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CERVANTES AND THE SPANISH BAROQUE AESTHETICS IN THE NOVELS OF GRAHAM GREENE

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CONTENTS

<i>Abbreviations</i>	5
INTRODUCTION	7
METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE.....	12
STATE OF THE ART	31
PART I: SPAIN, CATHOLICISM AND THE ORIGIN OF THE	
MODERN (CATHOLIC) NOVEL.....	38
I.1 A CATHOLIC NOVEL?.....	39
I.2 ENGLISH CATHOLICISM.....	58
I.3 THE ORIGIN OF THE MODERN NOVEL.....	71
I.4 FROM LA MANCHA TO THULE... AND BACK.....	91
I.5 FROM CATHOLIC CERVANTES TO PROTESTANT DEFOE	119
I.6 CATHOLIC IMAGINATION AND BAROQUE AESTHETICS....	134
I.7 CATHOLIC AESTHETICS IN CERVANTES'S NOVELS.....	152
I.8 MODERN RECEPTION OF CATHOLIC AESTHETICS.....	190
PART II: BAROQUE AESTHETICS AND THE INFLUENCE OF SPANISH	
CATHOLIC IMAGINATION IN GREENE'S NOVELS.....	222
II.1 GRAHAM GREENE'S UNFINISHED CONVERSION.....	223

II.2 THE PATTERN IN THE CARPET.....	245
- <i>THE MAN WITHIN AND THE NAME OF ACTION</i>	249
- <i>ENGLAND MADE ME</i>	261
- <i>A GUN FOR SALE</i>	279
- <i>BRIGHTON ROCK</i>	300
- <i>THE HEART OF THE MATTER</i>	321
- <i>A BURNT-OUT CASE</i>	338
II.3 SPAIN IN GREENE	352
- <i>RUMOUR AT NIGHTFALL</i>	358
- <i>THE CONFIDENTIAL AGENT</i>	366
- <i>THE POWER AND THE GLORY</i>	392
II.4 GREENE IN SPAIN.....	409
- <i>MONSIGNOR QUIXOTE</i>	420
CONCLUSIONS	455
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	478
APPENDIX	519

ABBREVIATIONS

All references to quotations from works by Miguel de Cervantes and Graham Greene appear parenthetically in the text.

- Miguel de Cervantes:

PS *Los Trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*

DQ *Don Quijote de La Mancha*

- Graham Greene:

B *It's a Battlefield*

BC *A Burnt-Out Case*

BR *Brighton Rock*

CA *The Confidential Agent*

CE *Collected Essays*

EA *The End of the Affair*

EMM *England Made Me*

GS *A Gun for Sale*

HM *The Heart of the Matter*

JWM *Journey Without Maps*

LR *The Lawless Roads*

<i>MQ</i>	<i>Monsignor Quixote</i>
<i>MW</i>	<i>The Man Within</i>
<i>NA</i>	<i>Name of Action</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>The Power and the Glory</i>
<i>RN</i>	<i>Rumour at Nightfall</i>
<i>SL</i>	<i>A Sort of Life</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Stamboul Train</i>
<i>YE</i>	<i>Yours Etc. Letters to the Press</i>
<i>WE</i>	<i>Ways of Escape</i>

INTRODUCTION

Peter Ackroyd, in his 2002 *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination*, opens chapter 17 with a suggestive and revelatory title: “Faith of Our Fathers”. The author begins with Thomas Malory’s words in his “Tale of the Sankgreal”, where Sir Galahad witnesses the miracle of transubstantiation during the holy communion of the Catholic Mass.

The bishop took up a wafer “which was made in lyknesse of brede. And at the lyfftyng up there cam a figure in lyknesse of a chylde, and the visage was as rede and as bright os ony fyre, and smote hymselff into the brede, that all they saw hit that the brede was fourmed of a fleyshely man. And then he put hit into the holy vessel agayne”. (Ackroyd, 2002, 123)

Ackroyd comments on the strangeness of the scene, where the wafer of bread is transformed into a child and a man before being dipped into the chalice. However, the image is perfectly consistent with the Catholic imagination of Malory’s contemporaries that in the mysterious miracle of the mass the Word does indeed become flesh. That imagination, as Ackroyd states, is at the heart of Catholic England, at the centre of the culture which Catholic England manifested. England was at the centre of Catholic Europe, rivalled with the Catholic European South, and breathed in Catholic culture before the Reformation “extirpated [it] in

the early sixteenth century” (245). Consequently, Ackroyd wonders “whether the legacy of the last five hundred years will outweigh or outlast a previous tradition of fifteen hundred years” (123). The location by Ackroyd of English cultural identity in the Catholic civilisation before the Reformation provides him with a cultural logic both tenable and productive, certainly one that creates a new frame of reference for the understanding of a set of dominants in English art forms.

It was a shared civilisation of ceremony and spectacle, of drama, of ritual and display; life was only the beginning, not the end, of existence and thus could be celebrated or scorned as one station along the holy way. It was a world in which irony and parody of all kinds flourished, where excremental truth and holy vision were considered fundamentally compatible, where Aquinas could mount towards heaven with his divine dialectic and Rabelais stoop towards the earth with his gargantuan corporeality. It was a world of symbolic ceremony, with the processions of Palm Sunday, the rending of the veil in Holy Week and the washing of the feet on Maundy Thursday. Doves were released at Pentecost in St. Paul’s Cathedral, and the Resurrection dramatised on Easter Day in Lichfield Cathedral. (Ackroyd, 2002, 124)

Catholic rituals, especially the mass, did after all mould theatrical representation in incontestable measures, and the centrality of theatrical traditions in the shaping of English character cannot be overstated. In its celebratory and ritualistic practice, Catholicism is the true kindred spirit of the English, Ackroyd argues, because it inculcates in the individual the inclination for spectacle and

play, manifest in the relish for performance arts, high in mimetic drive. He thus posits the native English tradition displaced by the Reformation as the expression of an archetypal form, a primal and recurrent image or prototype of the English imagination reverberating in the collective unconscious:

We all know how the drama was in origin a form of religious ritual, how in this country its beginnings are to be found in Mysteries and the Miracle Plays and how its deepest source probably lies within the Catholic Mass itself. We also know how certain forms of Protestantism were as deeply opposed to drama as they were to Catholicism. (...) Catholicism is a religion of ritual, spectacle and symbolism, whereas Protestantism is more concerned with the exigencies of the solitary conscience and the individual's relationship to God. (Ackroyd, 2000, 337)

In addition to its rich ritualistic and symbolical dimension, Ackroyd glorifies Catholic tradition for the communal feeling and publicness of faith that it cultivates. He polarises the Catholic and Protestant sensibilities, contrasting the restrained, individual-oriented theology of Protestant cultures to the collective ethos of Catholicism.

The original aim of my research was the way Graham Greene's novels negotiate and circulate Catholicism. In the middle of my study, however, I encountered two obstacles. Firstly, anything written by authors with a Catholic sensibility or imagination, such as Graham Greene, as well as fiction with implicit or explicit Catholic elements, had been labelled for more than a hundred years

now as “Catholic fiction”. The term “Catholic novel”, apart from being disturbing for most of the authors involved, implies confusion.

Secondly, critical works on Graham Greene have been many and exhaustive. I found myself in that wasteland of research where every single path had been trodden so many times before. Catholicism, politics, Faith, belief and unbelief were terms that led me to that place where some critic had already stayed. Sometimes, too many of them. Recalling Ackroyd’s ideas on the importance of the form of religious drama over the content and taking into account the possible Catholic origins of the novel, I found myself precisely in that place that Greene called “the tragicomic region of La Mancha”. In a sort of Eliotian April, I had found a starting point where the first ideas for this research flourished.

Indeed, many studies have analysed Greene’s vision of Don Quixote’s world as a “tragicomic region”, which was undoubtedly inspired by the closing chapter of Unamuno’s *The Tragic Sense of Life*, “Don Quixote in the Contemporary European Tragicomedy”, which discusses the knight’s quest as a “comic” and “irrational tragedy”. Unamuno establishes a mystical hermeneutic for Don Quixote, a “Knight of Faith”. Reading *Don Quixote* as a profound “Christian epic”, Unamuno calls the knight “Our Lord Don Quixote, the Spanish Christ” (285). The most important similarity between Greene and Unamuno is that both “accept the spiritual aspect of Don Quixote’s passionate adventures and turn Cervantes’s novel into a religious book” (Choi, 188).

The point here, I hope to show, is that in my attempt to study the origins of the modern novel, on the one hand, and its relation to Catholicism, on the other, I found myself researching on the work of Cervantes. Both *Don Quijote* and *Los Trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* have proved to be the keystones in the development of the modern novel, since Cervantes consciously used the term *novelar*, which might imply that he was aware of creating an innovative way of writing novels, writing about the nature of fiction itself. Moreover, he wrote his works imbued in the spirit of the Spanish Catholic Reformation and drank from the aesthetics of the Baroque.

The main lines of my research, therefore, are the analysis of what critics have called “Catholic novel”, which inevitably led me to study the Catholic influence on the origin of the modern novel, the crucial role that Baroque aesthetics and the sacramental imagination played in that origin. The second half of this research is devoted to the analysis of these ideas in the novels of twentieth-century Catholic writer Graham Greene. The British author seems an ideal choice since most of his work has been labelled as Catholic. I will demonstrate how his Catholic imagination, which pervades most of his writing, and his close relationship with Spain, displays Baroque aesthetics as a continuation of the Catholic tradition that is at the core of the modern novel. My argument therefore will not include a study of the so-called Catholic novel as a genre, but I will show how Catholicism helped to create the modern novel.

METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

Following the multidisciplinary perspective of this research, the first chapters of this dissertation analyse what critics have called “the Catholic novel”, especially the British Catholic novel. Recent scholarship insists on tracing its origins in the French Catholic Revival. Theodore P. Fraser’s 1994 influential study *The Modern Catholic Novel in Europe*, states that, “the Catholic novel in Europe as we know it today originated in French literature of the nineteenth century” (1). More recent studies still insist on the same guidelines. Richard Griffiths’ 2010 work *The Pen and the Cross: Catholicism and English Literature 1850-2000* argues that, “the concerns of English Catholic literature on the whole failed to mirror those of its French equivalent. The reason for this lies mainly in the position, and history, of the Catholic Church, within the two countries and the very different opponents it had to face in each” (9). The problem is that, in my opinion, there has been an excessive focus on those so-called Catholic novels’ content, but little attention to form. Moreover, the Catholic novel is a difficult term to define, but one that has been taken for granted without detailed research on the convenience or suitability of such a term.

I propose that there is no such thing as the “Catholic novel”. One of my aims in this study is to analyse the origin of the modern novel and try to show that

the modern novel as a genre was consciously created and developed in Cervantes's main works, which were written in a Catholic country immersed in the impulse of the Counter-Reformation, with a Catholic imagination, and under the influence of the aesthetics of the Baroque. Following this line of argument, I propose that the modern novel itself is a Catholic construct and Cervantes's fiction, especially his two major novels *Don Quixote* and *Persiles and Sigismunda*, proves this statement. New and fresh perspectives on the works of Cervantes such as Diana de Armas Wilson's *Cervantes, the Novel, and the New World* (2000), David Castillo's *(A)wry Views* (2001), and Michael Armstrong-Roche's *Cervantes Epic Novel* (2002), will support my thesis.

The obstacles against this theory, I argue, were raised by the impulse of Protestantism and the decline of the Spanish Empire. When the English Empire became strong, a new vision of the individual, the world and its relationship with the New World appeared influencing the novel and obscuring the Catholic legacy to the extent of having become a norm in scholarship until a few decades.

I will analyse both perspectives of the novel helped by David Tracy's influential theory of the "analogical and dialogical imaginations" in *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (1998). This work may be seen as the precursor for recent studies on aesthetic theories on Catholic Sacramental Imagination, as that of Andrew Greeley's *Catholic Imagination* (2000), which will inform my study on the origin of the modern novel through a comparative analysis of Cervantes's and Defoe's fictions and the aesthetics of their writing. It is not a case of privileging one over the other, but of

studying their differences in an attempt to revise traditional studies on the origin of the modern novel.

Throughout its history, Christianity has accommodated and adapted to contemporary culture and society in order to reach people effectively and to have a greater impact on its world. From the very beginning, Christianity became narrative, an oral, written, and most importantly, “physically human” narrative that paradoxically sought to transcend this world in search of God. The relationship between humans, Christ and God turns into a narrative each time the Paschal Mystery is reproduced. The Gospels were soon written, told, translated and spread. The Acts of the Apostles and several letters of Paul deal at length with the struggle over the movement towards a universal Church. Subsequently, and in particular after the Edict of Milan in 313, Christianity faced the issue of its relationship to the surrounding pagan Greco-Roman culture, the way in which Jerusalem was to be related to Athens.

During the early Middle Ages, the Church confronted the barbarian invaders from the north. Much of early medieval history is the story of assimilation by the Church and the Christian transformation of features of barbarian society, for example, of the mounted warrior into the ‘Christian knight’. The expansion of Europe into Asia and America in the sixteenth century required that the Church adapt to both advanced and primitive societies as it sought to make known the narrative of the Gospel, not a simple tale, but the image of Holy Mystery, the spreading of the real body of Christ.

According to Robert Bireley, in his 1999 *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700*, early modern Catholicism was the response of the Catholic Church to the changing world of the sixteenth century. This refashioning was both active and passive in character, since as the Church adapted itself in light of the evolving culture and society, so did this changing culture and society help refashion the Church. Both Catholicism and Protestantism tried to reinterpret Christianity through reform and renewal rather as a return to the spirit of the Gospel as they understood it. Bireley notes a “desire especially of lay people for a spirituality that made more Christian sense of life lived amidst worldly or secular pursuits, and increasingly in light of the upheavals of the century, the pursuit of order, religious, political, social, and intellectual” (2).

This impulse extended well beyond the high ranks and hierarchies of the Catholic Church, since personalities emerged such as King Philip II of Spain and prince Elector Maximilian of Bavaria, who took active parts considering religion too important to be left to the clergy. Charismatic figures such as Ignatius of Loyola, Angela Merici, Francis de Sales and Jane Frances of Chantal also played an important role. “Lay confraternities”, Bireley explains, “participated actively, and as recent local studies have shown, the ordinary Catholic faithful often had a say in decision-making at the parish level. So the concept of church here is diffuse. (...) Catholicism was hardly monolithic” (2).

There were indeed reform movements within the Catholic Church before the outbreak of the Lutheran Reformation in 1517, which led to the Council of Trent (1545-1563). “The Reformation period had bequeathed a legacy of

suspicion and hostility to Protestants and Catholics which, despite occasional ecumenical spirits, persisted well into the twentieth century” (Bireley, 3). John W. O’Malley has pointed out that the terms “Catholic Reform” and “Counter Reformation” present several objections. They underline the relationship to the Protestant Reformation whereas there were many aspects of sixteenth-century Catholicism that had little to do with the Reformation, such as missionary endeavours across seas, new religious orders devoted to the service of the poor, the sick, or to education, and the revival of the thought of Thomas Aquinas.

Moreover, in the sixteenth century, the term “reform”, according to O’Malley, had a technical, canonical meaning dating from the High Middle Ages, and designating the enforcement of church law in areas such as preaching, priests, and celibacy. O’Malley contends that the early Jesuits, highly important at the time, were not out to reform the Church in any traditional sense of the term, unless by reform one means either personal religious conversion or any other spiritual significant change. The goal was Ignatius Loyola’s attempt to Christianise the unfaithful and help souls. The impulse, as has been explained, was reciprocal, and both religious and lay people collaborated in the renewed imagination of Catholicism.

The State and the Church made use of art, especially sculpture and painting, and the arts made the most of this interest. The “narrative” of the gothic churches became more “popular” and the sacred and the profane combined to show the mysteries of Faith and the scenes of Christ’s life. As a fruit of this new artistic impulse, the Franciscans started to place symbolic artwork around a

worship space depicting the events of Jesus Christ's life, especially His final hours and the practice of moving from Station to Station of the Cross in prayer.

In this regard, these symbolic religious and, at the same time, artistic representations were not exclusively narrative, material, or "static", but turned into a physical, bodily pilgrimage, which may have begun within a generation or two after Christ's actual crucifixion. Tradition asserts that the Blessed Virgin used to visit daily the scenes of Christ's Passion and St. Jerome (c. 347 – 420) speaks of crowds of pilgrims from different countries who used to visit the holy places in his day.

Several travellers who visited the Holy Land during the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries mention a *Via Sacra*, a settled route along which pilgrims were conducted, but there is nothing in their accounts to identify this with the Via Crucis, as we understand it, including special stopping-places where indulgences were gained. Such indulgenced Stations must be considered the true origin of the devotion as now practised. It cannot be said with any certainty when such indulgences began to be granted, but most probably, they may be due to the Franciscans, to whom in 1342 the guardianship of the holy places was entrusted.

Then, in central Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Franciscans started to create outdoor sculptures and shrines that would replicate those holy places of Jerusalem. These were usually placed, often in small buildings, along the approach to a church. Realising that comparatively few persons were able to gain those indulgences by means of a personal pilgrimage to

the Holy Land, Innocent XI in 1686 granted the Franciscans, in answer to their petition, the right to erect the Stations in all their churches, and declared that all the indulgences that had ever been given for devoutly visiting the actual scenes of Christ's Passion could thenceforth be gained by Franciscans and all others affiliated to their order if they made the Way of the Cross in their own churches in the accustomed manner. Innocent XII confirmed the privilege in 1694, and Benedict XIII in 1726 extended it to all the faithful.

In 1731, Clement XII still further extended it by permitting the indulgenced Stations to all churches, providing that they were erected by a Franciscan father with the sanction of the ordinary. At the same time, he definitely fixed the number of Stations at fourteen. Baroque art had started to represent these scenes since the turn of the sixteenth century, which gives an idea of the importance this symbolic revival gained in the lives of sixteenth and seventeenth people and in their shared Catholic imagination.

This emphasis on the physicality of the body and the humanity of Christ led to a more accessible sacramental imagination, which was artistically represented as a sign of both human relationship with God and the glory of Christ's death as victory in the resurrection of the body. Through the efforts in representing the body and blood of Christ, the mystery of Transubstantiation became a daily and tangible reality in the popular imagination. It is that ceremonial and sacramental nature of Catholic practice which, as Ackroyd states, may inspire a writer.

The next step in my research will be to analyse the aesthetics of the modern novel from the perspective of that Catholic imagination in which the novel, as a conscious genre, was established. The modern novel, I will try to demonstrate, has its origins in the Catholic religious drama and was born under the influence and reciprocal collaboration of the artistic impulse of the Catholic Reformation, the Baroque aesthetics. Gregg Lambert explains that after a near-century of discussing the term, literary critics and historians have reached a provisional agreement: “the French adjectival term, *la baroque*, is derived from the etymology of the Portuguese (not Spanish) word, *barroca*, which means ‘an odd and irregular-shaped pearl’, (...) from a Portuguese jeweller's term, *perrola barroca*, which refers to a flawed and imperfect pearl” (Lambert, 1). Beyond this common etymological derivation, there has been little consensus in the history of baroque criticism as to what this term might signify across the different fields and disciplines of architecture, the plastic arts, literature and cultural criticism. As Lambert goes on to say, “from its very appearance in works of art criticism from the nineteenth century onward, this term was often confused with Mannerism, or simply as the exaggeration of traits already found in the works of the Renaissance” (1). Thus, it was often reduced to a period concept that occupies the middle ground between Renaissance and Classicism.

In order to fulfil its propagandist role, Catholic-inspired Baroque art tended to include large-scale works of public art, such as monumental wall paintings and huge frescoes for the ceilings and vaults of palaces and churches. Baroque painting illustrated key elements of Catholic dogma, either directly in

Biblical works or indirectly in mythological or allegorical compositions. Along with this monumental, high-minded approach, painters typically portrayed a strong sense of movement, using swirling spirals and upward diagonals, and strong sumptuous colour schemes in order to dazzle and surprise. New techniques of *tenebrism* and *chiaroscuro* were developed to enhance atmosphere. Brushwork is creamy and broad, often resulting in thick impasto.

Evonne Levy notes that St. Paul's statement, "we reflect as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, thus we are transfigured into his likeness" (2 Cor 3:17-18), envisions salvation as a matter of becoming Christ's image (Levy, 116). The reform of the soul through mimesis made dramatisation extremely important, for one must constantly perform – through story, ritual, and art – the ongoing conversion of the soul. Both the realism and the theatricality of the Catholic Baroque demanded something of the subject. The aesthetic is annunciatory, inviting the viewer into a decisive moment in the life of Christ or of his saints as a shared image of one's own life with God (Levy, 117). Imagination and artistic production were critical tools in the life of faith formation.

Whereas the Protestantism of theologian John Calvin (1509-1564) insisted on the idea that the senses cannot be trusted to lead one to faith, the Catholic response was to accentuate the opposite, extending the sacramental ramifications of the image as a way to understand art's effects on faith. Thus, the ideological strategies of the Catholic Baroque attempted to teach, to delight, and to persuade the viewer that a religious horizon impinged upon human life. Through a highly developed naturalism that engaged the viewer both physically and emotionally,

the Catholic Baroque drew on the theological doctrine of *Imago Dei* as the foundational insight into mimetic reform, that process of conversion to God through sharing the image of Christ as one's own. Catholic Reformation theology emphasised that the presence of God is quite accessible: the experience of the holy, of mystery, is available to everyone. The Catholic Baroque advocated a populist conception of theology, one that blended the high and the low.

Through the works on Baroque aesthetics by Lambert, Maravall, D'Ors, Spadaccini, or Ndalianis, among others, I will elaborate my theory of how Baroque aesthetics are used in order to disclose Catholic elements and truths that are difficult to express or need to be taken with the necessary distance so as not to become dogmatic or overtly preachy. However, using the aesthetics of the Baroque, the Catholic imagination is able to see and explain what is not apparently visible in the narrative subverting meanings at the same time and creating new ones.

This technique used by authors in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europe, especially Spain and Italy, is both consciously and unconsciously reproduced by authors with a Catholic imagination during the twentieth century. It is not a question of whether the modern notion is a true and correct copy of its predecessor, but rather why similar versions of the European Baroque in both seventeenth-century architecture and painting, and in Spanish prose and verse, have been employed by many critics and writers to define the aesthetic sensibility and historical force behind the emergence of modernism and postmodernism and

their crisis and preoccupations. This is one of the questions that this study will attempt to answer.

According to Lambert, the characteristics of the Baroque aesthetics are a compilation of many critics' works. My study presupposes or assumes that the reader is both familiar with the significance of a baroque style, or aesthetic philosophy, which is outlined in the following definitions:

1. The baroque is a phenomenon of which the period of its birth, decline or end can be situated somewhere between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
2. Its concept is relevant only to the West, since a certain stage or version of the baroque sensibility could only prosper in reaction to the solemn eroticism and "world-weariness" of the Counter-Reformation.
3. It is proper mostly to the Roman architecture of Borromini, the sculpture and architecture of Bernini, as well as to certain recurrent traits in sculpture and painting (Caravaggio, Rubens, Velázquez, Vermeer, Rembrandt). These traits are: an attraction to movement through ornamentation, producing a dizziness in the spectator, as well as a sense of unity, through the cumulative unfolding of surfaces; an emotionalism of wonder and admiration, producing both tension and release in the spectator or reader; a richer and more sensual use of colour; a dramatic opposition between light and dark (chiaroscuro); a heightened sense of emotional drama.

4. The baroque style is often regarded as pathological, the result of an obsessive attraction to forms of monstrosity and to vulgar taste. It is for this reason (because of its sensuality, its attraction to movement and its emotionalism) that its appeal is supposedly directed toward a larger, more common public than either the Renaissance, before it, or Classicism that followed. It is this 'populism' as inspiration that has resulted in its frequent comparison to the emergence of modern popular cinema.

A substantive change in the perception of the Baroque was propitiated by the publication of Heinrich Wölfflin's *Renaissance und Barock* (1888) which saw it not as a degeneration of the Renaissance but as an autonomous, valid style. Wölfflin placed its origins in Counter-Reformation Rome and considered it to be "free" ("developed without models") (23), and, most of all, "painterly" (29). Later on, he proposed the following five dichotomies ("forms of representation") to distinguish classical art from the Baroque: linear vs. painterly; plane vs. recessional; closed vs. open form; multiplicity vs. unity; and clearness vs. unclearness.

Baroque art endows the objects it represents with a sense of extraordinary weight and mass. It conveys a palpable illusion of physical presence. Baroque art produces an illusion not only of presence, but of motion in the sense that a physicist would understand it: the displacement of a body with mass through three-dimensional space over time. In this sense, baroque art is theatrical: the illusion of motion produces an effect that is both figuratively and literally

dramatic. At the same time as painters were experimenting with novel effects that suggested movement on canvas, the use of perspectival scenery became common in Europe. Both art forms rely on trompe l'oeil devices, on illusion – tricks of the light and the clever placement of drapery, for example – to heighten the viewer's sense of the reality of what is depicted.

The space of baroque art is projective. Within the picture, everything recedes toward a vanishing point, plunging into the depths of the pictorial space with exaggerated velocity. The represented objects simultaneously invade the space of the onlooker. Baroque art unites the painting and the viewer in a single space, creating the illusion that the image is as real as its beholder and that the pictorial space extends infinitely. Communication between separate worlds is a common motif of baroque art, equally present in architecture and interior design. A wall is never simply a wall, nor a ceiling, a ceiling. Each architectural element is extended beyond its functional duty as a shield from the hostile elements. The aesthetic component of the object, its form, overtakes its function. A wall or a ceiling becomes a possible opening onto the reality which it occludes. The same happens with “empty” backgrounds: a world of light and darkness draws the spectator's attention towards the interior of the scene thus hinting at another dimension.

Baroque artists aimed to undo the classical unity of form and function, to unbalance the composition and achieve the impression of movement and space that the new age demanded. In his landmark study *Renaissance and Baroque*, Heinrich Wölfflin writes:

The church interior, [the baroque's] greatest achievement, revealed a completely new conception of space directed towards infinity: form is dissolved in favour of the magic spell of light – the highest manifestation of the painterly. No longer was the aim one of fixed spatial proportions and self-contained spaces with their satisfying relationships between height, breadth and depth. The painterly style thought first of the effects of light: the unfathomableness of a dark depth; the magic of light streaming down from the invisible height of the dome; the transition from dark to light and lighter still are the elements with which it worked. (...) The space of the interior, evenly lit in the Renaissance and conceived as a structurally closed entity, seemed in the baroque to go on indefinitely. The enclosing shell of the building hardly counted: in all directions one's gaze is drawn into infinity. The end of the choir disappears in the gold and glimmer of the towering high altar, in the gleam of the "splendori celesti," while the dark chapels of the nave are hardly recognizable; above, instead of the flat ceiling which had calmly closed off space, loomed a huge barrel-vault. It too seems open: clouds stream down with choirs of angels and all the glory of heaven; our eyes and minds are lost in immeasurable space. (Wölfflin, 64-65)¹

Contrast is the primary tool through which baroque art prompts a sensation of the infinite in the mind of the beholder. The infinite cannot of course be shown. It must be suggested or implied. What baroque art conveys is an impression, an

¹ See appendix 1

illusion of infinite space, of movement into boundless depths, by suggesting the existence of what finally remains unseen.

My study, consequently, proposes to show the way Catholic Baroque aesthetics blended the sacred and the profane in the literary Spanish world of the Catholic Reformation, where heaven and earth are literally falling into one another, and the Roman Catholic Church – its physical and ecclesial structure – is the place, the moment, where this clash happens. The sweeping sense of verticalisation in many ceilings of Baroque churches suggests human passage toward some divine realm, but there is a counter effect as well, as if the heavens are tumbling down into the world.

This is seen, for instance, in Caravaggio's *Calling of St. Matthew* (1599): the light from outside the edge of the painting falls upon the tax collector's startled, incredulous expression as Christ's hand reaches out to claim him. And in the painting of the *Martyrdom of St. Matthew* that stands on the opposite wall, every face, every limb on the canvas is held in a momentary shock of recognition at the immensity of Matthew's suffering. In both of the St. Matthew paintings, the demanding implications of religious faith are felt and realised in the prosaic rituals of ordinary life: we can see Matthew collecting taxes and celebrating the Mass.²

The magnification of light and darkness in action through these episodes becomes an epiphany of grace, often in an expression that leaves the subjects in the painting – and the viewer who is invited to take part – unprepared for the consequences of such divine intervention. The use of chiaroscuro and the

² See appendixes 2 and 3.

grotesque, together with the contorted human bodies, subvert the natural order, yet the effects of this chaos paradoxically imply a transcending principle of order behind the surface events. Caravaggio negotiates and subverts the culturally normative levels in order to establish a new order through the process of conversion, the experience of *metanoia*. In this sense, this experience was “staged and performed” on a daily basis becoming an act of ordinary life.

In Graham Greene’s collected essays the dominant figure is Henry James. Not only is James the subject of five essays; he is also the novelist who receives Greene’s highest tribute: “He is as solitary in the history of the novel as Shakespeare in the history of poetry” (*CE*, 34). James, unlike Greene, had no interest in formal doctrine and only apparently the vaguest sense of the supernatural as his ghost stories reflect. However, the Henry James honoured by Greene is a novelist of the supernatural order: “James believed in the supernatural, but he saw evil as an equal force with good” (*CE*, 33).

Greene does not agree with some critics’ analyses of James such as Desmond MacCarthy who wrote in an essay on Henry James: “The universe and religion are so completely excluded from his books as if he had been an eighteenth-century writer. (...) [The religious sense] is singularly absent from his work” (*CE*, 35).³ For Greene, however, James inherited a passion for Europe and tradition which “drew him towards the Catholic Church as, in his own words, ‘the most impressive convention in all history’” (*CE*, 36). Greene even reproduces a

³ Greene quotes MacCarthy’s essay “The World of Henry James”, published in *The Saturday Review of Literature* on August 29, 1931.

letter that Henry James wrote from Rome as early as 1869 where he noted his aesthetic appeal. Greene reflects on the aesthetics of Catholicism:

But no one can long fail to discover how superficial is the purely aesthetic appeal of Catholicism. (...) The pageantry may well done and excite the cultured visitor or it may be ill done and repel him. The Catholic Church has never hesitated to indulge in the lowest forms of popular ‘art’; it has never used beauty for the sake of beauty. Any little junk shop of statues and holy pictures beside a cathedral is an example of what I mean. (*CE*, 36)

Writing as early as 1933, Greene is preoccupied with the aesthetics of Catholicism and its effects on the religious imagination of the author. Following his revelatory essay on Henry James, Greene reproduces James’s words in *A Little Tour in France*, when he wrote, “The Catholic Church, as churches go today, is certainly the most spectacular, but it must feel that it has a great fund of impressiveness to draw upon when it opens such sordid little shops of sanctity as this” (*CE*, 36). For Greene, then, if Henry James had not had any religious sense and Catholicism only spoke to his aesthetic sense, “Catholicism and James at this point would finally have parted company” (36). As Greene goes on to explain,

If [James’s] religious sense had been sufficiently vague and ‘numinous’, he would then surely have approached the Anglican Church to discover whether he could find there satisfaction for the sense of awe or reverence, whether he could build within it his system of ‘make-believe’. If the

Anglican Church did not offer to his love of age so unbroken a tradition, it offered to an Englishman or an American a purer literary appeal. (*CE*, 36)

After careful consideration of James's works, Greene concludes that there were dogmas in Catholic teaching, avoided by the Anglican Church, which attracted James. He cites the prayers for the dead and the way the Catholic Church treats supernatural evil. In this sense, Greene argues that James came very close to a direct belief in both Hell and Purgatory. The same preoccupation for those Catholic dogmas that Greene observes in the novels of Henry James are present in his own fiction. The aesthetics in Greene's novels presupposes a sort of death-oriented plot and a sense of supernatural evil that combines and conveys the same aesthetic principles of the Baroque. We deduce that Greene believes in the importance of aesthetics to reflect his religious and moral dilemmas in his fiction because he uses the same argument to explain the way Henry James is concerned with a transcendental, if not religious, sense.

However, in Greene's novels, characters are generally aware of their condition and, in some sense, they reflect their author's frustration at the problem of communicating faith in fiction. Flannery O'Connor explains this challenge:

The problem of the novelist who wishes to write about man's encounter with this God is how he shall make the experience – which is both natural and supernatural – understandable and credible to his reader. In any age this would be a problem, but in our own, it is a well-nigh insurmountable one. Today's audience is one in which religious feeling has become, if not atrophied, at least vaporous and sentimental. (71)

Thinking that the problem will only be solved when there is a combination of believing artists and believing society, O'Connor concludes that until that time, the novelist "may find in the end that instead of reflecting the image at the heart of things, he has only reflected our broken condition and, through it, the face of the devil we are possessed by" (75). Greene's novels try to solve the problem of overcoming the paradoxes of Christian aesthetics precisely presenting the religious sense as experience, as spiritual conflict, struggle and search for conversion, not as codified theology. As Charles Glicksberg puts it, "[w]hat we get is a convincing and comprehensive picture of life in all its irreducible mysteriousness" (1966, 72).

STATE OF THE ART

Graham Greene confessed that he started to write as a kind of therapy in order to comprehend and overcome the process of his conversion to Catholicism. When he converted, he chose the Christian name of Thomas the Doubter, because he identified with the Apostle's doubt, as he explains in his first autobiography *A Sort of Life* (121). In fact, one of Greene's recurrent themes in his fiction is the way doubt maintains faith alive. Brief introductions to Greene as well as more comprehensive studies of his work are so numerous that to survey all of them would be beyond the limits of this introductory chapter. Many of the critical approaches to Greene deal with issues of religion, Faith, doubt and sin, including exhaustive studies about his most famous characters appearing in his more publicly acclaimed novels, namely *Brighton Rock*, *The Power and the Glory*, *The Heart of the Matter*, *The End of the Affair*, *A Burnt-Out Case*, and *Monsignor Quixote*. These are his "great religious novels", according to most critics, and also those that have received most critical attention. I propose an in-depth analysis of his first works, traditionally forgotten by studies on Greene, because they offer, in my opinion, a more detailed example of the way his aesthetics will be used and repeated throughout his career.

Greene's critical work became monothematic even to the point of bothering the author himself, who became worried, midway through his career, about his growing reputation as just a Catholic writer, and a writer of a few novels repeating the same themes. Although my work will touch these themes in his fiction, it will be more focused on how the Catholic elements in his fiction show Baroque aesthetics in the author's attempt to efface his hard process of conversion.

The early work by Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris, *The Art of Graham Greene* (1951), though limited now because it exclusively refers to *The Heart of the Matter*, is an interesting study of his obsessive themes and his craftsmanship influenced by James, Stevenson, and Conrad. John Atkins's *Graham Greene* (1958) demonstrates an intuitive grasp of connections between Greene's personal life and his fictions, "a distorted reflection of his creator, a man who cannot disguise or hide his feelings. He can always be seen through" (159). Gwenn Boardman, in *The Aesthetics of Exploration* (1971), interprets Greene's fiction as expressing his artistic quest through the central metaphor of a map reflected in his continuous travels. Those journeys were, according to Boardman, psychological as well as aesthetic explorations. Roger Sharrock, in *Saints and Sinners and Comedians: the Novels of Graham Greene* (1984), acknowledges the movement into comedy experienced by Greene's later fiction after *A Burnt-Out Case* as the novel that inaugurates the second phase. Sharrock does not undervalue this second phase; on the contrary, he sees Greene's "great technical achievement" (1984, 12).

Brian Thomas's *An Underground Fate* (1988) sees a major transition in Greene's fiction occurring around 1950, a shift from a tragic vision to a more comic mode. Thomas observes that Greene's narrative pattern is a kind of quest that moves from a journey into the underground toward a rebirth. V.V. Rama Rao sees a similar movement from tragic to comic in his work *Graham Greene's Comic Vision* (1990), though Rao's version describes three phases in the evolution of Greene's work, which "may be analysed in terms of the artistic exploration of modes of experience; tragic, comic and tragicomic" (1). Robert Pendleton's *Graham Greene's Conradian Masterplot* (1996), is a complete study on the influence of Conrad on Greene and in the change and later influence of postmodernist writers on Greene. Robert Hoskins work *Graham Greene: an Approach to the Novels* (1999) is an excellent study on the relationship between Greene and his protagonists and the change experimented in his later fiction, which moves toward an increasingly self-reflexive tendency and, consequently, Greene's interest toward the act of writing itself and the figure of the artist in the scope of a fiction directed toward the role of the author.

As for critical approaches to *Monsignor Quixote*, Jae-Suck Choi's *Greene and Unamuno: Two Pilgrims to La Mancha* (1990), studies the relationship between Greene and Spain but limited to the frame of Unamuno's influence on Greene, and the chapter about *Monsignor Quixote* is shorter than expected when one considers that novel as being the most representative of the relation Greene/Unamuno. Many recent shorter essays have been published over the last years about *Monsignor Quixote* concerned with Faith and doubt in the context of a

Spain in a difficult moment in history, its transition from dictatorship to democracy and the first years of democracy when the novel seems to take place. Graham Holderness, in his essay “Knight-errant of faith? *Monsignor Quixote* as Catholic Fiction” (1993) is a good example and almost a pioneer in the increasing interest for this novel.

Late Father Leopoldo Durán deserves a special paragraph since he was a living account of Greene’s relationship with Spain. Both travelled the country together and this originated the genesis for the novel. His book *Graham Greene: Friend and Brother* (1994) is a first-hand account of their travels and conversations. It is also necessary to mention here Durán’s work *La crisis del Sacerdote en Graham Greene* (1974), which is an excellent study on the priests characters that appear along Greene’s novels.

The two most important and influential works on Greene written in the last few years are, firstly, Mark Bosco’s *Graham Greene’s Catholic Imagination* (2005), an excellent account of Greene’s works from a Catholic and theological insight as well as an important work to see the difference of Greene’s fiction prior and post-Vatican II. Secondly, Michael G. Brennan’s *Graham Greene: Fictions, Faith and Authorship* (2010) is very interesting since it focuses both on his best-known novels and his less-familiar works. He also explores the major issues on Catholic faith and doubt, particularly in relation to his portrayal of secular love and physical desire.

However, the works mentioned above fail to explore the aesthetics of the author from the beginning of his career, from the moment of his conversion to

Catholicism, a very difficult process in my opinion which will mark the rest of his writing as can be seen through his Baroque aesthetics. This aesthetics seems the best way to disclose what the author himself called “the pattern in the carpet”. This pattern led me to find the origins of the modern novel in the Catholic narrative of the sacraments, which were reinforced and enhanced by the originality of the Baroque aesthetics as can be seen in Cervantes’s main novels. Graham Greene, after an extensive career trying to use his fiction to understand his incomplete process of conversion, ends up travelling in the same region where everything started, that “region of the mind” he called the “tragicomic La Mancha”.

My analysis of Greene’s novels will be divided into two main sections: the first section will study the guidelines of his narrative, the origin of his necessity to write as a kind of therapeutic treatment. This first phase will also analyse his conversion to Catholicism, a fact that soon became the main reason and inspiration for his writing career. These issues will form his aesthetics, which blended religious elements with aspects of his life. Part of his narrative hides an unconscious desire to complete the process of his conversion to Catholicism.

Although he actually converted to the Catholic faith in 1926, this process, I hope to show, became a sort of “unfinished business” that Greene will negotiate throughout most of his career as a novelist. I consider his first novels crucial in the analysis of his aesthetics. Most critics and scholars have paid little attention to these first novels, especially to *The Name of Action* (1930) and *Rumour at*

Nightfall (1931), his second and third novels, which were suppressed by Greene who forbade their re-publication.

From these works on, a series of thrillers soon gave Greene popularity due to their agile dialogues, fast and engaging plots, and technical improvements. *A Gun for Sale* (1936) and *Brighton Rock* (1938) stand out. The latter has usually been labelled as his first “Catholic novel”, although Catholic elements are present in his works from the beginning. During the forties and fifties, Catholicism lived a glorious period since people needed sanctuary after the horrors of the Second World War. Greene wrote his most popularly acclaimed novels combining Catholic elements with traces of his personal life. His adulterous affairs gave shape to plots in which Baroque aesthetics play an important role to disclose the complete picture of the narrative. Novels such as *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), *The End of the Affair* (1951), and *A Burnt-Out Case* (1960) belong to this productive period.

In another chapter, I analyse his novels set in Spain, *Rumour at Nightfall* (1931) and *Monsignor Quixote* (1982) as well as *The Confidential Agent* (1939) because its plot has to do with the Spanish Civil War and two of its protagonists are Spaniards. I have also included here *The Power and the Glory* (1940), set in Mexico, because I believe that this novel represents perfectly the main elements of the Baroque aesthetics and the Spanish Catholic imagination. Indeed, Greene has declared on several occasions that he has always had an unconscious fixation with Spain and Spanish culture. *The Power and the Glory* and *Monsignor Quixote* mirror elements of Spanish Catholicism and reflect an interplay with Cervantes’s

novels, especially *Don Quixote*, closing the thematic circle of my research. In this last section, I will also analyse the influence of the Second Vatican Council on Greene's narrative and on Catholic aesthetics.

I hope to fill that critical lacuna in the study of both the modern novel's debt to Catholicism and the Graham Greene studies and show how Baroque aesthetics and the sacramental imagination negotiate the Catholic elements of his novels. I am not referring exclusively to those Catholic ideas and debates that most scholars have been discussing on Greene's work, but those "absent presences" that build a second narrative in his fiction, a narrative that can only be disclosed, I will show, through the active participation of the reader and the elements of Baroque aesthetics that pervade his novels. I also hope this research help open new reflections both on the modern novel written with a Catholic imagination and on future Greene studies.

PART I

SPAIN, CATHOLICISM AND THE ORIGIN OF THE MODERN (CATHOLIC) NOVEL

I.1 A CATHOLIC NOVEL?

In an interdisciplinary study in which the reciprocal influence of literature and religion is considered, the question of categorising a literary career according to the religion of the author alone may raise many methodological problems. This is the case of the category of authors known as “Catholic writers”. They belong to a large and identifiable body of literature which grew up in Catholic countries, particularly in France in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and extended its influence to other countries, such as Britain, where Catholicism constituted a minority faith. Some of those authors were writing in the twentieth century: Georges Bernanos and François Mauriac in France, Flannery O’Connor and Walker Percy in the United States or Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene in England, to name but a few. Even in our century, the “Catholic writer” figure still survives in authors such as Sara Maitland, Alice Thomas Ellis, Piers Paul Read, David Lodge or Muriel Spark.⁴

In 2002, Peter Quinn began his essay on the Catholic novel with the question: “Is there such a thing as the Catholic novel? Tricky question” (16). A few years later, Bernard Bergonzi admitted: “if the idea of the Catholic novelist offers difficulties, the “Catholic novel” presents many more” (2007,10). Precisely, the British literary critic Martin McQuillan, discussing the work of Muriel Spark,

⁴Alice Thomas Ellis and Muriel Spark died in 2005 and 2006 respectively.

wrote: “What does it mean to be a “Catholic writer”? Surely, the term is an oxymoron” (4). Although McQuillan’s intention was to change the critical perspective far from any religious or spiritual focus, his assertion reopens an old wound.

In *Faithful Fictions* (1991), Thomas Woodman begins his famous study on the Catholic novel in British literature reminding his readers of Sir Hugh Walpole’s words when he wrote that he was opposed to the spread of Roman Catholicism because it would be bad for the novel (Woodman, ix). Walpole’s reflection was a direct consequence of the traditional association of Catholicism with an uncanny and sinister interpretation of rituals. This problematic vision of Catholicism may have originated during the seventeenth century as the Protestant Reformation discarded elements of Christian religious practice that were deemed idolatrous, such as the veneration of the Virgin Mary and the Saints, which were considered as rooted in a pagan past – as evidenced in the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation.⁵ Susan Griffin refers to Catholicism’s use of spectacle, “as a religion of forms and surfaces: gilded decorations, ritualised behaviours, and mediated (through clergy or saints) relations with God, (...) a religion which is theatrically performed” (4-5).

That condemnation of the use of spectacle not to inspire belief in the marvellous, was exhaustively used by the eighteenth-century Gothic novel which, according to Regina Hansen, emerged as “the progenitor of the modern fantastic subgenre known as horror [and] dramatised this distrust of the irrational in general

⁵ Most people nowadays are aware of the persecution suffered by British Catholics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the Test Acts of 1673 and 1678, which excluded Catholics from public life until the 1829 Catholic Relief Act. See Griffiths (9-17).

and of the supposedly occult and uncanny nature of Catholicism in particular”. Nineteenth-century fiction in England and later in America continued the Gothic fascination with uncanny Catholicism, “often in the service of religious intolerance and ethnic bigotry” (7). The two decades following the Catholic Emancipation Act (1829) saw a series of events that exacerbated those anti-Catholic feelings. According to Edward Norman, the most important issues were the effect of the Oxford Movement, and then in 1850 the “Papal Aggression” – the creation of a Catholic Hierarchy in England (1968, 52).

The Oxford Movement was a group of High Church Anglicans in the 1830s, based mainly in Oxford, which set out to restore the Church of England reacting against the extreme Protestantism and stressing those characteristics that the Church of England and Catholicism had in common. They believed that the Church of England held an intermediate position, represented by the patristic tradition, as against modern Romanism on the one hand and modern Protestantism on the other. The Movement included John Henry Newman, Edward Bouverie Pusey, John Keble and Hurrell Froude. They were also known as “the Tractarians” after a series of works, *Tracts of the Times*, published between 1833 and 1841, which encapsulated their earlier teachings and had an enormous influence upon the Anglican Church thus culminating in several conversions to Roman Catholicism, headed by cardinal Newman’s in 1845. These events paved the way for the Pope’s decision to create a Catholic hierarchy in England, which helped revive virulent anti-Catholicism. Although there had been an impressive number of converts as a result of the Oxford Movement, and distinguished intellectuals

continued to join the Catholic Church in the early twentieth century, Catholics were still much a minority in England.

According to Marian E. Crowe, “Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton, although primarily known today for their non-fiction – especially their vigorous defence of Catholicism – did write some fiction which had bearing on development of the English Catholic novel” (42). In *Survivals and New Arrivals* (1929), Belloc describes the difficult hostile atmosphere in which English Catholic writers have worked thus highlighting the differences between England and countries with a large Catholic population and tradition: “*There* Catholicism re-entered late as an alien phenomenon after the character of society had become “set” in an anti-Catholic mould. There all national literature, traditions, law and especially history were (and are) fundamentally anti-Catholic” (31). However, this anti-Catholic sentiment would bring about a deeper change in British intellectuals. Upon learning in 1928 of T. S. Eliot’s conversion to Christianity, Virginia Woolf wrote to her sister:

I have had a most shameful and distressing interview with poor dear Tom Eliot, who may be called dead to us all from this day forward. He has become an Anglo-Catholic, believes in God and immortality and goes to church. I was really shocked. A corpse would seem to me more credible than he is. I mean, there’s something obscene in a living person sitting by the fire and believing in God. (457-458)

Woolf’s dismissal of belief in traditional Christianity was typical of the British intellectuals’ attitudes during her era. Adam Schwartz points out that

“from Arnold Bennett to Bertrand Russell, from G. B. Shaw to H. G. Wells, the day’s cultural leaders tended to see dogmatic religion as so much shameful hidebound superstition that people must be liberated from for the sake of their own well-being and society’s progress” (1). The 1920s were the first decade in which the overturning of Christianity begun by the previous generation was openly accepted as a fact of modern life. As Adrian Hastings explains, “the principal intellectual orthodoxy in England in the 1920s was no longer Protestantism, nor was it Catholicism or any other form of Christianity. It was a confident agnosticism” (221).

However, the case in France was different, since a re-conception of the relationship between Catholicism and culture took place in the form of a radical departure from the pre-war epoch. Indeed after the Great War, as Stephen Schloesser asserts, Catholicism came to be imagined by certain intellectuals “not only as being thoroughly compatible with ‘modernity’, but even more emphatically, as constituting the truest expression of ‘modernity’. Its eternal truths were capable of infinite adaptation to ever-changing circumstances” (5). It seems that it was in France around 1920 that the terms “Catholic novel”, “Catholic/Christian Literature” began to be normally used by literary scholars, writers and critics. A harder task would be to locate the first Catholic novel simply considering the conscious and deliberate use of Christian/Catholic plot and elements. Toby Garfitt suggests that,

The idea of a specifically Catholic novel arose during the nineteenth century. The often anti-Catholic agenda of the *philosophes* had been

counterbalanced by writers such as Rousseau and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, who sought to reveal God through the wonders of the natural world. But it was Chateaubriand's *Atala* (1801) that inaugurated the new genre of the Catholic novel as a riposte to the de-Christianisation associated with the revolution. (2012, 222)

Marian E. Crowe, however, suggests that "Fyodor Dostoyevsky, although not a Roman Catholic, is sometimes called the father of the Catholic novel because he is the first European novelist for whom the drama of salvation is at the centre of his fiction" (31). According to Crowe, unlike the idea of self-realisation advocated by Enlightenment thinkers, for Dostoyevsky salvation was a matter of "total submission to Jesus Christ and outpouring of the self in service to others" (31).⁶ Nevertheless, she admits that the Catholic novel had its beginnings in France by cultural elites that came to be known as the French Catholic literary revival or *renouveau catholique* from 1870 to 1914, as part of the idealist reaction against materialism and the cult of science.

Theodore P. Fraser, in his influential *The Modern Catholic Novel in Europe* (1994), includes Charles Baudelaire among the defenders of the spiritual dimensions of the human, which the positivists denied out of hand. According to Fraser, "it was rather from the ranks of writers that the reaction to the positivist cultural domination arose" (3). Indeed, Baudelaire opposed the positivists' theories affirming the absolute freedom of the individual and the attempts to break

⁶ It was André Gide who asserted that before Dostoyevsky "the novel with but rare exception concerns itself with relations between man and man, passion and intellect, with family, social and class relations, but never, practically never between the individual and his self and with God" (1961, 15).

free of the constraints of the biological and environmental determinisms that defined each person. Thus, for Baudelaire there are two simultaneous postulations in every man at every hour: one toward God, the other toward Satan. From this idea, he developed his major poetic work, *The Flowers of Evil* of 1857. He emphasises the strong attraction that Evil, under the disguise of beauty, exerts on humans, to the detriment of Good: “What matter, if thou comest from the Heavens or Hell / O Beauty, frightful ghoul, ingenuous and obscure! / So long thine eyes, thy smile, to me the way can tell / Towards the Infinite I love, but never saw” (23).

Fraser points out that “as a result of the fall, Baudelaire describes the human condition in Platonic terms: through the power of Satan, our human vision is obscured”. Baudelaire’s work highlights our fallen condition as if we could only see “through a glass darkly”⁷. His artistic principle “provided nineteenth-century decadent writers with an aesthetic system allowing them to counter the all too real and ugly reality that the positivists presented as the only valid work”. Moreover, as Fraser goes on to say, for Catholic novelists such as Barbey and Huysmans, Baudelaire “opened the door to a spiritual universe of good and evil, to the essential duality of the human person torn between the opposing forces of God and Satan, and to the human experience of the drama of sin and salvation” (4). Fraser may be right to include Baudelaire at the very core of the modern Catholic novel since that Good-Evil duality and the drama of sin and salvation will be developed by twentieth-century Catholic writers such as Graham Greene.

⁷ A Biblical phrase from 1 Corinthians 13:12

Since the Catholic Church had historically been the dominant religious force in France, its turn-of-the-century separation from the state was especially bitter. By the turn of the nineteenth century, Catholicism in France had suffered from the anti-Catholic and anti-clerical policies of the Third Republic. Education had been secularised and the Jesuits and most other teaching orders expelled. By 1904 religion had been completely banished from the public square. Yet even in this dismal situation, there were an impressive number of intellectuals reconverted to Catholicism, many of them Catholic writers such as Jules Barbey d'Aureville, Joris-Karl Huysmans, Paul Claudel, Léon Bloy, Charles Péguy and Jacques Maritain who had been influenced by anti-positivist theories and tried to depict the spiritual dimension of humans in their writings. According to Fraser, Barbey d'Aureville was "the first self-proclaimed Catholic novelist who proudly identified himself as such" (7).

Moreover, he wrote the preface to the 1858 edition of his novel *Une Vieille Maîtresse* entitled "Catholicism in the Novel"⁸ in which he explains how his characters possess considerable psychological depth and reveal hidden and dark passions close to the Gothic/romantic tradition, but adding a decidedly religious dimension that he proudly described as an essentially Catholic vision of reality: "Catholicism has nothing prudish, pedantic or unsettling in its treatment of passions. It leaves that to the false virtues of well-manicured puritanism" (8). Therefore, Barbey was aware of the Protestant writers' efforts to appropriate the novel as a genre as well as of the distinctiveness of the Catholic ethos, tradition

⁸ Other authors quote this preface in the 1865 edition. See Brian G. Rogers's *The Novels and Stories of Barbey d'Aureville*.

and sensibility which had given and will give again a wider and richer scope based on the sensual imagery of Catholic imagination. These insights may be the reason why this preface constitutes a sort of landmark within the Catholic novel development. Brian G. Rogers states that, “the 1865 preface to *Une Vieille Maîtresse* is regarded by some today as the starting point for the whole development of the twentieth-century Catholic novel in France” (31).

Since the nineteenth century the novel had been, at least by definition, a “realist” genre, excluding the metaphysical, supernatural, or mystical. Consequently, the idea of using dialectical expressions like “Christian realism” had seemed self-contradictory. As late as 1920, French writer André Bellessort wrote that, insofar as a book was a novel, it could perfectly be “the empire of passions”; but insofar as it was Catholic, it could only function as something trembling and insecure. He concluded dramatically that, “Le roman catholique semble aussi difficile à réaliser qu’un cercle carré (...) en sa qualité de roman, l’empire des passions lui appartient; en sa qualité de catholique, il ne peut s’y hasarder qu’avec scrupule et tremblement” (131). These words were written as a reaction against various articles appearing in the journal *Les Lettres*, edited by Gaëtan Bernoville, in the years 1919-1920, which criticised the fragmentation of Catholics in the political, social, and intellectual spheres.

In 1921, Bernoville organised the Catholic Writers Week aimed at unifying writers who represented a new Catholic intellectual generation. In 1922, Monsignor Baudrillart launched the French Catholic Almanac. Schloesser calls our attention to this almanac because it dedicates several pages to an essay by

Jean Morienva1 entitled “Catholic Literature Today”. “In using dialectical expressions like ‘Catholic novel’ and ‘Christian realism’, Morienva1 and other Catholic revivalists reinvented the accepted meanings of terms by inverting their values” (Schloesser, 127). Instead of lamenting a vision of religion and culture as two opposing forces irreconcilably set against each other, Catholic revivalists reimagined this relationship thus moving Catholicism from the margins of culture to its very centre.

What made this re-evaluation of concepts possible was, as Schloesser points out, “the revivalists skilful retooling of three traditional Catholic ideas: hylomorphism, sacramentalism, and transubstantiation” (6). *Hylomorphism* is the old Aristotelian/Thomistic teaching that all reality is made up of prime matter and substantial form – the broadest possible way of picturing the reality of this world; that is, material stuff (ύλο- *hylo-*) that is pure potentiality, and the actuality of form (μορφή, *morphē*), an unseen causal force that gives order, unity and identity to matter. *Sacramentalism* holds that created things are a visible “sign” (*sacramentum*) which both bears within itself and simultaneously points beyond itself to an invisible “reality” which is, eventually, the Creator. “This dialectical vision that sees created matter as the *visible sign* carrying an uncreated *invisible reality* underlies the fundamental Catholic practices of sacraments and sacramentals” (Schloesser, 6).

In the doctrine of transubstantiation, which became an identity marker for Catholics after the Counter-Reformation, the visible appearances of bread and wine remain the same even as the substance changes into the substance of Christ’s

own body and blood. Accordingly, hylomorphism, sacramentalism, and transubstantiation exemplify a vision of the world as a dialectical composite of two interpenetrating planes of reality: seen and unseen, created and uncreated, natural and supernatural. They offer an alternative way of imagining relationships. In sum, revivalists found a way to re-imagine the relationship between religion and culture creating a new context in which Catholic fictions seemed compatible with secular ones in the age of post-war realisms and avant-garde experimental narratives.

The ideas of all these thinkers contributed to the creative ferment in which the Catholic novel, as is known today, matured. The greatest novelists of the French Catholic Renaissance were François Mauriac and Georges Bernanos, most of whose novels appeared in the 1920s and 1930s, and who demonstrated that “the spiritual world could have a dynamic presence even in that most secular of literary forms, the novel, and (...) introduced into it a new kind of interiority completely different from the stream of consciousness technique used by Joyce, Woolf and others” (Crowe, 38). Following Péguy, both Mauriac and Bernanos show how the sinner is at the very heart of Christianity, a concept which would be extended and dramatised in British Catholic novels throughout the twentieth century.

Nevertheless, the British converts’ situation was very different. They were mostly converts not from atheism or agnosticism, but from another form of Christianity, Anglicanism. Although they shared some similarities with their French co-religionists as both were repelled by social dislocations and the consequences of industrialism, the major concern for British Catholic writers was

not with what differentiated Christianity from the secular society of the time, but with what differentiated Catholicism from other forms of the Christian religion.

In short, the earlier English Catholic intellectuals saw themselves primarily in opposition to Protestantism. At that time, according to Griffiths, “the miraculous and the mystical had a lesser part to play. In their place came a concentration on specifically Catholic views of the sacraments and of the priestly role” (10). Consequently, after Newman and a series of lesser Catholic novelists, the works by Catholic writers suffered from being too sentimental and showed an overt didacticism. Apart from some writings by Newman, the first outward signs of anything of literary value came in the realm of poetry.⁹

In Britain, the “Catholic novel” had a very slow start compared to its French counterpart. According to Bernard Bergonzi, the major difference was the fact that “English Catholic writers were relatively restrained and tentative in showing the manifestations of the supernatural in the natural” (1986, 174). English Catholic novels tended to depict the problems that Catholics had to face in the modern world and the conflicts between their own human desires and the Church’s norms, rather than the workings of the supernatural in the material world. One of the most popular literary genres in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was that of the detective story. G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936) published his Father Brown stories between 1911 and 1935, which portrayed a

⁹ The only major Catholic poet at that time, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89), was unknown and unpublished in his own lifetime. Three remarkable religious poets came after him: Lionel Johnson (1867-1902), Francis Thompson (1859-1907) and Alice Meynell (1847-1922). See Griffiths (52-58).

detective figure whose superior insights were the result of his unusual way of looking at the world – but in this case the figure was a Catholic priest.

The series had an enormous success as the reader continually found religious messages being subtly introduced. At the time Chesterton wrote the earliest collections, he was not yet a Catholic, but most critics agree that he had been Catholic even before his conversion in 1922 and this is reflected in his works. In the detective story, Chesterton achieved the ideal that so many Catholic authors aimed at, as Griffiths puts it, “the entertaining incorporation of Catholic messages into a secular form, in a way that appealed to a wide readership, both secular and Catholic” (99).

At a time when the French Catholic novel was preoccupied with the concepts of the miraculous and vicarious suffering, the British Catholic novel started dealing with moral dilemmas which reflected the problems of Catholics in the modern world and many British Catholic authors admired the liturgy “not only as an archetypal reflection of the truths of faith, but also as an expression of beauty and magnificence” (114). At the same time, they could also stress the value of those aspects of Catholic art that were not aesthetically understood by many British intellectuals and stood for the strangeness and difference of their faith.

Indeed Christians have often been suspicious of the seductive power of art in all its forms. Even before the Puritans of the seventeenth century, the Iconoclasts of the eighth and ninth centuries railed against the use of images, which not only could distract the Christians, but could even contaminate the

spiritual nature of one's relationship with God. Marian E. Crowe reminds us that as literacy spread and more people had access to art made from words, the debate focused on literature. The fact that a book, the Bible, is the foundation of the Christian faith, "has paradoxically given support both to the supporters and the adversaries of literature".

As she goes on to say, "Those who see the Bible as all-sufficient see no need for profane literature, which can in no way even compare to the eminence of Scripture. Others see Scripture as endorsing humans' desire to write and read stories and poetry" (Crowe, 2007, 2). This is obvious as many Christians consider the fact that God has chosen literary forms as the means to reveal His truth as encouragement for people to use the same means.

The other major fear about Christian art, according to Crowe, is that it will be didactic. As she puts it, "even people who don't mind being preached to in church, object to it strongly when they sit down to read a novel. [...] People are sometimes edified, inspired, or morally challenged by what they read, but if a writer's intent to edify or preach is too obvious, the reader is likely to rebel" (Crowe, 2). Nonetheless, every piece of writing is to some extent didactic or, at least, tries to communicate a kind of truth as its author may see it. Any didactic purpose must be subtle, and I agree with Crowe that, above all, "it must not overpower the primary purpose of giving artistic delight" (Crowe, 3).

There are writers who want to combine religion and literature and readers who like the combination. Indeed, there is a long tradition of Christian writers who mixed their art and their faith and produced classical masterpieces such as

Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and the poems of Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, John Donne, George Herbert, and many others including Gerard Manley Hopkins. J. C. Whitehouse put it well when he wrote that this kind of literature was positive because theological and philosophical ideas that "may seem restrictive and straitened assume a new richness when filtered through an individual literary sensibility" (Whitehouse, 1999, 206).

Literature may give human situation a deeper dimension. Even if a literary work has no obvious Christian themes, it can help give concreteness to the belief that we live in a fallen world, that we need hope in salvation. According to Whitehouse, for many people today, even within the Catholic Church, man is now defined predominantly by a nexus of social relationships. He has become "horizontal man", obsessed with himself and distant from God. In reply to this prevailing ideology, Whitehouse provides detailed interpretations of the human being in the works of Catholic authors thus suggesting an antidote to the dissent that is now so prevalent through a richer view of man and his potential as a "vertical man", that is, the concept of man as a creature in an individual relationship with his creator.¹⁰

David Lodge uses the term defamiliarisation to describe fiction's ability to "overcome the deadening effects of habit by representing familiar things in unfamiliar ways" (Lodge, 1992, 53). Christian fiction, and above all Catholic fiction, brings to life aspects rendered insipid and prosaic due to long familiarity

¹⁰ See Whitehouse, 1999.

and repetition in liturgy, sacraments, and a transcendental sensibility that can disclose the action of God's grace in the world as powerfully as no theological treatise ever did. Nonetheless, the seventeenth century puritans in their fear of literature were right about one thing, as Marian Crowe explains, that "literature can and does affect us – and not always for the better [and] can induce cynicism and licentiousness, as well as benevolence and gratitude" (Crowe, 5). For religious people, fiction may be a means of increasing self-knowledge and spiritual life. For T. S. Eliot, fiction can even affect behaviour:

The common ground between religion and fiction is behaviour. Our religion imposes our ethics, our judgement and criticism of ourselves, and our behaviour toward our fellow men. [...] When we read of human beings behaving in certain ways, with the approval of the author, who gives his benediction to this behaviour by his attitude toward the result of the behaviour arranged by himself, we can be influenced toward behaving in the same way. (Eliot, 1950, 347)

Although readers know that good novels can help us to be better people, and even to enhance our faith, it would be a literary suicide to have that as its main purpose. Many people consider themselves religious, however, they may be attracted to church for a sense of tradition, community, and contribution to broad ethical principles. Much of the Christian ethical code is universal and is shared by Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism: all teach that we should help the less fortunate, be honest, and resist becoming too attached to material things. However, many Catholics find it difficult to have belief in central Catholic

dogmas like the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, Atonement or Transubstantiation. Even humanity's need for salvation is becoming highly problematic in our secular society. As Flannery O'Connor says, "redemption is meaningless unless there is cause for it in the actual life we live, and for the last few centuries there has been operating in our culture the secular belief that there is no such cause" (O'Connor, 33).

During the twentieth century, disagreements and misunderstandings between religious hierarchies and scholars, and the subsequent challenges to the faith from evolutionary biology, cosmology, modern Biblical criticism, and the role of the Church in that century's politics have accelerated the attack on traditional Christianity, above all on Catholicism. According to O'Connor, we live in a difficult age to reconcile belief with literature:

We live in an unbelieving age but one which is markedly and lopsidedly spiritual. There is one type of modern man who recognizes spirit in himself but who fails to recognize a being outside himself whom he can adore as Creator and Lord; consequently he has become his own ultimate concern. [...] There is another type of modern man who recognizes a divine being not himself, but who does not believe that this being can be known anagogically or defined dogmatically or received sacramentally. Spirit and matter are separated for him. Man wanders about, caught in a maze of guilt he can't identify, trying to reach a God he can't approach, a God powerless to approach him. And there is another type of modern man who can neither believe nor contain himself in unbelief and who searches desperately,

feeling about in all experience for the lost God. At its best our age is an age of searchers and discoverers, and at its worst, an age that has domesticated despair and learned to live with it happily. (O'Connor, 159)

This situation creates a discrepancy between the worldview of the writer with serious Christian beliefs and that of a large number of readers. O'Connor laments that "the Catholic writer often finds himself writing in and for a world that is unprepared and unwilling to see the meaning of life as he sees it" (O'Connor, 185). Both secular readers and church-going Christians may be offended by these words, but they will probably be also offended if a novel seems too intent on moralising or evangelising. Accordingly, the Catholic writer may choose to incorporate religious themes into a novel by avoiding explicitly religious content.

Theologian Wesley Kort explores the reasons why narratives, even when not religious, often seem to convey some sort of religious meaning.¹¹ He states that narrative naturally comports with religious experience because the elements of narrative – setting, character, plot and tone – correspond to aspects of religious faith, respectively, "otherness" or transcendence, "paradigm" or authoritative figure that tends to form a "Christ figure", a "process" which reflects humans' need to impose order and meaning, and "belief" projected in the author's worldview. Crowe finds Kort's analysis intriguing because it explains "why some readers find compelling religious themes in narratives that have no obvious or

¹¹See Wesley Kort's *Narrative Elements and Religious Meanings*, 1975.

explicit religious content – a fact that irritates some secular critics, who accuse religious readers of reading into the book what they want to find” (Crowe, 8).

Consequently, Charles Moeller claimed that contemporary readers are suspicious of this kind of “literature of salvation”: “[the readers’] impression is that believers have ready-made answers, as if one could press a button on an automatic machine for the answer to the problem of death or the problem of love. They think that faith suppresses the flavour of life, its risks and its authenticity” (Moeller, 1970, 44). Kort’s theory might enable the novelist to avoid writing works which could appear as “suspicious” to contemporary readers. As Crowe goes on to say, “nevertheless, using such approaches may enable a novelist to write about Christianity without *seeming* to write about it by using suggestion, imagery, and symbolism, but avoiding explicitly Christian content” (Crowe, 8).

François Mauriac was probably one of the first Catholic writers who was aware of these problems. Consequently, he managed to convey religious truth through the depiction of the real, modern world, but also, in purely literary terms, he was a novelist who “reacted against the “dogmatically *pure* novel” of the tradition founded by Flaubert” (Griffiths, 160). That is, he not only introduced Catholic themes in a subtle way in his work, but also gave his plots and characters an “additional” dimension that those in the traditional realist novel usually lacked.

I.2 ENGLISH CATHOLICISM

In 1932, Graham Greene read Mauriac's *Le Noeud de Vipères*, which had a profound and lasting effect upon him. Greene had also revisited Mauriac's predecessors and showed a particular interest in Léon Bloy and Charles Péguy, which led him to take up themes from the French Catholic novel – that had been most absent from the English Catholic literature – such as vicarious suffering and the role of the sinner in God's plan for the world. Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh, both of whom started publishing fiction in the late 1920s, were the most important English Catholic novelists of what is referred to as the golden age of the Catholic novel.

Waugh's first novels, written before his conversion, depict a satire of the twenties that he would continue cultivating after his conversion in 1930. His writing took a definitive turn when he published *Brideshead Revisited* in 1945, when he announced in *Life* magazine, "So in my future books there will be two things to make them unpopular: a preoccupation with style and the attempt to represent man more fully, which, to me, means only one thing, man in relation to God" (302).¹² Waugh was direct and honest about writing as a Catholic and believed it would improve his art. In the end of *Brideshead*, the dying father, who

¹² The reference here is from Donat Gallagher's edited book on Evelyn Waugh *The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh*, but Waugh's original article "Fan-Fare" was published in April 8, 1946 issue of *Life*.

had been estranged from his wife and living with a mistress, is apparently reconciled with the faith when he makes the sign of the cross in his deathbed. This apparent conversion is not convincing to some readers and many do not understand why Julia submits to Church law and refuses to marry Charles, thus sacrificing human love. On the other hand, some Catholics are put off by the way that Catholics in the novel are much less appealing than the more dissolute members of the family. Waugh is probably the best example of the problematic relationship of the Catholic novelist with his audience. Catholic readers and non-Catholic readers have very different responses to him.

Whereas Waugh looked to the Church as a principle of order in the chaotic decadence of modern life, Greene was more focused on the personal drama of good and evil, sin and grace. According to Crowe, “perhaps for this reason, he did not arouse as much ire among critics as did Waugh. Like Mauriac, whom he very much admired, Greene is particularly hard on self-righteously pious Catholics who keep the letter of the law but have little charity” (Crowe, 47). However, Greene was also aware of those criticisms and of the challenges that Catholic writers should face.

Crowe suggests that because of the fact that Roman Catholicism is the largest Christian denomination, the institutional church looms so large that, “its tightly knit hierarchical structure, its emphasis on authority, and its systematic oversight of orthodoxy all combine to present a formidable aspect to other Christians (even to some Catholics), and a downright sinister one to nonbelievers”

(16). It should therefore come as no surprise that even other famous writers during that period thought the idea of a Catholic novelist a contradiction in terms.

As late as 1940, George Orwell in his essay “Inside the Whale” commented on the relationship between Catholicism, Protestantism and the novel following the traditional idea, built by Anglo-American critics over the years, which privileged the Protestant origin and character of the modern novel:

The atmosphere of orthodoxy is always damaging to prose; and above all it is completely ruinous for the novel, the most anarchical of all forms of literature. How many Roman Catholics have been good novelists? Even the handful one could name have been bad Catholics. The novel is practically a Protestant form of art; it is a product of the free mind, of the autonomous individual (241).

Indeed, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries many Catholic intellectuals labelled as “Catholic writers” found the term uncomfortable. Both François Mauriac and Jean Sullivan thought of themselves as Catholics who were also writers, and preferred not to combine the two words. However, Orwell’s remark is of great interest since he brings into the equation the Protestant perspective of the discussion. As will be explained in this chapter, many Anglo-American critics promoted the idea that the origin of the modern novel was the result of the Protestant historical and social development. This Protestant perspective has rooted so strongly in British literary tradition that Catholic writers find it difficult to express the dilemma of exposing themselves as such. On several occasions,

Graham Greene also expressed his dissatisfaction with the term. In his autobiography *Ways of Escape*, he complains:

I was discovered to be – detestable term! – a Catholic writer. Catholics began to treat some of my faults too kindly, as though I were a member of a clan and could not be disowned, while some non-Catholic critics seemed to consider that my faith gave me an unfair advantage in some way over my contemporaries. I had become a Catholic in 1926, and all my books, except for the one lamentable volume of verse at Oxford, had been written as a Catholic, but no one had noticed the faith to which I belonged before the publication of *Brighton Rock*. [...] Many times since *Brighton Rock* I have been forced to declare myself not a Catholic writer but a writer who happens to be a Catholic (WE, 74).¹³

Greene lamented that critics would label him as a Catholic writer only after writing a novel that had specifically Catholic concerns together with the public success that that work enjoyed. However, it seems as if no one was able to discern the shape of his faith or any common element in the novels written before *Brighton Rock* (1938), which include up to seven novels. He admitted, nevertheless, that by 1937 he was prepared to use Catholic characters although some had already appeared in his three first novels. What really troubled Greene was the impact of his religious commitment on his image as an author and the

¹³ See also “Graham Greene takes the Orient Express”, Interview with Christopher Burstall, *The Listener* (21 November 1968): “I prefer to be called a writer who happens to be a Catholic”. Some years later, he insisted again in an interview with Marie-François Allain, *Conversations with Graham Greene* (London: Bodley Head, 1983): “I don’t see why people insist on labelling me as a Catholic writer. I’m simply a Catholic who happens to write” (159).

way it could affect the literary worth of his novels. He needed to keep distance in order to avoid an easy categorization that sprang up with the success of *Brighton Rock* from which Greene started his most productive period, writing a group of novels that explored Catholic themes exhaustively.

Critics obviously began calling Greene a “Catholic writer”, which could work to limit and restrict his talent as a novelist and as an artist raised in an environment whose Protestant tradition forced readers to approach a novel written by a Catholic with a negative bias based on their feelings about the Catholic Church. He felt what David Lodge, a Catholic novelist himself, expresses this way:

In seeking to convey to his non-Catholic audience a technical and emotional understanding of Catholic experience, the Catholic novelist risks arousing in this audience whatever extraliterary objections and suspicions it entertains about the Catholic Church as an active, proselytising institution; while on his own part he has to grapple with the problem of retaining his artistic integrity while belonging to a Church which has never accepted the individual’s right to pursue intellectual and artistic truth in absolute freedom. (1971, 88-89)

Consequently, Greene affirmed that, “the ideas of my Catholic characters, even their Catholic ideas, were not necessarily mine” (*WE*, 74-75). He even warned his critics and readers about the inadequacy of classifying an artistic work through assumptions about the author’s religion either based on the professed faith or lack of such. In a letter to Elizabeth Bowen in 1948, Greene reflected the

unease with the whole idea of the writer's social function being paramount thus admitting that the "greatest pressure on the writer comes from the society within society (...). If I may be personal, I belong to a group, the Catholic Church, which would present me with grave problems as a writer if I were not saved by my disloyalty" (YE, 2008, 151).

He argued for the distinction between his ideas and those of his characters citing John Henry Newman's thoughts in *The Idea of a University*: "If literature is to be made a study of human nature, you cannot have a Christian literature. It is a contradiction in terms to attempt the sinless Literature of sinful man". Indeed, Cardinal Newman's theology and thoughts had such an influence on Greene that he suggested that, "Catholic novelists (I would rather say novelists who are Catholics) should take Newman as their patron" (152).¹⁴ As Greene went on to say in his autobiography, Cardinal Newman "wrote the last word on Catholic literature" (WE, 74).

Thus, John Henry Newman advocated that a Catholic university ought to promote the creation of Catholic literature written not just by writers who happen to be Catholics, but also by those who would treat their subjects with a Catholic sensibility. Indeed, Greene referred to the following consideration by Cardinal

¹⁴ Richard Greene, the editor of this collection of letters by Greene, points out that these words belong to a series of letters that Greene exchanged in 1948 with Elizabeth Bowen and V. S. Prichett as part of Greene's contribution to a formal discussion on the role of the writer. The three read their letters on the BBC programme on 7th October, 1948. A short version of this exchange appeared in the *Partisan Review* (Nov. 1948) and a longer form in the pamphlet *Why Do I Write?* (London: Perceval Marshall, 1948). Richard Greene, also notes that Greene re-used parts of his letters when writing his lecture "The Virtue of Disloyalty" (1969), published in *Reflections* (266-70).

Newman as the definitive argument about the relationship between Catholicism and Literature:

“Religious Literature” indeed would mean much more than “the Literature of religious men;” it means over and above this, that the subject-matter of Literature is religious; but by “Catholic Literature” is not to be understood a literature which treats exclusively or primarily of Catholic matters, of Catholic doctrine, controversy, history, persons, or politics; but it includes all subjects of literature whatever, treated as a Catholic would treat them, and as he only can treat them. (267)

A preliminary conclusion would be that there are writers who are also Catholics and they may or may not write works that have specifically Catholic concerns. These works would be what most critics call “Catholic Literature”, but the very use of the word *Catholic* or any other adjective before the term Literature might precisely neglect the *literary* dimension thus leaving only a “committed” story at its best, if not a “preachy” message. Obviously, what Greene and others feared was the idea that their novels would be considered as pious or even *homiletic* writing. These terms, nevertheless, should not be taken negatively when referring to religious literature in its wider spiritual context.

The problem here is that the terms “Catholic Literature” and “Catholic Novel/Fiction” have been used interchangeably, not only confusing readers, but also alarming writers. Richard Griffiths argues against this distinction between “Catholic literature” and “literature written by Catholics”:

For a great many Catholics (as for great many Anglicans, Jews, deists, positivists) the writing of a literary work has not automatically involved a deep concern with the matters of faith. Compendia of Catholic literature, compiled by pious and well-meaning critics, have too often jumbled together writers whose sole point of contact is the fact that they are Catholics. [Catholic literature] has suffered much not only from becoming intermingled with non-religious literature written by Catholics, and with literature written against a backcloth of religious beliefs, but with no specifically religious preoccupations in subject or treatment; it has also been stuffed willy-nilly into the same pigeon-hole as pious literature of a very different type. (Griffiths, 5)

Cardinal Newman seemed to settle the issue when he stated that “Catholic Literature is not synonymous with Theology, nor does it supersede or interfere with the work of catechists, divines, preachers, or schoolmen” (268). Paradoxically, the best way to separate pious Catholic literature from Catholic fiction seems to be the idea of a “Catholic Novel” considered as more than a novel that uses religious material, but as one that provides a distinctive Catholic way of looking at the world incorporating religious themes together with a substantial literary merit, but without becoming homiletic.

Precisely, in order to avoid the categorisation of the genre as didactic, futile or, as we have read, an oxymoron, I will examine the history of criticism on the novel as a modern genre as well as the crucial significance of Catholicism and

the Catholic imagination¹⁵ in the origin of the genre. This “imagination” is not an exclusive use of Catholics, but it probably stems from a longer contact with religious learning, practice or habit. According to Patrick Query, the term *Catholic novelist*, “if it is to have more than biographical significance, should describe an aesthetic condition as much as a religious one” (37). This artistic impulse may include Catholic and non-Catholic artists alike since, as Query adds, “the question of what makes a Catholic writer ‘Catholic’ can be addressed as effectively on the level of form as on the level of content, where the discussion has long been almost exclusively focused” (Query, 37).

Catholic novelists, therefore, have at their disposal Catholicism’s rich symbol system and poetic liturgy. However, for many secular readers or for those with a Protestant background, this symbolic and sacramental system may lead the writer to impose an artificial pattern on what should be allowed to be chaotic. It is understandable, consequently, that Catholic novelists such as Bernanos, Mauriac and Greene were so cautious about being labelled as “Catholic novelists”. Nevertheless, David Lodge points out that even in the fiction of Graham Greene, who did not want to be classified as a Catholic novelist, Catholicism provides more than the author himself would consciously allow:

A system of concepts, a source of situations, and a reservoir of symbols with which he can order and dramatise certain intuitions about the nature of human experience – intuitions which were gained prior to and independently of his formal adoption of the Catholic faith. Regarded in this

¹⁵ I mean by “Catholic Imagination” the distinctive way of looking at the world through an internalisation of the aesthetics of Catholic sacraments and ethos.

light, Greene's Catholicism may be seen not as a crippling burden on his artistic freedom, but as a positive artistic asset. (Lodge, 1971, 89)

One factor that distinguishes many Catholic novels is that system of symbols that build the Catholic imagination since Catholicism does, in fact, provide authors with a pattern easily recognisable by their ideal readers. Ian Ker concludes his relevant book on the Catholic Revival in English literature suggesting: "Newman could hardly have been more wrong than when he sadly pronounced on the self-evident inability of Catholics to 'form an English literature'. For this they have done – and in the full sense in which he understood the idea of a 'Catholic literature'" (Ker, 205).

Graham Greene, who advocated for Newman as the "patron" of Catholic novelists, also seems to contradict his own model as well as those who considered the idea of a Catholic novel an oxymoron, something ruinous for the novel as a genre, or the antithesis of what had been considered as a Protestant form of art. In his famous essay on François Mauriac, he reflects his ideas on the English novel:

After the death of Henry James a disaster overtook the English novel. (...) For with the death of James the religious sense was lost to the English novel, and with the religious sense went the sense of the importance of the human act. It was as if the world of fiction had lost a dimension: the characters of such distinguished writers as Mrs Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster wandered like cardboard symbols through a world that was paper-thin. (*CE*, 91)

Consequently, Bosco argues that, “any discussion of Graham Greene forces the critic to come to terms with the role that the religious imagination plays in his literary creation” (5). Moreover, Greene complained about that loss of the “religious sense” in the English novel in numerous articles and interviews along his career, above all from the 1930s until the 1950s. For him, “that *sense* may have been intimately tied to Catholicism, a faith tradition that could still evoke a metaphysical understanding of good and evil in the world and within an individual” (5). Since the subversive forms of the French Catholic literary revival in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the “Catholic novel” has been at the centre of any discussion of the religious dimension in literature. Thus, critics have written many pages trying to define and discern the validity of such a label as the “Catholic Novel” whilst the discussion, in my opinion, should have been focused on how Catholic the novel really is.

According to Graham Greene, there is some sort of underlying religious sense inherent to the novel – and, by extension, to any form of art – or at least, some religious dimension that enriches the narrative of any artistic creation. Catholicism has traditionally highlighted this enrichment in art thus creating a pattern throughout the centuries which Greene, in a notable conversation with Marie-Françoise Allain, described as the imaginative role that Catholicism played in his works by alluding to his literary hero Henry James: “There does exist a pattern in my carpet constituted by Catholicism, but one has to stand back in order to make it out” (1983, 159).

There has been indeed an underlying pattern developed through the centuries which encompasses the general rubric of the Catholic use of image and ritual. A symbolic understanding of reality that non-Catholics do not want to see and Catholics do not want to show. There is a scene that exemplifies this thought probably better than any other. In Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, Sebastian Flyte, the eccentric drunkard, after describing the degrees of religious devotion in his English Catholic family, finally confesses to Charles Ryder:

"I wished I liked Catholics more."

"They seem just like other people."

"My dear Charles, that's exactly what they're not – particularly in this country, where they're so few. It's not just that they're a clique (...), but they've got an entirely different outlook on life; everything they think important is different from other people. They try to hide it as much as they can, but it comes out all the time." (99)

My first intention in this chapter, therefore, will be to shed some light on the relationship between Catholicism and the modern novel in order to understand that Catholic *difference* which "comes out all the time" even when it occurs unintentionally. I have sketched the origins and development of the modern Catholic novel and why these novels deserve a niche in literary studies. Nevertheless, considering that any attempt to define the Catholic novel may be futile to many, I will analyse the origins of the modern novel to prove how Catholic the novel as a genre really is or, at least, to study the influence and importance of the Catholic background in which the modern novel originated.

This move back to the origins of the modern novel will allow us to achieve the necessary distance to discern that “pattern constituted by Catholicism” in artistic expression. On the one hand, the novel as a genre has traditionally resisted a coherent and unified definition; on the other, even its own origin is still a matter of much academic debate.

I.3 THE ORIGIN OF THE MODERN NOVEL

In her *True Story of the Novel* (1996), Margaret Anne Doody states that “the Novel as a form of literature in the West has a continuous history of about two thousand years” (1). Conversely, Lennard J. Davis suggests that “we have turned to the Greeks out of our need to establish beginnings, to create order and continuity”. Thus, in his opinion, looking back at the Greeks, we find “no true origin but a mythical template [...] through which we trace our desire for an origin” (1983: 1). He calls this approach to the origin of the novel “the evolutionary model”. According to him, this model is not valid since, in its attempt to find precursors, through successive selections of different subgenres, “those precursors will seem to lead inevitably from primitive narrative structure to the fully realised form of the novel” (4-5).

A second model, called “osmotic” in Davis’s terms, includes that represented by Ian Watt’s influential work *The Rise of the Novel*. The work implies that a profound change in society should effect an analogous change in narrative. Watt explores the decline of classical Platonic philosophies that resulted in poetic forms and genres with flat plots and characters and their replacement by rationalist philosophies in the early eighteenth century. The thought of Locke, Descartes and Spinoza, among others, and the scientific, social and economic developments of the period had a dramatic impact on the novel. According to

Watt, a more realistic, pragmatic and empirical understanding of life and human behaviour began to emerge thus originating a conscious experience of human individuality as reflected in the novels of Defoe, Richardson and Fielding. He wrote that the novel's form must seek "truth to individual experience" (1957, 13). In Davis's opinion, the flaw in Watt's theory is that he presents "a picture in which a given structural change in society at a particular historical moment will create a related change in literary structures" (6).

A third model is best illustrated by Phillip Stevick in his *The Theory of the Novel* when he writes that the origins of the novel "lie in a dozen different narrative forms: essay, romance, history, the 'character' biography, comic and sentimental drama, and so on" (1967, 2). The premise here is that the novel comes out of almost everything that preceded it. Again, Davis does not see this "convergence" model completely valid since its problem is "the absence of any intentionality at all". As he goes on to say, "there is no reason for these disparate types of writing to suddenly clump together" (7).

The model that Davis favours, nonetheless, relies partially on the work of Michel Foucault in which the novel is "seen as *discourse* – that is in Foucault's usage, the ensemble of written texts that constitute the novel (and in so doing define, limit and describe it)" (1994, 7). Such an approach looks not "for cause and effect, for linear influence, but rather for ruptures and transformations". At the same time, it entails "a rather special kind of historical materialism [through which] the novel is seen as a discourse for reinforcing particular ideologies, and its coming into being must be seen as tied to particular power relations" (9). There

is an ambivalent reaction Central to Davis's view of the novel since he sees the origin of the novel as "a form of defence against censorship, power and authority" and as "the history of the division of fact and fiction, news and novel, the movement from the untroubled fictionality of Cervantes to the inherent ambivalence of Defoe, Richardson, Fielding and later writers" (222-223). Davis's approach, however, seems to expose several flaws he denounces in other authors.

Michael McKeon's influential *The Origins of the English Novel: 1600-1740* sees the novel as arising from a negation of aristocratic values characterised as "romance idealism" by scientific rationality only to be critiqued by "naive historicism". The result of this negation is the new discourse of the novel presented as "extreme scepticism". The novel might have emerged, McKeon contends, as a cultural instrument designed to engage the epistemological and cultural crises of the age. Following a large body of Marxist literary history, beginning with Marx and Engels, through Lukács and Bakhtin, to Watt and Jameson, and the special affinity that they have demonstrated for the novel, McKeon's study offers a detailed analysis of the social and political history where "the novel anticipates at a cultural level those achievements toward which Marxism aspires at the level of both knowledge and politics" (Warner, 62).

That Marxist historical view might be considered reductionist since its study of the novel's development is made with the benefit of hindsight, from a present point of view back to a point in the past convenient for their interests. Many instances of the use of foreshadowing in historical and literary discourses are created retrospectively, and involve a measure of *backshadowing*, or abusive

hindsight.¹⁶ In a similar move, Anglo-American criticism has traditionally located the rise of the novel in eighteenth century England and the troika of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding. According to Doody, “British and American critics of Protestant descent or under the influence of Protestant history have often “explained” the development of the novel in connection with the rise of Protestantism and of the new capitalist bourgeoisie” (1). It may be observed here how those critics have been using a discourse carefully built retrospectively along the years to favour a Protestant imprint at the very heart of the novel’s origin and form.

This abusive use of hindsight or *backshadowing* might easily confuse the researcher and has probably misled generations of scholars all over the world. Doody uses the term *parochial* when she objects to the Anglo-American critics’ penchant for looking at English Puritans and merchants for the origins of the novel:

[It] indicates a very parochial view of the genre and history. This parochialism betrays itself in the incessant assertion that the Novel should always be separated from the Romance; there is a symptomatic determination to play down the inconvenient fact that other European literary languages make no such distinction. A certain chauvinism leads English-speaking critics to treat the Novel as if it were somehow

¹⁶ Michel André Bernstein in *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History*, Berkeley: California UP, 1994, gives the notion of foreshadowing an analytical twist introducing the term *backshadowing* which is “a kind of retroactive foreshadowing in which the shared knowledge of the outcome of a series of events (...) is used to judge the participants in those events *as though they too should have known what was to come*” (16).

essentially English, and as if the English were pioneers of novel writing – ignoring, for instance, the very visible Spanish novels of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. A consideration of the phenomena alone would lead to an admission that Catholicism and a pre-modern economic setting could also give rise to the Novel. (1-2)

According to Doody, what those critics were saying about the novel, as somewhat replacing or even displacing the romance, was “related to what they thought about history and sociology and their analyses will in turn affect history-writing and the making of history” (4). This is an example of how “Whig history” influenced and shaped the English critical perspective early in the eighteenth century.¹⁷ From then on, a biased view for the rise of the novel emerged thus obliterating more than a hundred years of productive prose fiction in Catholic Europe.

European continental critics in general are more interested in the prose fiction of the Renaissance and, as Doody goes on to say, echoing the thought of Michael Bakhtin, “it was essentially the Renaissance that invented the novel, whereas English critics do not allow it to be ‘invented’ until the eighteenth century, when the English came on strong” (2). Doody’s thesis introduces two important ideas to consider: firstly, the debate of novel versus romance as well as

¹⁷ The British historian Herbert Butterfield (1900-1979) coined the term “Whig history” in his small but influential book *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931). Whig history is the approach to historiography which presents the past as an inevitable progression towards ever greater liberty and enlightenment, culminating in modern forms of liberal democracy and constitutional monarchy. In general, Whig historians stress the rise of constitutional government, personal freedoms, and scientific progress. The term is often applied generally to histories that present the past as the inexorable march of progress toward enlightenment. The term has been applied widely in historical disciplines outside of British history to criticize any teleological or goal-directed, hero-based, and transhistorical narrative.

the prose works written in Spain during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; secondly, the influence of Catholicism on the rise of the novel. Moreover, both ideas may be closely related.

English novelist Clara Reeve (1729-1807) wrote *The Progress of Romance* in 1785, a work that takes the form of a series of evening conversations among three characters, Euphrasia as the author's alter-ego, Hortensius as antagonist, and Sophronia as an arbiter, and which showed her critical interests in its spirited attempt to distinguish between "ancient romance" and "modern novel":

Euphrasia: The word Novel in all languages signifies something new. It was first used to distinguish these works from Romance, though they have lately been confounded together and are frequently mistaken for each other. [...] The Romance is a heroic fable, which treats of fabulous persons and things. The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written. The Romance in lofty and elevated language describes what never happened nor is likely to happen. The Novel gives a familiar relation to such things, as pass every day before our eyes, such as may happen to our friend, or to ourselves. (2001: 14)

Reeve argues against many of the prevailing opinions of the day, most of which just happened to be Hortensius's. The premise of this work is that Hortensius has taken exception to, or at least been startled by, some remarks from Euphrasia in which she seemed to denigrate epic poetry. Euphrasia explains that, rather, she was merely expressing her opinion that romances are by no means necessarily inferior to "the works of the great Ancients", as is usually asserted, but

may be regarded as essentially the same works in a different format. Hortensius is affronted by this comparison thus unconsciously anticipating the negative critical response of a work which greatly bothered so many critics and writers of the time. Besides, they would never forgive Reeve for tracing the origins of the novel out in Italy, France and Spain.

That controversy exposed the narrow scope of those English critics when they considered the possible origins of the novel out of the British Isles. As Margaret Anne Doody explains, the realism that characterised the works written in eighteenth-century England was declared the hallmark of a new wonderful genre: the novel. The thousands of prose fictions that had come before were dismissed as mere *romances* or that bland entity, “extended prose works” (1).

In his *Aspects of the Novel*, E.M. Forster cites the famous definition of the novel by the French scholar M. Abel Chevalley: it is “a fiction in prose of a certain extent” and Forster adds that, “the extent should not be less than 50,000 words” (1927, 25). This simple definition raises the question of the origin of prose fiction or the period when verse gave way to prose in works of a considerable extent. Some evolutionary scholars tend to label as “novels” works written in verse in the sixteenth century thus regarding the transition from verse to prose as a step in the development of the novel throughout history.

Joaquín Álvarez Barrientos puts it this way: “Antes de adquirir su definitiva expresión en prosa, se escribieron novelas en verso durante mucho tiempo; y durante los siglos XVI, XVII, incluso XVIII, se escribieron en verso y prosa” (1983, 6). He refers here to works such as Jacopo Sannazaro’s *Arcadia*,

published in 1504, considered the first *pastoral* work in Renaissance Europe to gain international success. Scholars who oppose to the “evolutionary” model, however, usually consider *Arcadia* as a work that inaugurated a new genre, the *pastoral romance*, which mixed pastoral poems with a fictional narrative in prose. Paul van Tieghem states that those prototypes in prose began to be written at the end of the Middle Ages.¹⁸ Barrientos adds that those first pastoral works originating in Italy had a decisive effect on the Spanish *pastoral novel*, to use Barrientos’s term for *pastoral romance*.¹⁹

Those “hybrid” forms seemed to emerge as a search for a more appropriate way of expressing novelistic fictions. According to Carlos García Gual, either verse or prose could serve as forms of expression just as the first medieval “novels” (from the twelfth century) used verse forms as their narrative instrument. As he goes on to say, “el octosílabo pareado, verso para la recitación, pero no para el canto, ha precedido aquí al uso de la prosa. El cambio de verso a prosa realizado hacia el 1200 es significativo de un proceso espiritual” (1988, 89-90).

During the early thirteenth century, romances were increasingly written in prose and extensively amplified through cycles of continuation. Those were collated in the vast manuscripts comprising what is now known as the Vulgate Cycle, where the romance of *La Mort le Roi Artur*, also known as the *Prose Lancelot*, is the main source of Arthurian Legend written in French. Those texts

¹⁸ See Paul van Tieghem’s *Compendio de Historia Literaria de Europa*, Madrid: Austral, 1965, p. 123. The title in English is *Outline of the Literary History of Europe since Renaissance*, translated from the French by Aimee Leffingwell McKenzie, London: The Century Co. 1930.

¹⁹ Advocates of an evolutionary model for the origin of the novel will obviously call these works “novels” whereas traditional models prefer the term “romance”.

comprised the basis for Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (c.1408-1471) in England, and the *Amadis de Gaula*, written in Spanish and edited in Spain in 1508, but of uncertain origin.

Thus, prose became the standard of the “modern” forms of fiction – thanks to a number of advantages it had over verse. Firstly, prose emerged quickly because it was easier to translate. Malory mastered this art and knew how to maintain vivid stories in everything he translated. He created a new version of the Arthurian legend reproducing only the essential for the construction of fiction and omitting what he considered superfluous, for instance, many moral passages and theological digressions added by clerics. A rather intimate and informal language prose won the market of European fiction in the fifteenth century, a time when books first became more available. From the high Middle Ages, in works of piety, clerical critics often deemed romances to be harmful worldly distractions from more substantive or moral works and, by 1600, many secular readers would agree; in Europe such readings began to decline at the end of the sixteenth century.

Cervantes's “condemnation” in *Don Quixote* (1605, 1615) meant an almost definitive rejection of “that artificial literature” of the romance written in verse incompatible with a new historical era, a new period which demanded new kinds of narrative traditionally represented by the *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), which founded the *picaresque novel*, and Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, which would change the course of fiction. The use of prose became widely accepted, but the novel as a genre still resisted a clear definition and was often confused with the romance.

Cervantes's case study is an example of this confusion, and perhaps one of its causes, because in his last work *Los Trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* (*The Trials of Persiles and Sigismunda*), completed a few days before his death in 1616, he seems to return to the romance in a final and glorious attempt to imitate Heliodorus, which Cervantes considered a brilliant finale to his writing.²⁰ Moreover, this work might well exemplify the numerous attempts to distinguish romance from novel, but there has recently been much debate about the genre which this work belongs to.

Julio Baena, for example, claims that Cervantes, after writing *Don Quixote*, realises that he has created an “amorphous and unlimited monster” (*monstruo irrestricto*) and then he writes *Persiles*, “being at once Cervantes's ostensibly favourite creation and his most forgotten book” (127). According to Baena, Cervantes invents the novel with *Don Quixote*, but the writer thinks that, in creating this modern genre, he has gone against the ethics and aesthetics of writing. Thus *Persiles* is created to “right that wrong”. As Baena puts it:

In spite of all the fascinating aspects of *Don Quijote*, it must be acknowledged that negativity, either because of irony or scepticism, pervades the great book, an ethical and aesthetic problem for an author who, knowing that his great invention (the novel) disposes of the old

²⁰ See María Sachetti's *Cervantes' Los Trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda: A Study of Genre*. London: Tamesis Books. 2001. *Persiles* has traditionally considered a Byzantine Romance (The term “Byzantine” describes works of fiction written in the manner of the Greek romances of love and adventure composed in the first four centuries AD). However, Sachetti questions this traditional view by analysing the novelistic or realist aspects of the work and highlights the degree to which Cervantes departs from the established canon of Greek romances.

limitations of prose writing, wants to put that invention to the service of positive perfection from both the moral and aesthetic points of view. (127).

While some scholars locate the *Persiles* in the context of the revival of the Byzantine romance and consider *Don Quixote* as the anti-romance or, to put it in another way, the work that inaugurated the modern novel²¹, Sachetti and other critics do not see those boundaries so clear and challenge such notions of established genres by asserting that, in the *Persiles*, its characterisation, the use of contrasting perspectives and ironic manipulations upsetting the readers' expectations of a conventional ending produce a kind of "generic hybridization", which exposes the fallacies of this type of fiction. Baena focuses on the idea that the *Persiles* might have become a novel, but he goes further and claims that, in writing this work, Cervantes exposed himself to failure:

[Cervantes,] empleando todos los conocimientos a su disposición sobre la escritura ideal, empeñado en llevarla a su perfección, construye una novela que es en tantos modos una negación de la novela en la pluma de quien más entendió el género. Cervantes, en nombre de la utopía, destruye a su criatura (la novela moderna) de la misma forma en que Platón termina expulsando de su república a los poetas, después de ungirles como a dioses. (140)

Whereas Baena, among others, maintains that *Persiles* fails to be a novel precisely where it expected to work as a utopia, other critics think the opposite,

²¹ See Forcione's *Cervantes, Aristotle and the Persiles*. Princeton: Princeton UP. 1970.

that is, the novel works as a *counter-utopia*.²² *Don Quixote*, through the use of irony, and the *Persiles*, through allegory, converge at the same point from which, as José Antonio Maravall suggests, readers begin to see the arbitrariness of the utopias of the Counter-Reformation. Moreover, he believes that “*Don Quixote* is not a utopia strictly speaking but considers that its author makes use of the idea of a utopia throughout the narrative in order to discredit those who cling to such a concept” and thus, the novel is in fact “a powerful antidote to the extensive and intellect-stifling utopianism in sixteenth-century Spain”. To be more precise, Maravall goes on to say, “Cervantes presented his work as a counter-utopia written to contradict the falsification of the utopian ideal that Don Quijote himself represents” (17-18).

On the other hand, the reading of the *Persiles* as an allegory has been a common feature of the historiography on Cervantes. In his article “*Persiles* and Allegory” (1990), Avallé-Arce states that the text is essentially a Christian allegory of life as journey, man as traveller (13), and death as destiny (16), that is, a literary symbol of Catholic Counter-Reformation. Consequently, the *Persiles* has been associated with the schemes and thoughts of the Counter-Reformation since several Hispanists have traditionally labelled the work as a Christian romance.²³ However, more recent critics approach the work through new structural and semantic elements that reveal similarities with *Don Quixote* such as

²² I use the term “counter-utopia” in the same sense as José Antonio Maravall’s *Utopia and Counterutopia in the “Quixote”* (1991), as explained below. The work was originally published in Spanish in 1976.

²³ See, for example, the works of Avallé-Arce, Casaldueiro or Forcione (1972) in the bibliography section.

the self-reflexivity of the narrative voice, the use of irony and humorous allegories and other features which make the *Persiles* a counter-utopia.

The innovative presence of self-reflexive and metafictional elements in Cervantes's texts may be best understood, in part at least, if we consider that the second part of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century are characterised by an atmosphere of aesthetic experimentation best exemplified by the development of anamorphosis, the style of mannerism or the extensive use of Chinese boxes (stories within stories). These tendencies seem to be part of an age in which the arbitrariness of exclusive perspectives and the multiplicity of meanings began to react against the mimetic impulse of the classical Renaissance.²⁴

Nonetheless, those common elements shared by *Don Quixote* and the *Persiles* have contributed to the idea that both works emphasise the continuity of the romance tradition, as do studies such as Edward Dudley's *The Endless Text*. The author affirms that Cervantes's work, especially *Don Quixote* as a book and Don Quijote as a hero, far from marginalising the romance, played a crucial role in its survival:

Cervantes' achievement redefined the battle lines and provided the world of the fading chivalric (Arthurian) vision with a life closer to the mainstream of the dominant culture. *Don Quixote* as the source of the novel as a new literary kind made these concerns again central to our

²⁴ Two pictures are usually presented as examples of anamorphosis and mannerism: these are respectively Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1533) and El Greco's *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz* (1586). A famous example of Chinese boxes in Baroque painting is Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (1656). See appendixes 4,5,6.

culture. By establishing the modern novel on the ruins of Romance, Cervantes created a powerful new discourse that made possible the articulation of the fundamental issues of the power of love, intuition, and human relations. (1997, 37)

Dudley situates the rise of the novel as a “new literary kind” in Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* and sees this work as emerging from the crumbling foundations of Romance. The British Hispanist E. C. Riley defends the usefulness of the English distinction between the two genres, which he claims that are difficult to separate. He states that Cervantes “could not have written *Don Quixote* at all without a keen sense of the difference, and the relationship, between what we now think of as ‘romance’ and ‘novel’” (11).

Despite many scholars’ efforts, a terminological confusion between *romance* and *novel* coexisted across the eighteenth century, when the terms were used interchangeably. Sir Walter Scott continued this terminological imprecision into the nineteenth century also using both terms alternately and even Henry James in his *House of Fiction* warned against “clumsy separations” of *romance* from *novel* (29).

The distinction between these two genres still remains theoretically inadequate and, as Michael McKeon notes, we must always account for “the persistence of romance, both within the novel and concurrently within its rise” (1987, 3). However, some classicists prefer to eliminate the term *romance* from novelistic discourse, as James Tatum proposes, thus citing Cervantes who used the verb form of *novel* – the Castilian term *novelar* (“to novelise”) – but no form

of *romance* to describe his own fictional practices. Consequently, Tatum explains, Cervantes “may or may not have thought that his ancient masters Heliodorus and Apuleius were engaged in the same activity as he was” (2). According to James J. Lynch, “the Heliodoran novel may be considered as a literary hybrid, a refinement of romance that flourished primarily during the first half of the seventeenth century among writers who sought to apply the rules of epic poetry to prose fiction” (13).

It seems that the distinctive form of the *Persiles* derived from Heliodorus’s *Aethiopica* – a postclassical Greek romance rediscovered in the sixteenth century – quickly became a central focus in discussions of prose fiction by leading theorists of Cervantes’s days such as Amyot, Scaliger, Tasso and El Pinciano. Indeed, as Lynch goes on to say, Cervantes envisions “an ideal romance that would measure up to the theoretical model of the epic in prose [and] puts this in practice in his final novel, *Persiles and Sigismunda*” (14).

In his *Viaje del Parnaso* (*Voyage of Parnassus*), published in 1614, Cervantes himself provides a clue of the activity he was engaged in: “Yo he abierto en mis novellas un camino / por do la lengua castellana puede / mostrar con propiedad un desatino” (1991, 114). Margaret Anne Doody argues, explicitly responding to the “parochialism” and “naiveté” of Anglo-American critics, that the English separation of *novel* from *romance* is a false distinction that “has outworn its usefulness” (1996: xvii). Moreover, Diana de Armas Wilson adds that Cervantes was writing, of course, “sans benefit of this specifically English distinction [and] in his early modern symbolic order (as is well known to

Hispanists), the Spanish term *romance* meant a ballad or the Castilian language itself” (51).²⁵

It is difficult, therefore, to consider the *Persiles* as a romance, despite the fact that it was written to compete with Heliodorus’s *Aethiopica*. However, as I have explained above, it has traditionally been labelled as a “Byzantine romance”. Wilson categorises it as a novel “on the grounds of its contemporaneity (its fictional time is the 1560s), its self-conscious theorising, its rationalising of “miracles”, and its avowed imitation of Heliodorus’ *Aethiopica*” (55). Moreover, she rightly refers to Daniel Eisenberg’s study *Romances of Chivalry* where he classifies Heliodorus’s work as “the very antithesis of a romance of chivalry” (28). Because it is difficult to distinguish romances from novels in their primitive forms, it is equally hard to say when the novel as a form or genre first arose. If Heliodorus’s work is the opposite of a romance, then it might be taken as some prototype of the novel.

Following this line of argument, Bakhtin states that the novel rises continually in different times and places and, like any literary genre, tends to remember bits and pieces of its past. With this notion of “multiple origins”, as Holquist’s introduction to *The Dialogic Imagination* suggests, Bakhtin “paradoxically perceives the novel as new. Not new when it is said to have

²⁵ It should be noted here that in Spanish the word *novela* means “novel” in current English, and *novela corta*, short story, which were originally labelled as “romance” and “novel/novella” respectively in English; They say *roman* and *nouvelle* in French, *romanzo* and *novella* in Italian, *Roman* and *Novelle* in German. As explained above, the confusion in Spanish occurs because what we now call Novel could not be labelled as Romance, since the Spanish word *romance* was used to refer to a poetic genre of great tradition in Spanish literature.

“arisen”, but new whenever that kind of text made its appearance, as it has done since at least the ancient Greeks, a text that merely found its most comprehensive form in Cervantes and those who have come after” (1981, xxvii).

Conversely, in his work *The English Novel* Terry Eagleton proposes the romance as the novel’s primary generic source: “novels are romances, but romances which have to negotiate the prosaic world of modern civilisation ... [a] place where romantic idealism and disenchanted realism meet” (2005, 2-3). Hence the temptation to invoke *Don Quixote* as the first novel – a temptation that Eagleton tries to resist. He prefers to say that it is “less the origin of the genre than a novel *about* the origin of the novel” (3). Not so much the first literary conjunction of romance and realism, but rather a novel whose topic is what happens, in life and literature, when romantic idealism collides with the real world.

As Eagleton suggests, in the modern era the novel has been linked to the emergence of the middle class, but it is not clear when that rise occurred. “Some historians”, he goes on to say, “would locate it as early as the twelfth or thirteenth centuries” (2). This would go against the extended idea in most American and English departments describing the rise of the novel through the rise of Protestantism and the English middle-class. Hispanists, however, consider this a post-Romantic construct that tries to displace Cervantes and Catholic Spain from the rise of the novel.

This notion of origins was belied by the American critic Lionel Trilling who maintained that, “all prose fiction is a variation on the theme of *Don Quijote*”

(203). Discussions of origins have also become a difficult critical exercise in Cervantine studies: Is *Don Quijote* the first novel? Is it the last medieval romance? Or is it some “half-way house of fiction?”, Edwin Williamson wonders in a study in which romance as a category gives way, in a progressive manner, to the novel (ix). Following this argument, Carroll Johnson also explains that *Don Quixote* “is a kind of halfway point in the evolution of romance into novel” (23). Indeed, Eagleton states that, “most commentators agree that the novel has its roots in the literary form we know as romance” (2). However, this idea implies that *Don Quixote*, or to be *less* precise, Cervantes’s works marked the rise of a new form different from a variety of fictional genres from which the Spanish author seems to depart consciously.

In the European tradition, these forms include, as we have seen, the chivalric romances such as *Amadís of Gaul*, to which Cervantes makes direct and repeated references, as well as picaresque novellas such as the *Lazarillo de Tormes*, pastoral tales like *La Diana* of Jorge de Montemayor and *L’Arcadia* of Jacopo Sannazaro, and a number of Italian Renaissance epics, for example Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* which also appears in *Don Quixote*. In a more distant literary past stand the adventure romances from the Greeks and Romans. Some of those genres exerted a strong influence in Cervantes’s time and, for many critics, as Anthony Cascardi explains, “the novel became their unforeseeable and incongruous continuation” (2003, 58).

In their influential *The Nature of Narrative*, Scholes, Phelam and Kellogg observe that one of the great developmental processes that is unmistakable in the

history of the written narrative has been the gradual movement away from narratives dominated by the mythic impulse to tell a story with a traditional plot. As they go on to say, this movement can be traced twice in Western literature: once in the classical languages and again in the vernacular languages (12). In the course of this process, literature tends to develop in two antithetical directions which emerge from the epic synthesis: the *empirical* and the *fictional*. “Empirical narrative replaces allegiance to the *mythos* with allegiance to reality. [...] The *fictional* branch of narrative replaces allegiance to the *mythos* with allegiance to the ideal” (13).

According to them, after considering the breakdown of the epic synthesis into those two antithetical components, post-Renaissance narrative literature developed a new synthesis in writing. This gradual process, whose origin they locate as early as Boccaccio, is most obviously discernible during the seventeenth century:

The new synthesis can be seen clearly in a writer like Cervantes, whose great work is an attempt to reconcile powerful empirical and fictional impulses. From the synthesis he effected, the novel emerges as a literary form. The novel is not the opposite of romance, as is usually maintained, but a product of the reunion of the empirical and fictional elements in narrative literature. Mimesis (which tends to short forms like the Character and “slice of life”)²⁶ and history (which can become too scientific and cease to be literature) combine in the novel with romance and fable, even

²⁶ According to Scholes et al., “mimetic narrative is the antithesis of mythic in that it tends to plotlessness. Its ultimate form is the “slice of life” (2006, 13).

as primitive legend, folktale, and sacred myth originally combined in the epic, to produce a great and synthetic literary form. (15)

The acceptance of prose forms and the assimilation of romance and other pre-existing genres by Cervantes's innovative and self-conscious way of writing turn his work into a landmark in literary history, precisely because he is the first author in a vernacular language who consciously tries to innovate and create a new genre. As Cascardi affirms, "the *Quixote* remains a watershed work in the history of literature. Before it, things seem relatively remote; after it, we are in a far more familiar universe. During the four centuries since the publication of *Don Quixote* there has been no doubt that to write a major work of fiction was to write a novel" (2003, 58). According to Cascardi, *Don Quixote* was the first novel, although Cervantes might not have been aware of having initiated the most important literary genre of the modern age.

I.4 FROM LA MANCHA TO THULE... AND BACK

The assumption that the Spanish literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reflects and responds to the tensions of its age forms the basis of Anthony Cascardi's study on various works of the period in his famous collection of essays *Ideologies of History in the Spanish Golden Age*. The author is right to stress the mutual influence of literature and politics in a period in which there has been, as he states, a tendency to view literature in “purely aesthetic terms” (1997, 1). Cascardi contextualises Golden-Age literature largely by investigating the attitudes towards, and uses of, history revealed in it. The ideologies of history that prevail in literary works are seen to be crucial to the development of individual consciences and sensibilities (subject-formation) in an age in which the caste system peculiar to Spain is challenged by the emergence of social classes.

The originality of Cascardi's approach lies in his recognition of the complex nature of the tensions and development of Counter-Reformation Spain. Nonetheless, he sets apart from Marxist critics' theories about the standard historical interpretation of the Spanish seventeenth century and the supposed “delay” that occurred between “any transformation in the modes of production and a corresponding transformation of social relations”. He goes on to say that

this is “an exaggeration in the case of Spain to the degree that it would be more accurate to speak of a resistance to the culture of modernity than of the simple persistence of traditional values during early modern times” (20). Although the Spanish *comedia nueva*, best represented by Lope de Vega’s plays, clearly exemplifies that resistance, Cervantes’s works initiated the struggle in the generic tension within his writing.

I agree with Cascardi’s arguments about Cervantes’s incorporation and transformation of pre-existing genres and the original way in which he incorporated them thus moving from one genre to another throughout his oeuvre. Consequently, “the distinctions between the ethical and the moral orders of discourse are reflections of a division that is itself embedded within the novel and that may be identified as internal to the formation of the modern subject itself” (300).

Cervantes, therefore, anticipates the paradox of the modern subject inherent in the modern novel: on the one hand, the subject wishes to be ethically free, but on the other hand it wishes to be bound by a universal moral law. This complex relationship between the ethical and the moral may provide the basis for questioning the idea of a categorical distinction between “novel” and “romance”.

As Cascardi puts it:

On the one hand, the subject attempts to secure for itself the grounds of ethical freedom consistent with the (novelistic) representation of the world as objective, rational, and real; on the other, the subject seeks to transcend mere representations in the (romance-like) projection of a reconciled

totality, a universal, moral community of mankind, whose claims can be secured beyond purely “subjective” grounds. (300)

Thus, the generic distinction between *Don Quixote* and *Persiles* is a contradiction that must be resolved to understand Cervantes’s writing as a whole. The resistance to accept the idea of Cervantes as the originator of the modern novel may be caused by the insistence on focusing this origin on *Don Quixote* only. Therefore, I suggest that the modern novel began to rise on the way from La Mancha to Ultima Thule and back, that is, focusing our attention on the tension between *Don Quixote* and *Persiles* texts and the way both works negotiate the contexts in which they are written. We must not forget that in the inscription of the second part of *Don Quixote*, Cervantes tells the Count of Lemos that he will finish the *Persiles* in four months’ time. This means that parts of both works were written concurrently.

Cervantes’s writing may be the key to locate the origin of the modern novel as a new genre in the pre-modern economic Catholic Spain of the Counter-Reformation. However, *Persiles* stands in the way, for it has traditionally been labelled as a manifestly anti-modern work if what we expect from modernity is rationality, scepticism concerning the possibility of knowledge of the extra-mundane, and a fully autonomous, self-present subject. According to Avallé-Arce (1979), Cervantes’s last work implied the great Christian epic in prose, an intention that has confused many readers and has resulted in numerous misconceptions on the critics’ part. This otherness of *Persiles* has generally been explained away by viewing Cervantes’s posthumous work as a retreat into

orthodoxy, and its resistance to this reading is one of the chief virtues of Cascardi's book.

For it is to *Persiles* that the argument of *Ideologies of History* leads, clarifying the gulf which separates Cervantes's vision of the moral order from the collapse back into authoritarianism characteristic of the theatre of the Golden Age. According to Cascardi, Cervantes's task in *Don Quixote* is "to expose the fact that the world is indeed disenchanted, and to call into question all the false and illegitimate uses of the marvellous", while in the *Persiles* he "takes it as his task to explore what it might mean to "re-enchant" the world", thus exposing "the loss of an underlying faith in the essential, sustaining goodness of nature" (290).

Although *Persiles* attempts to 're-enchant' the disenchanted world of *Don Quixote*, it presupposes the reader's awareness of historical contingency as asserted in the earlier work, and maintains the separation between the "reality" in which author and reader live and the "fiction" of the "reconciled community of mankind" it projects. The basis for this community is not to be any institutional authority of Church or State, but a quasi-miraculous recognition in purely human terms.

New perspectives on the *Persiles* such as Michael Armstrong-Roche's work *Cervantes' Epic Novel* studies the relation between the Barbaric Isle of Thule – where the action of the novel begins – and the Catholic South, as one to be understood in terms of the difference between law and custom. The author highlights the importance of Cervantes's departure from the traditional practice of epic writers who worked to "align the hero's ethnic, political and religious

affiliations with those of its first audiences and readers” (36). By doing so, and having northern European Gothic protagonists make their way across civilised Catholic Europe, Cervantes is able to show the familiar from an outsider point of view and, consequently, unsettle his first readers’ cultural assumptions. This works particularly well when we see that, while it is true that the barbaric Law of Thule features cannibalism, sacrifices, trafficking of women, and other barbaric practices, the Catholic and civilised world has its own forms of barbarism present in numerous customs ranging from the idolatry of female beauty to the violent consequences of the honour code.

The final destiny of the pilgrimage of Persiles and the rest of the group is then no longer the geographical city of Rome, but a conjugal and charitable love discovered precisely through the encounter of “humanity on the margins and barbarism in the heartlands of Christianity” (110). In the novel’s Rome we discover that, unlike such barbaric Romans as Hipólito, Pirro and the Governor, the Goth protagonists are the ones who really represent the idea of Rome, since their need of Catholic instruction embodies the image of the Holy City as if through a looking-glass.

As Armstrong-Roche suggests with an anagram in Spanish, the relevant destiny is no longer Rome (Roma), but Love (Amor). Consequently, the Rome they meet is not the idea of Rome that the faithful expect. Instead it offers prodigal displays of barbarism and “readers are provided with a vivid (and entertaining) demonstration of the ethical folly of overstating the importance of right (dogmatic) belief or ritual practice over right behaviour” (97).

Cervantes, therefore, anticipates one of the most important and frequent themes in the twentieth-century so-called Catholic novel: the problematic relationship between Catholic practices and orthodox rules, that is, the tensions that have survived in Catholic theological discourse and practice. These tensions are obvious in Catholic novels after the second Vatican Council (1962-1965), thus showing different reactions to them, in the same way that Cervantes's major novels reflect the atmosphere of the Counter-Reformation that began with the Council of Trent (1545-1563)²⁷. In so doing, Cervantes also anticipates and opens the way for new models of critical theory widening the scope of literary studies to other forms of expression as early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Calls for reform and movements to purify the Church began before Luther. There was a strong consciousness of the abuses of the church in the apocalyptic spirit of the late Middle Ages that extended into the fifteenth century. One of the first objectives of the Christian humanists was a return to the scriptures and the spirit of the early church. Intellectual paradigms and the conditions of society were changing, as were economic structures. The discovery of new territories and exploration helped to expand the European world and mind and the printing press fostered a new level of education.

²⁷ The Council of Trent, under Pope Paul III (the nineteenth ecumenical council), reconfirmed all seven of the sacraments and reasserted the traditional Catholic position on all theological matters that had been challenged by the Protestants. It also set clear guidelines for the elimination of abuses among members of the clergy, emphasised preaching to the uneducated laity, and encouraged the regeneration of intellectual life within Catholic monasteries. Church leaders revived the activities of the Inquisition and established the *Index Expurgatorious*, a list of books judged heretical and therefore forbidden to Catholic readers. The Catholic Reformation supported a broadly based Catholicism that emphasised the direct and intuitive – hence, mystical – experience of God.

An early example of the reforming spirit put into practice is found in the Spanish church under the leadership of Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros (1436-1517), archbishop of Toledo and chancellor of the kingdom of Castile. Cisneros, who joined the Franciscan order after having served as a secular priest, worked hard for the reform of the clergy and the renewal of spiritual life. A well-known humanist, he founded the Complutense University, primarily for the education of the clergy, where a return to the Scriptures were strongly emphasised. Among his literary works, he is best known for funding the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, the first printed polyglot version of the entire Bible in the original languages, Hebrew, Chaldean Aramaic, and Greek, with Latin translation. Cardinal Cisneros's achievements may be considered the first efforts of a Spanish cultural renewal.

An important part of the reforming movement was the foundation of new lay societies and confraternities and new orders of priests and religious. Among the new orders, the one that would eventually be amongst the most significant in numbers and influence was the "Society of Jesus" or *Societas Iesu* (1540) founded by Ignatius de Loyola. Having begun his adult life as a soldier, he thought of his society as a kind of militant order (*militia Christi*) fighting a spiritual battle under "the standard of the Cross". The order would take an active role against Protestantism. However, its roots lie in a fervour for missionary activity stemming from the personal conversion to the crucified Christ and an inspiration to imitate him – following the idea of "finding God in all things" – that represented the spirit of the Catholic Reformation.

Urged by Emperor Charles V (Charles I of Spain), the Council of Trent was not called until 1545 due to the opposition of Pope Clement VII and of Francis I of France.²⁸ The political tensions that have occurred prior to the Council, the theological and pastoral controversies with the Reformers were not solved, but it rather defined and legislated the Catholic position alone, frequently in conscious opposition to the Reformers. In this sense Trent can be seen as the symbolic beginning of the Catholic Counter-Reformation as a straight opposition to Protestantism, both in doctrine and aesthetics. At the same time, the Council was a continuation of the reforms that had already taken place in Catholicism prior to the Protestant Reformation.

The greatest weight in the Council's decrees was given to the sacraments, as, more specifically to the one that encapsulates the rest, the Eucharist emphasising that Christ is "really, truly, and substantially present" in the consecrated forms. Other important contribution of the Catholic Reformation was the reform of religious life by returning orders to their spiritual foundations, and new spiritual movements focusing on the devotional life and a personal relationship with Christ, including the Spanish mystics. These contributions would be of great importance for the aesthetic impulse in both the visual arts and literature – where this impulse acquires new connotations – as we will see in this chapter.

It is notable that the decrees of Trent did not give any specific guidelines for sacred arts. On the one hand, the use of art was strongly affirmed. On the other

²⁸ As the Council of Trent lasted eighteen years (1545-1563), the sessions took place under the pontificate of three different Popes: Paul III, Julius III and Pius IV.

hand, its mode of execution was to be restricted: the rejection of “sensual beauty” or the presence of anything “profane” or “inappropriate”, terms that could, and often were, interpreted very widely. However, these restrictions could only work to be avoided by means of subtle symbolic elements, the excess in the representation of a Biblical scene, or taking advantage of the rich sacramental imaginary to transgress or subvert established concepts and meanings.

In this sense, literature had a wider margin than visual arts, since the latter were openly displayed and the former still suffered from a vast illiterate society. As we have seen, a new genre was to be born in Cervantes’s writing and the atmosphere of Spanish Catholic Reformation provided its breeding ground. This background brought about, both consciously and unconsciously, a series of aesthetic innovations that not only helped to shape the visual arts and the fiction of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but also would inspire the fiction of the following centuries.

Indeed, new studies on Cervantes demonstrate the fact that Hispanic studies are particularly well placed to take advantage of the most innovative literary theories in order to locate the rise of the novel in the Cervantine corpus. Paul Julian Smith, editor of the Oxford Hispanic Studies series, puts it this way in the preface to Wilson’s innovative study *Cervantes, the Novel, and the New World*:

Unlike those working in French or English studies, Hispanists have little reason to genuflect to a canon of European culture, which has tended to exclude them. Historically, moreover, Hispanic societies tend to exhibit

plurality and difference: thus, Medieval Spain was the product of the three cultures of Jew, Muslim, and Christian; modern Spain is a federation of discrete autonomous regions; and Spanish America is a continent in which cultural identity must always be brought into question, can never be taken for granted. (Wilson, 2000, vii)

In the work that follows these passionate words, Wilson discusses how Cervantes's two long novels, *Don Quixote* and *Persiles*, which came into being in the age of, and under the influence of, imperial Spain, reflect the cross-cultural contacts of exploration, conquest and colonization that Columbus inaugurated in the Indies. Consequently, the Cervantine novel was "stimulated by the geographical excitement of a new world" as both Don Quixote's sallies and *Persiles*'s travels show (3).

In early modern Spain, Cascardi rightly adds, "we witness the emergence of a series of culturally ambiguous, displaced, or 'marginal' groups (such as the *moriscos*, *conversos*, *pícaros*, and of course, women) whose identity cannot be located either in terms of the social order that has been eclipsed or in terms of the emergent order of things" (1997, 184). However, the origins of that multiracial Spanish society come from the mists of time.

Different populations and cultures followed over the millennia, including the Iberians, the Tartessians, Celts and Celtiberians, Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Suebi and Visigoths. In 711, a Berber and Arab army, invaded and conquered nearly the entire peninsula. During the next 750 years, independent Muslim states were established, and the entire area of Muslim control

became known as Al-Andalus. Meanwhile the Christian kingdoms in the north began the long and slow recovery of the peninsula, a process called the *Reconquista*, which was concluded in 1492 with the fall of Granada.

By 1252, when Ferdinand III of Castile died, the Iberian Peninsula was divided into separate Christian and Muslim kingdoms. In the Christian kingdoms, three different castes formed a society of coexisting Christian, Jewish, and Muslim living together, depending on each other, though not always in harmony. However, to assert and secure the unity necessary to achieve the *Reconquista*, the system sought as a requirement the complete assimilation of the Other into a homogeneous culture. What had been a ternary society had to become unitary and cohesive, since Christians aspired to constituting themselves as pure despite the heterogeneous society that until that moment had conceived the interweaving of the three religious groups legally and morally advantageous.

Américo Castro, in his controversial *The Spaniards: An Introduction to their History*, reminds us that this type of society is referred to as “*La Convivencia*”, that is, the coexistence of Christians, Jews, and Muslims in Medieval Spain.²⁹ He cites the example of Ferdinand III of Castile’s epitaph in the cathedral of Seville to illustrate this. The epitaph, written in four different languages – Latin, Castilian, Arabic, and Hebrew – exalts the memory of the king for having destroyed his enemies and re-conquered Seville from the pagans.

²⁹ Al-Andalus coincided with *La Convivencia*, an era of relative religious tolerance, and with the Golden age of Jewish culture in the Iberian Peninsula. The phrase often refers to the interplay of cultural ideas between the three groups, and ideas of religious tolerance. This postulation is at odds with historical evidence of various massacres carried out on the Jewish population by Muslims such as the 1011 massacre in Cordoba and the 1066 Granada massacre. Obviously, the religious intransigence within the Muslim territories forced thousands of Christians and Jews to move to Christian kingdoms.

Castro highlights the difference between the Latin version written in a much more aggressive language than the three other versions likely to be read by the masses, Castilian, Arabic, and Hebrew.³⁰ This was a prelude to the end of the period when the three castes “coexisted”, according to Castro, in relative tolerance and awareness of each other. The conquest of Granada in 1492 brought the unification of the Spanish territory under a Christian political establishment, the expulsion of the “infidels”, from the re-conquered territory and the launching of the New World adventure. It also marked the beginning of the Spanish desire for a unified and homogeneous culture.

According to Castro, the aggressive epitaph, in Latin only, of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile in the Royal Chapel of Granada shows this change of policy by the end of the fifteenth century, when compared to that of Ferdinand III the Holy: “Destroyers of the Mohammedan sect and the annihilators of the heretical obstinacy (i.e. of the Jews), Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, husband and wife undivided in opinion, called the Catholic, lie enclosed by this marble tomb” (translated in Castro, 1971, 205).³¹

Thus, Spaniards began understanding themselves as a single unitary entity without external elements of “impurity”. Castro puts it this way:

³⁰ Cited in Castro (1971) pages 60-61.

³¹ The original epitaph in Latin is as follows:

Mahometice secte prostatores
Et heretice pervicacie extinctores
Fernandus Aragonum et Helisabetha Castelle
Vir et uxor unánimes
Catolice appellati
Marmóreo clauduntur hoc túmulo.

In the formative epoch of the Spanish consciousness, the feeling of caste was a stimulus inciting people to prove their worth, something like a feeling of “noblesse oblige”; later however, what had been the motivation became the goal, that is to say, one did not aspire to be heroic, intelligent, or industrious in order to rise as a member of the Christian, Jewish, or Moorish caste, but all effort was concentrated in the eagerness to be counted as a member of the caste that had come to stand alone—the caste of the Old Christians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the only sovereign and valued caste. Such was the upheaval that shook Spanish life, the change of direction that become visible, expressed and given concrete form in imperial prowess, in literature, and in the art of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Castro, 1971, 207).

Accordingly, a desire for a unified empire formed upon the Western tradition of universality and sustained by the Catholic Church emerged. However, this desire was constantly threatened by the existence of differences of faith, race and culture. Consequently, the concern for being *limpio de sangre* (pure of blood) started disturbing Christian Spaniards from the beginning of the fifteenth century. Ironically, the system of collective and individual evaluation based on blood, purity, and lineage represented by the institution of the Spanish Inquisition was, according to Castro, adopted by Spaniards from the Jewish tradition.³²

If the cultural mixture of Hispano-Hebrews and Hispano-Arabs was not only seen as normal but necessary before the fifteenth century, by the end of that

³² See Castro, 67-71.

period, Spaniards did not feel comfortable with it. The population was thoroughly mixed at every level so it was difficult to recognise “purity”. Christians of Jewish or Moorish descent constantly faced extreme suspicion of disloyalty to the Crown, and as a result, institutional discrimination. For this reason, a new figure appeared: *el Cristiano Viejo*, or Old Christian, a descent of a “pure” Christian family, considered model Spaniards, trustworthy and devoted to the king. In consequence, an insidious distinction between “Old Christians” and “New Christians” arose. In this context, unlike most Western traditions that construct purity of lineage on phenotypic features, Spanish society had to rely on a metaphorical conception of blood as sign of authenticity and legitimacy.

Cervantes’s depiction of many of these groups is more than evident throughout his works and has become prominent in recent scholarly debates. Like the classic narratives, which flourished within expanding multilingual empires, “the Cervantine novel also emerges from a fascination with the “other”, not only from Spanish minorities – gypsies, Basques, *conversos*, *moriscos* – but also from new colonial subjects, the New World *indios*, *mestizos*, *mulatos* and *criollos*”. Moreover, Cervantes not only uses his Mediterranean consciousness through Graeco-Latin models, who may be regarded as hybrids themselves, as Wilson suggests: “the African-born Apuleius – a Platonist who composed Greek fictions in Latin – and the Hellenized Phoenician Heliodorus”. But Cervantes, Wilson adds, “also inherits this polyglot consciousness from contemporaneous sources from both the “Babel” of Algiers and the “bar-bar” of the Indies” (14).

Bakhtin claimed that ancient novelistic discourse was consciously structured as hybrid, developing the peripheries of the Hellenistic world and constituting itself as a genre out of a new polyglot consciousness. Thus, this “new cultural and creative consciousness lives in an actively polyglot world” (1981, 12). Indeed, the Cervantine novel – the *Persiles* even more than *Don Quixote* – uses these “polyglot energies” and positions itself on the border between multiple cultures and languages. Wilson reminds us of Cervantes’s extensive use of languages in his novels and observes that “still episodic in *Don Quixote*, which represents some half-dozen languages, polyglossia is a dominant feature of the *Persiles*, whose multinational cast of characters negotiates in some dozen languages” (Wilson, 14).³³ Some words used by northern Goths in the *Persiles* even come from Caribbean origin thus showing the hybrid impulse and influence of the colonial enterprise upon the Spanish collective consciousness.

These subversive voices are brought from the margins of La Mancha and Ultima Thule to the centre of the Empire through Cervantes’s hybrid writing. Consequently, the concept of *hybridity* is used here “not only because of its immersion in history but also because of its reliance on dialogue” (Wilson, 81). This topographical dualism is neutralised precisely to emphasise the idea of imperialism, thus creating what Homi Bhabha calls the “Third Space”, a space of

³³ In *Don Quixote*, Wilson refers to “Spanish, Arabic, Turkish, German, Italian, Basque, and the multi-tongued lingua franca” (2000, 96). In the *Persiles*, characters “speak English, Norwegian, Polish, Irish, Danish, Lithuanian, French, Italian, Portuguese, Castilian, Valencian, Arabic, a *lengua aljaminada* (Spanish written in Arabic consonants), and a kind of “Barbaric” language for which Cervantes provides a polyglot translator” (104).

enunciations, a sort of alien territory which “makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process [and] destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code”. Such an intervention challenges our notion of “the historical identity of culture as a homogenising, unifying force” (Bhabha, 1994, 54).

The representations of hybridisation theorised by postmodern critical debates are foreshadowed in Cervantes’s novels. Bakhtin’s famous discussion of hybridisation focuses mainly on *Don Quixote*, the text “which realises in itself, in extraordinary depth and breath, all the artistic possibilities of heteroglot and internally dialogised novelistic discourse” (Bakhtin, 1981, 324). Indeed, Sancho’s proverbs, the Duchess’s elevated speech, or the Cousin’s humanist jargon are clear examples of the concept. The same happens, for instance, when Don Quixote meets on his initial sally two *rameras públicas* (public prostitutes). These women, whom Don Quixote renames with honorific titles, cannot understand a word of his pseudo-chivalric utterances, even though they are all speaking the same language.

As Wilson rightly asserts, “there is no question that *Don Quixote* shows an extraordinary understanding of the many different “languages” simultaneously existing within single cultures or speaking communities” (95). *Don Quixote* also shows interactions between radically different languages – apart from those already mentioned above – including “new” languages from the New World. To put an example, Don Quixote gives Sancho a lesson in Spanish words of Arabic

origin (2, 67) or with new acquisitions in Spanish from American languages as in the case of *bejuco*, *caiman*, *cacique*, or *Potosí*.

The same happens with the rest of Cervantes's works, where we can find several examples of loanwords from American native languages. According to Wilson, the mixture of languages in *Don Quixote* is "strategically filtered through the pen of an Arab historian", and then "translated" into Castilian by a *morisco*, a born-again Christian knight, whose story "crosses and re-crosses language boundaries to find its fictional linguistic 'source' in Arabic, in a translation from the language of Spain's defeated enemy, a translation that obliterates its 'source'" (Wilson, 99).

Cervantes's several representations of episodes in which bilingual or even trilingual consciousness take place emphasise a "cross-lingual process that alienates notions of unitary national myths" (97). This makes perfect sense if we take into account that Philip III had just signed the Expulsion Decree through which almost 30,000 *moriscos* were driven into exile between 1609 and 1613, a counterproductive act that practically ruined the middle classes of Valencia and Aragon.

The history of Cervantine criticism shows the futility of oversimplifying his works. Regarding *Don Quixote* as the symbol of "a nation that had come to envision its very existence as a vocation", critic Louis Dupré reveals the fourfold aim of that vocation: "to liberate Spain from the infidels, to vanquish Islam in all of Europe, to eradicate Northern heresies and to conquer and convert the New World" (126). Such interpretations reflect the serious decline of Spain as a power

caused by various famines, plagues, bankruptcies, and the military disaster of the Armada in 1588. The discovery of the New World and the new territories that the Conquistadores were annexing to the Spanish crown probably served as a revision of the nostalgic and glorious past of Spain's Reconquista. Thus, the shores of America were identified with the shores of Africa in both the Catholic and Muslim consciousness.

This double process of (mis)-identification witnessed the emergence of a hybrid national narrative in which Indians and Moors were assimilated. Moreover, this process gave way to a series of dramatic performances played out in parts of the New World, which following the already popular peninsular cycle of "Moors and Christians", resulted in a blending of Moors and Indians, a tradition still persisting in some parts of Latin America.

That may be one of the reasons why Cervantes in the *Persiles* writes about fictional barbarians who are half-European and half-American and, at the same time, they have to save a structural breakage of space that appears as an oceanic rift between the Old and the New Worlds, in which tempests, monsters, pirates and other "marvellous" events function as visible marks of alterity through a combination of Western conceptions of otherness. Wilson exemplifies this mixture when she attracts our attention to a strange word that the narrator uses in the opening chapter: *bejucos* is used for the "vines" tying up a raft in the North Sea. She goes on to explain that instead of using any of the Castilian words available for these vines, "the narrator uses a word of Caribbean origin,

specifically a Taíno word, which he may have accessed through various popular historiographers of the Indies” (104).

Persiles continues and complicates the theme of the *translatio*, a term that according to Wilson takes a double sense: “as literary translation and geographic movement” (104). After crossing many frontiers, Cervantes’s last novel and its protagonists eventually lose both their nationality and their national language. Readers are informed that the story is a translation, but they are never told from what language the *Persiles* is supposed to be translated. This fact is intriguing when we know that Cervantes wrote a story in which twelve different languages are at play and where most part of the meaning depends on signs, interpretations, and translations.

However, none of the characters approaches the hybrid nature of Transila, the kidnapped interpreter for an all-male culture of barbarians who are unable or unwilling to negotiate in languages other than their own. Taken for ideological purposes during the fictional 1570s, Transila is a Polish-speaking Irishwoman on the “Barbaric Isle” of Ultima Thule, a signifying space that “both opens the novel and haunts most of its narrative” (209). As a polyglot in captivity, she embodies the multicultural and multilingual colonised subject who is also an author of discourses.

The character may well be taken from Cervantes’s own traumatic experiences as a captive in Algiers where he was forced to act as translator for a culture always on the verge of invading Spain. Transila, therefore, shows translation to be a resistance tool, a metaphor for both oppression and for

resistance to oppression. Even her own name, a fact that seems unnoticed to critics, has an etymological purpose: Transila may be a name formed by “*trans*”, an alternative Latin prepositional prefix from the original *ultra* (+ accusative) meaning “beyond” or “on the far side” and *ila*, a word that presents several alternatives, such as a shortened Spanish medieval form for *isla* meaning “isle or island” or a derivation from the Latin feminine pronoun *illa* meaning “that woman”. In short, Transila’s name is surely a play on words by Cervantes which summarises her goal within the narrative: *trans* + *illam*, “beyond the isle” and, at the same time, “beyond that woman/her (beyond translation).

Following this line of argument, Transila embodies both the subversive role of translation and its implications in transcending the colonial space or, as Louis Montrose has argued for English texts, the discourse of discovery “grounded in a territorial conception of the female body” (13). This makes sense if we take into account that Transila had been fleeing from her countrymen’s sexual custom of ritual defloration before her capture, thus acting as the typical trope of land/woman. This trope acts as a metaphor of her body as country field threatened to be raped/conquered. Transila transcends linguistic, literary, and geographical meanings and mirrors the way Cervantes breaks narrative levels and establishes writing conventions in his attempt to be original, in short, to create an innovative mode of writing.

The concepts traditionally associated with the modern novel are as unstable and unsettled as “modernity [which] is never achieved once and for all”, as Armstrong-Roche points out, and as “realism, [which] is not a permanent

standard valid for all readers and all times”. These ideas invite the critics and ideal readers to re-evaluate “not only *Persiles*’s place within Cervantes’s corpus and the development of early modern prose fiction, but also *Don Quixote*’s, and what is taken as distinctive about it” (304).

In Cervantes’s writing we may find the origin of the modern novel, not in *Don Quixote* only, but through the creative space that the Spanish author creates between *Don Quixote* and *Persiles*, in Armstrong-Roche’s words, “the relationship between what we might call ideal romance and realistic novel, and more broadly what we mean by modernity in literature” (304).

Given that issues of origins or beginnings have become so problematic, it would seem useless to argue for a specific source of the birth of the novel as its origin. In an interesting study on this subject, David Quint recalls that, in late Renaissance, the notion of prior origins as a criterion for literary prestige was replaced by the notion of originality. A good example of this shift in literary values could be felt when Cervantes asked his readers to judge *Don Quixote* “for its inimitable originality” (22). As Quint goes on to say, the Renaissance debate between origin and originality, that is, between locating “the text’s value in a source of truth and authority that lies outside the text itself – normally in an earlier text or series of texts that have been granted authoritative or sacred status – and the historicist reading that focuses on the craftsmanship of the human author” finally shifted to the second mode in *Don Quixote* (22).

Consequently, Cervantes turns the readers’ attention to the way he builds his writing, which creates a tension between pre-existing modes of writing and the

author's intention in creating such original fictions full of historical, social and political issues. Besides, we must not forget that Cervantes's plots and their issues are really contemporaneous and both the form and content of his main works anticipate those developed during the twentieth century. This crucial fact allows critics to approach his work from multiple intertextual perspectives following cultural and historical issues that help us discern politics, economics, gender, race, class, and national and regional identity of sixteenth and seventeenth century in Spain through Cervantes's innovative writing.

Many critical perspectives have advocated for the rise of the Cervantine novel as the source of the origin of the modern novel. Among the most well-known let me cite Claudio Guillén, who sees Cervantes's novels as the "crucial rapprochement between literature and history" (156); here the New World impinges upon his theory of the rise of the novel in the sixteenth century after "the chronicles of the conquest of America" (156). Walter Reed links the emergence of the novel to forms of neediness by depicting a bourgeoisie "bankrupted by the inflation brought on by New World gold and silver, diminished by the expulsion or forced conversion of the Jews, and seduced by the entrenched prestige and power of the aristocracy" (268).

For José Antonio Maravall, the Cervantine novel is "the conception of a utopia" (1991, 182). Robert Alter, in his influential study *Partial Magic* (1979), puts it this way:

The novel begins out of an erosion of belief in the authority of the written word and it begins with Cervantes. It fittingly takes as the initial target of its literary critique the first genre to have enjoyed popular success because of the printing press – the Renaissance chivalric romance. Although novelists were by no means the first writers to recognise clearly the fictional status of fictions, I think they were the first – and Cervantes of course the first among them – to see in the mere fictionality of fictions the key to the predicament of a whole culture, and to use this awareness centrally in creating new fictions of their own. (Alter, 3)

Cervantes's texts call the established distinctions into question: the entire narrative of the supposed exploits of both Don Quijote and Persiles may be read as parables illustrating the supremacy of history as the site of truth by comparison with the lies told in the chivalric and epic romances and the fantasies they are liable to engender. However, in Cervantes's main novels the praise of "the truth of history" is accompanied by a eulogy of the credible lie. As he explains in *Don Quixote*: "Tanto la mentira es mejor cuanto más parece verdadera y tanto más agrada cuanto tiene de lo dudoso y posible" (I, 47). In relation to this statement, Riley adds: "There is in the Quixote a practical solution to the problem which taxed the wits of Italian theorists of the Counter-Reformation: how to bring the universal and the particular into harmony [...] It is not history and not poetry: its centre is somewhere in between and it includes both of them" (1986, 177-78).

Cervantes constantly draws the readers' attention towards the way his texts have been found, translated, retold and, in short, fictionalised. In so doing, the

novels emphasise the real world outside the text and the changes it undergoes. Patricia Waugh defines metafiction as “a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (40). This type of fictional writing tends to problematise the question of “representation” in that it is not the world as such that can be “represented” but the “*discourses* of the world” (41).

This tendency towards metafiction can be observed in Greene’s novels from the fifties until the eighties, when his fiction becomes gradually self-reflexive and reveals a postmodern sensibility. *Monsignor Quixote* (1982) may well be considered the highest point in this process. For the first and only time, Greene modelled the fictive world of a novel on that of a famous classic. Although he had used a similar picaresque sensibility in *Travels with my Aunt* (1969), this time Greene drew on *Don Quixote*, as Valerie Sedlak points out, “to structure the adventures of the “monsignor errant” and his Sancho, depending all the while upon the reader’s familiarity with Cervantes to recognise the many similarities between *Don Quixote* and *Monsignor Quixote*” (2002, 579).

Greene, therefore, makes explicit demands on the reader to fulfill his fictional world. Monsignor Quixote’s parody, comic tone, and meaning depends, to a large extent, on the reader’s collaboration and knowledge of classic works such as *Don Quixote*, philosophic, theological, and socio-political writings, and of course Greene’s own previous work and life.

As Cervantes did almost four hundred years ago, Greene explores in *Monsignor Quixote* the relationship between reality and fiction and relies on the reader conscious of his work and life for a satisfactory understanding of a novel that depends on extra-textual material. This reader-text relationship is similar to that produced by the metafictional text. Robert Alter, in his study *Partial Magic*, asserts that metafiction, though not realistic in nature, is a type of writing that nonetheless dialogues with extra-textual realities: “A self-conscious novel, briefly, is a novel that systematically flaunts its own condition of artifice and by doing so probes into the problematic relationship between real-seeming artifice and reality” (Alter, 1975, x).

Moreover, Linda Hutcheon, points out the importance of the reader’s role implicit in metafictional narrative: “I would say that this *vital link* [between life and art] is reforged, on a new level - on that of the imaginative process (of storytelling), instead of on that of the product (the story told). And it is the new role of the reader that is the vehicle of this change” (Author’s emphasis) (Hutcheon 1980, 3). She goes on to explain that, “on the one hand, he [the reader] is forced to acknowledge the artifice...of what he is reading; on the other, explicit demands are made upon him as a co-creator...” (Hutcheon 1980, 7).

Consequently, what is often stressed in discussions on metafiction is the provisionality of reality and history or the idea that the world is “a series of constructions, artifices, impermanent structures” (44). These characteristics, which are now used to define contemporary fictional writing, can also be applied to Cervantes’s fiction, which makes Cervantes the precursor of the modern novel.

Yet while Cervantes's texts call attention to themselves as artistic constructs, they also pose a challenge to authority and tradition, and with it, a critique of dogmatic attitudes.

Indeed, in Cervantes's novels these issues are ultimately tied to a reader who is constantly challenged to make sense of the text's often contradictory, ironic incursions into a multitude of topics that are brought about by various "authors" and circumstantial readers. Thus, one might say that the world is not translatable in a univocal manner but only through multiple interpretations. In this sense, his novels represent a formidable attack on dogmatisms while relying on a Catholic background that might be considered dogmatic from an institutional perspective, but it also provides a rich source of symbolism with which to create new meanings.

At a time of religious depuration, the Catholic Revival initiated by the Council of Trent proclaimed that art should have a role as media for propaganda. The new interest in circulating the sacraments³⁴, and made them central and available in each person's life, caused a proliferation of sculptures, paintings, and books, which gave the impression that art was more accessible. At the same time, a vast majority of people, largely illiterate, could literally "watch" the life of Jesus Christ in images, thus creating a popular sacramental imagination based on a more personal and direct contact with biblical passages and mysteries.

³⁴ The sacrament of penance, for instance, was transformed from a social to a personal experience; that is, from a public community act to a private confession. It now took place in private in a confessional. It was a change from reconciliation with the Church to reconciliation directly with God.

This would also suggest that the Cervantine text provides its readers with a dialogic perspective to see the plurality of multiple discourses as well as with a Catholic background, which allows readers to internalise the characters' experience using sacramental elements. These elements are part of a strategy that works effectively because they were easily recognisable due to the Catholic Reformation's use and abuse of cultural discourses based on the aesthetics and spectacle of the Catholic liturgy and sacraments.

Cervantes's innovative way of writing, addressing an allegedly personal (ideal) reader as *lector mío*, introduces in literature the differentiation between the critical reader and the passive spectator who is caught up in a mass-oriented performance, a discussion initiated in *Don Quixote* (I, 48) regarding the excess in "consuming" stories – books in *Don Quixote* or visual arts in *Persiles* – which may eventually cause a distortion of reality. Through parody and a subversive use of madness, *Don Quixote* problematises issues of fiction and reality, presence and absence, art and life. By means of an abuse of Christian allegory, *Persiles* creates a counter-utopian narrative, a sort of anamorphic mirror that distorts the excessive zeal of Counter-Reformation.

There is no need to privilege the origin of the modern novel in Cervantes's Catholic Spain as well as there is no need to exclude other competing perspectives. Moreover, they may all form, as Wilson argues, "a system of multiple influences in interaction, all relating to the cultural environment that produced them" (58). The formative influences of the novel, cultural and historical, are different for each national stand and, in the debate between

Hispanists and Anglo-American perspectives, both Cervantes's and Defoe's writings should serve to reconceive literary history along new transnational lines. A closer look at both claims for origin should facilitate the discovery of a more cross-cultural "novel" that takes into account the rich intertextuality between both writers and the traditions they started.

I.5 FROM CATHOLIC CERVANTES TO PROTESTANT DEFOE

We have examined the impact of the New World as well as a country caught in the tumult of a new age in Cervantes's writing and how both *Don Quixote* and *Persiles* innovated and revolutionised the world of literature turning the readers' attention to new concepts of space, the power of language and translation, questions of authorship and playwriting together with notions of self and otherness through the discourse of liminal voices thus anticipating contemporary issues and theories.

It is important to note here that Cervantes was writing some hundred years before Defoe, the Spanish Empire had passed its zenith, and Spanish society was experiencing deep changes in terms of economy, class stratification and race. It is not my intention to discredit Anglo-American claims for novelistic firsthood, but the implications of that claim privileges Protestantism as inherent in the origin of the novel thus obliterating any trace of Catholic imagination from the original sources of the novel as a modern genre.

I propose, therefore, to set the Spanish next to the English formative influences on the global map. Both Cervantes and Defoe are witnesses of the impact of the matter of America, its conquest and colonisation, and both authors

show different ways of understanding a new order of things. Wilson states that, “a comparison of these New World formative influences on the novel has been hampered, however, by the fetishisation of national identities” (59).

Colonial and post-colonial studies are often anxious about a sense of disdain and victimisation that force similitudes among the different colonial practices carried out by European countries so “united” in great diversity. These studies, precisely, tend to stress the dangers of homogenising the imperial practices of different nations. A comparative look at Cervantes’s and Defoe’s works, mainly *Persiles* and *Robinson Crusoe*, may help to expose the differences between both traditions, historical and literary, and hopefully to understand them better. The first great difference is that Cervantes had lived through both the imperial triumphs and their decline whereas Defoe witnessed how a great empire was emerging.

According to Ian Watt, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) begins “the tradition of the novel” (1957, 92). Six years before, the Spanish empire signed what would mean its definitive end: the Treaty of Utrecht (1713). This treaty not only ended with the War of the Spanish Succession, but it also handed the English the colonial supremacy on a plate. Through this treaty, the Spaniards were forced to transfer the Asiento permission, a contract that allowed the English to have a monopoly of the supply of African slaves to the territories of America. Economically speaking, this was the crown of the treaty.

Even so, the treaty’s provisions did not go so far as the Whigs in Britain would have liked, but a new concept became a common topic of debate during the

negotiations for this “peace”: the *balance of power* in international relations, first mentioned in 1701 by Charles Davenant, an English economist and politician, in his *Essays on the Balance of Power*. The concept *balance of power* was boosted by Daniel Defoe’s periodical *A Review of the Affairs of France* (1704-1713), in its issue of 19th of April of 1709, using the term as a key factor in British negotiations to the extent that it was reflected in the final documents of the treaty.

Thus, Defoe’s periodical specialised in political relations and the tensions between the Catholic states of France and Spain and Protestant England thus following the Whig tradition and eventually becoming a pamphlet to put forth the Protestant Whig position. Defoe’s works, both his essays and his fictions, have a strong political and religious intention and should be therefore approached as one of the key figures that helped sustain the idea that the novel is a Protestant genre.

Since Ian Watt enshrined *Robinson Crusoe* as the first English novel, criticism of Defoe’s novel has been “stranded in the utopia of the Protestant Ethic” (1994, 299). Although recent scholars continue to admit the existence of that Protestant utopia in Defoe, they also highlight his fiction’s participation in the economic imperialism and colonialism of his time and the way *Robinson Crusoe* functions as a parable of “the early Enlightenment Man – pious but pragmatic, believing but rational, Christian but European, curious but colonialist, visionary but realist, and spiritual, but *this-worldly*” (Curkpatrick, 247). Apart from preposterous oppositions such as Christian/European and curious/colonialist, the definition reveals new trends in Defoe’s criticism. Consequently, Defoe’s indebtedness to the tradition of adventure and travel narratives has been

questioned by critics who see his work more as a nationalised literary sub-tradition of Puritan imagination.

In the light of the travel-book tradition, the discipline of colonial studies has focused on Defoe's interest in the Spanish Indies for both his biased colonial propaganda and his novelising. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in his 1818 lecture on Cervantes, argued for this intertextuality, stating that "in his *Persilis* [sic] and *Sigismunda*, the English may find the germ of their *Robinson Crusoe*" (274). Although Coleridge never explicitly identified the parallels, numerous points of contact may be established: the arrival, after a shipwreck, of European castaways on a barbaric island with many New World features, the domestication of that island, the motif of slavery, the depiction of local natives as barbarians and idolaters, Caribbean cannibals, and a long pilgrimage.

Indeed, there are many indirect references to *Don Quixote* and *Persiles* and similar situations in *Robinson Crusoe* that expose Defoe's interest in the Spanish affairs in the New World. As he was writing his novel, Defoe was a stockholder for the South Sea Company and was deeply concerned with English colonisation, specifically the river Orinoco, which had been explored by the Spaniards for more than two hundred years, where he wanted to erect a British colony. And it is precisely at the mouth of the Orinoco where Crusoe's fictional island is located since the area round that island was populated by "Caribees".

Defoe had taken the idea for the novel from the reports of a castaway on a Chilean island in the south Pacific, but his writing displaced the island according to his real interests. As Wilson argues, "in both his life and fictions [...] Defoe was

often responding to the diminished but still threatening presence of Spain's empire in the Indies" (65). In the light of his heavy colonial interest in Hispanic Indies, Defoe's imperialistic propaganda for promoting new schemes of trade and colonisation exposes a clear tendency to imitate Cervantes in *Robinson Crusoe*.

Besides topographical coincidences, Defoe's novel also imitates *Persiles* in his attempt to describe multiracial and multilingual Caribbean scenes. Speaking more than one language is a feature typical of the Caribbean and, as writer Rosario Ferré notes, taking over a language is "a cannibalistic activity", as if speaking the language of others were a way of becoming them (1999, 105). Every reader of *Robinson Crusoe* will remember Friday's broken English, which may be seen as Robinson's servant cannibalising his master's language. Other linguistic cannibal is Maresco, later referred to as Xury, whose name is at the same time cannibalised by Defoe from the Spanish *morisco*. Many scholars had wondered why Xury had to speak English, a language he had no motive to speak, when it would have been more natural to make Robinson Crusoe speak Arabic.

It is easy to observe the opposite situation in *Don Quixote*, who speaks some Arabic, as his creator Cervantes actually did. Crusoe carries out a constant Anglicisation of Spanish and Caribbean words, which shows not only the promiscuity of the English language at that time, but also the anxiety for colonisation reinforcing the reputation of England as an imperial imitator. However, this imperial mimesis is by no means a similar reflection. As in the example of Don Quixote teaching Arabic to Sancho Panza or *Persiles* managing to understand and translate foreign languages whereas Xury and Friday have to learn

English, Cervantes and Defoe represent two different, if not opposite, colonial discourses.

In 1552 Bartolomé de Las Casas's *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias* was published in Seville. The Dominican's inflammatory treatise was an account of Spanish atrocities against natives in the New World. It was translated into English in 1583. This treatise was a crucial text for Spain's Europeans enemies, who used Las Casas's humanitarian campaign on behalf of the Indians to construct a centuries-long Anglo-Dutch "Black Legend" excoriating Spanish cruelties as Gibson's 1971 *The Black Legend* explains. In an illustrated Latin edition of Las Casas's work published in Frankfurt in 1598, the expatriate Flemish publisher Theodore de Bry disseminated vividly engraved images of Spanish atrocities across Europe, as Conley details in his 1992 article "De Bry's Las Casas".

Daniel Defoe could have easily encountered any version of Las Casas's text given his biographical interest in Sir Walter Raleigh, Defoe was familiar with the privateer's anxiety to have the English supplant the Spanish in the New World. Thus, Defoe's contribution to, and exploitation of, the Black Legend is remarkably active.

According to Wilson, with his imitation of Las Casas's discourses, "Crusoe joins his voice to the huge chorus of anti-Catholic Europeans who had been trying, for over a century, to break the Spanish monopoly on American colonisation" (69). In many passages of *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe cannibalises and mimes Las Casas's work portraying a stereotype of the Spaniard as licentious,

cruel and greedy, while claiming that “Spaniard” and “barbarian” are synonyms.

Defoe states,

[t]hat this would justify the Conduct of the *Spaniards* in all their Barbarities practis'd in *America*, and where they destroy'd Millions of these People [...] with the utmost Abhorrence and Detestation, by even the *Spaniards* themselves, at this Time; and by all other Christian Nations of *Europe*, as mere Butchery, a bloody and unnatural Piece of Cruelty, unjustifiable either to God or Man; and such, as for which the very Name of a *Spaniard* is reckon'd to be frightful and terrible to all People of Humanity, or of Christian Compassion. (Defoe, 2010, 191)

Defoe depicts his hero as the great defender of the American Indians, miming Las Casas against the Spanish colonists in order to set himself and his nation above both. Hispanic scholars often attribute the Black legend to Dutch and English Protestant propaganda. Quite obviously, religion played an enormous role in the creation of the legend, as Protestants objected to the Catholic clericalism practiced by Spain. In particular, Maltby explains in *The Black Legend in England* (1971), English Protestants identified Spain as the champion of the Counter-Reformation, and therefore directed their hatred of Catholicism specifically at the Spanish. Add to this the sometimes-exaggerated accounts of the Inquisition, and Spain's reputation for cruelty was solidified.

Las Casas's text came to give sense to the European countries' envy for Spanish colonial control. As Maltby explains, if the Spaniards spoke so “ill of one another, the English could scarcely be blamed for doing likewise” (12). Las

Casas's position as a Dominican friar as well as his eye-witness status added weight to the criticisms. Since the Spanish conquest of America in part stemmed from a desire to convert the Indians to the Catholic faith, Las Casas's claim that the conquistadores had "lost all fear of God" rendered the avowed purpose meaningless (1974, 67).

The fact that Las Casas was a Catholic condemning "Catholic" practice provided the European Protestants with further ammunition against Catholic Spain. The successive editions and translations during the seventeenth century seemed far more interested in cementing the Black Legend than in protecting the Indians, which was Las Casas's original motive.

Accordingly, while Defoe condemns the Spanish brand of colonialism, he does not condemn colonialism in general; in other words, he does not try to free the Indians from the bonds of servitude, but instead tries to prove that servitude to Englishmen is superior to servitude to Spaniards. This is a far cry from the picture in Cervantes's *Persiles*, whose barbarians and their ritual practices are connected to the initiation of, not the resistance to, empire. Thus, according to Wilson, "instead of giving us cannibals who are *other* – either as frightful savages or pitiable victims of European imperialism – Cervantes represents them as great empire builders themselves" (73).

Cervantes, in short, by presenting a tribe of imperial cannibals, forces colonialism to meet in cannibalism the image of its own desire. He is anticipating postmodern and post-colonial practice which compares imperialism with a form

of cannibalism.³⁵ Cervantes does not idealise his cannibals. He uses their barbaric rituals to denounce and expose them as world conquerors who are threatening other people's boundaries. Cervantes is telling the Spaniards – more artistically and, at the same time, more effectively than Las Casas – an allegory about themselves as colonialists. He takes us to the margin, as others, and forces us to look at the centre in order to observe our own empire through our victims' eyes.

Defoe is also telling the British an allegory about themselves, but taking advantage of the demonisation of the Spanish empire and Catholicism. His tale is a self-congratulatory story. Whilst Cervantes suggests the need to look within to understand why cannibalising barbarians behave like imperial Spaniards – a projection of European territorial desires – Defoe avoids any trace of self-reflection invoking barbarians as an image of what the English society is not.

The memorable moment when Robinson Crusoe finds the footprint on the shore, he is overwhelmed by fear, shock, and insomnia. Later he encounters the rests of a cannibal barbeque, which makes him vomit. Although both scenes are completely logical, they are only some examples of the numerous explicit moments that work as signs of distinction between “Us” and “Them,” what immediately implies the construction of “otherness”. This otherness is used by Defoe to relocate anything that is not British and Protestant “out there”.

Psychologically, Defoe depicts a relationship between Crusoe and Others that is without fault – especially with Friday – and serves to justify his authority. The coloniser-colonised relationship is explained by Homi Bhabha's notion of

³⁵ See Hulme (1998).

mimicry,³⁶ that is, the tendency of the coloniser to impart upon the colonised a "desire for a reformed, recognisable Other" (122). This imitation is seen clearly through Crusoe's mastery over Friday. Friday's almost flawless mimicry projects onto Crusoe an image of himself, or more accurately, what Friday mimics in Crusoe. When Friday mirrors feelings of good will and benevolence, it justifies and reaffirms Crusoe's authority over him, and more generally, over the island. By focusing on Crusoe as the object mimicked, rather than, say, a group of colonisers, Defoe is able to obtain a purer reflection of himself from Friday, and the colonised conscience, to justify his authority.

James Joyce famously identified Crusoe as "the true symbol of the British conquest", portraying him as a figure who embodied "the whole Anglo-Saxon spirit: the manly independence; the slow yet efficient intelligence; the sexual apathy; the practical, well-balanced religiousness; the calculated taciturnity" (Manganiello, 109). Marthe Robert adapted this view of Crusoe to present him as a symbol of the British novel.³⁷ I would add, more specifically, that *Robinson Crusoe* represents the rise of the Protestant novel in Britain since it shares all the common characteristics that Defoe considered necessary to succeed: their reason, their work ethic, and the Protestant faith. These characteristics mirror the Puritan colonies' success and by depicting his hero Crusoe as the representation of those Puritan principles, Defoe is inciting the British into fulfilling their destiny – within the Whiggish historiographical tradition of regarding the present as a

³⁶ For a more detailed explanation of *mimicry*, see Bhabha 1994: 121-132.

³⁷ See Robert (1980).

natural and inevitable result of the past – a destiny consisting of reaping the benefits of imperialism.

Consequently, *Robinson Crusoe* represents the desire to establish “civilised” British colonies with a strong commercial interest in which the barbarian is dominated and domesticated to be a good servant. There are no traces of racial mixing, the hero is never on the other side because that “other” side is immediately made “home”, and the journey is always from the centre to the margins because the civilised meet the barbarians. In *Crusoe* therefore, it seems difficult to observe some sort of change or transformation in the hero, only perseverance and trust in Providence. There is no communion with the other since cannibalism serves as a rapacious projection of European fantasies of consumption.

Accordingly, Defoe’s attempt to imitate Cervantes’s trope of cannibalism is never successful due to a lack of self-reflexivity, which prevents identification because the British author is not able to fuse together traditional binaries such as man and nature, symbol and object and content and form of art. In other words, Defoe does not offer a clear aesthetic preoccupation to emphasise the metaphorical nature of the world. However, Cervantes is capable of reconciling symbol and object, that is, the matter and spirit of his artistic expression. Cervantes effectively utilises the aesthetics of the Counter-Reformation, the spectacle of the Empire, in order to focus his readers’ attention on the Other, the unknown, the uncivilised. Thus, the ill practices of an excessively dogmatic authority and a not so civilised society at home are exposed.

The barbarians in the *Persiles* consume powdered male hearts as a way to foretell the father of their forthcoming Messiah, a man destined to be a king whose son will be a world conqueror.³⁸ This cannibalistic ritual sacrifice not only imitates the sacrament of the Eucharist, but also endows it with a Catholic sensibility. The idea depicted in this scene is more than just a symbol, since in the symbol itself the visible reality of the whole is present, although in its entirety it remains invisible. Cervantes writes this scene as if it were a sort of liturgy. Therefore, in speaking of the liturgy as symbol we can say that it not only points to something else, like every symbol, but makes a reality present.

The author perfectly knew that his readers were aware of the sacrament of the Eucharist, its meaning and the belief in the Transubstantiation, following the image from the fourth gospel in John 1: 14: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth.” At one level, Cervantes shows the barbarians accepting and understanding the sacrament of the Eucharist and holding “as a certain and inviolable truth” the coming of their king whose son will rule the world. At another level, the author incites his readers to share the barbarians’ point of view through the common (and communal) act of receiving communion thus locating the protagonists’ homelands in the unexplored and “uncivilised”

³⁸ “The island is inhabited by barbarians, a savage and cruel people who hold as a certain and inviolable truth (being persuaded by the Devil or by an ancient sorcerer they consider the wisest of men) that from among them a king will come forth who will conquer and win a great part of the world. [...] They must sacrifice all the men who come to their island, grind the hearts of each of them into powder, and give these powders in a drink to the most important barbarians [...] he who should drink the powders without making a face or showing any sign that it tasted bad would be proclaimed their king. However, it wouldn’t be this king who’d conquer the world, but his son.” (Cervantes, 2009, 25).

Northern territories and narrating their subsequent quest for the “civilised” empire which in the end is not what they expected.

Indeed, the protagonists’ trip from the margins to the centre turns out to be disappointing when they discover not the ideal *heavenly* Rome as centre of Catholicism but an *earthly* city marked by false testimony, judicial venality, and even homicidal assault. Consequently, the more the pilgrims approach the real Rome, the more the utopic Rome disintegrates up to the point that the idea of Rome fuses together with that of Thule through the inversion of the Eucharist. No sooner have the pilgrims entered Rome’s surroundings than they are met not with a vision of the *heavenly city* but with a nightmare. Cervantes depicts Rome’s countryside as a bucolic place full of grass, streams and fountains until the pilgrims find a small portrait of Auristela (Sigismunda) hanging from the branch of a willow tree.

Thus that initial *locus amoenus* turns dramatically into an *et in Arcadia ego* where the pilgrims discover tracks of blood spilled all over the place by the duelling of barbarian (but Christian) Danish Prince Arnaldo and Catholic French Duke Nemurs. Auristela’s beautiful face in the portrait contrasts with her real horrified expression before the bloody scene thus mirroring what Armstrong-Roche identifies with the “Barbaric Isle’s two faces of bucolic idyll and primitive savagery” (82). The scene of the portrait displays the popular religious aesthetic of the Spanish Baroque in both content and form.

The pilgrims’ journey to improve their Catholic faith and culminate their love with marriage in Rome will be eventually fulfilled through another ritual

scene, the sacrificial and sacramental death of Maximino, Persiles's elder brother. Symbolically enough, Maximino fell in love with Sigismunda when he saw a portrait that his mother showed him. Maximino, the heir to the throne, was supposed to marry Sigismunda, but while he was away at war, Persiles fell hopelessly in love for Sigismunda and both set out for Rome after telling Sigismunda about Maximino's violent disposition. When Maximino returns, he immediately leaves in search of his brother and his betrothed. The next day Persiles and others are in front of the basilica of St. Paul and he tells the group that his brother is on his way to Rome very ill.

The beautiful and wealthy Hipólita offers her help, which immediately awakens feelings of jealousy and violence in her friend Pirro who draws his sword and stabs Persiles from shoulder to shoulder. Through the details of the description, we learn that Sigismunda, shocked and appalled, holds the seemingly expiring Persiles, who is covered with blood, in her lap. The scene calls immediately to mind the Virgin Mary as portrayed in the Pietà. At this point Maximino arrives, descends from his coach and takes the hands of Persiles and Sigismunda, joins them, gives his blessing for the marriage and then dies.

The significant dimension of the scene in front of St. Paul's in Rome is much more evident to seventeenth-century readers accustomed to interpreting earthly things in terms of Christian theology as was frequently done in the Spanish theatre and poetry of the time. In this scene, Cervantes creates a detailed visual description of a re-enactment of Jesus's crucifixion in the moment immediately prior to the symbolic wedding. Maximino's sacrifice brings about

Persiles's miraculous recovery both physical, from his wounds, and spiritual, from his love struck condition. Armstrong-Roche points out that "although in the novel Rome is ostensibly at the antipodes of the human sacrifice of the Barbaric Isle, Persiles's Rome itself comes off as a Barbaric Isle in Catholic disguise" (287). Moreover, Cervantes stimulates again the Catholic imaginative way of seeing this scene, like many others throughout his works, with a sacramental sensibility.

Like his readers, Cervantes would have had occasion to witness and participate in multiple processions,³⁹ funeral cortèges, mystery plays, or Corpus Christi celebrations where he could have internalised the visual narrative pattern as well as its moral and allegorical signification. More interesting still, he subverts and inverts the meanings thus causing some ambiguity in the way he presents his characters, society, institutions, Empire, and the law.

As has been explained in the examples above, Cervantes learned to make the most of his readers' Catholic imagination through the use of self-reflexive fictions, dialogic narrative, parody, irony, different tropes such as journeys, cannibalism, mimicry, hybridity, language and translation as well as an acute insight into the preoccupations of his time thus becoming the definitive milestone in the development of the modern novel.

³⁹ Good examples are the Holy Week processions which represent the Passion of the Christ through different *pasos* (floats) carried by *cofradías* (guilds, brotherhoods). Although their origin dates back to the Middle Ages, a great number of them were created during the Baroque period, inspired by the Counter-Reformation. See appendix 7.

I.6 CATHOLIC IMAGINATION AND BAROQUE AESTHETICS

Without denying the emergent British novel of the eighteenth century any privilege or value and admitting the richness of the distinctive features of its Protestant background, we can also assert that Cervantes, as examined above, consciously created an original and innovative way of writing – still imitated today – that we usually denominate “modern novel”. Not only did Cervantes write his novels in a Catholic nation, but he also wrote them with a Catholic imagination. Contrary to the Protestant idea that Catholicism was unable to tell the story of the modern, individual self in a realistic way, Cervantes’s two major novels demonstrate how Catholic imaginative aesthetics provided the novel with multiple perspectives and subversive discourses as well as a more profound dimension.

Despite the way in which Catholic dogma frequently fostered a limited and bigoted perspective toward the world, the Catholic faith has always conduced, paradoxically, openness to possibility and the power of imagination to transcend reality. Before the twentieth century, the Church made aesthetic splendour central to Catholic celebration. The pageantry of Mass, the outward and material spectacle of the Church, had been a common object of Protestant scorn during the

Reformation, but aesthetics made the divine a tangible presence for the Catholic. Catholics depended upon endless narratives to understand faith – hagiography, iconography, angelography, exemplums, folklore, local processions and feasts. Most importantly, the Catholic belief in the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, continues to make the incarnation of the Word available to everyone by infusing all aspects of ordinary life with something magical, transcendental or divine while, at the same time, granting value to material existence. The sacraments continue up until this day to have a powerful impact upon a literary imagination.

David Tracy in his study *The Analogical Imagination* noted that the classic works of Catholic theologians and artists tend to emphasise the presence of God in the world, while the classic works of Protestants tend to emphasise the absence of God from the world. Consequently, the Catholic writers usually stress the nearness of God to His creation; the Protestant writers the distance between God and His creation. He then traces the analogical imagination as a Catholic tendency in Christianity and the dialectical imagination as a Protestant one.⁴⁰

Following Tracy's work, critics have tried to discern the analogical and dialectical imagination in contemporary culture. Andrew Greely, for example, whose numerous sociological studies have popularised Tracy's theories, adds that, "Catholics tend to accentuate the immanence of God [whereas] Protestants focus on the transcendence of God" (2000, 5). Thus, the Catholic imagination, analogical in Tracy's terms, in all its many manifestations tends to emphasise the metaphorical nature of creation.

⁴⁰ David Tracy is consistently careful to insist that neither propensity is superior to the other, that both need each other.

This is in stark contrast to the Protestant emphasis on biblical revelation as the primary source of God's truth. Since the Reformation, Protestants have tended to regard Catholic practice of visual and sensual imagery as a form of idol worship closely related to Catholic corruption. The tension between both sensibilities could have been summed up as a conflict between the Catholic culture of the image and the Protestant culture of the word. It is no coincidence that the invention of the printing press and the first stirrings of Protestantism occurred at the same moment in history.

Reformers were able to spread their religious imagination to the Christian world and print and distribute their Bible in the vernacular of the people. Thus in some ways the Catholic-Protestant conflict of the sixteenth century was between two different cultures, two different ways of understanding politics, society, and religion. In the foreword to the 2009 edition of Christopher Dawson's *The Dividing of Christendom*, James Hitchcock summarises Dawson's positive approach to that tension:

Although the alliance of the Counter-Reformation with Spain proved disastrous for the Church, bringing it under suspicion of being an instrument of Spanish imperialism, the Counter-Reformation was truly religious and provided an antidote to rationalism and materialism, as well as to the Protestant charge that Catholicism was merely a religion of externals. (15)

Consequently, according to Dawson, the Church attained a new level of universal awareness, which he exemplifies with the early Jesuit missionaries

extending Catholicism all over the world. Apart from theological differences, Dawson saw Baroque art as the most important expression of the Counter-Reformation, a great international phenomenon “manifesting anew the power of the spiritual; an ecstatic, mystical spirit alien to the sober piety of the North; a union of heart and head that appealed to the masses as well as to the educated”.

Although he admits that in some ways the Protestant North was more “intellectually vigorous” than the Catholic South, “the Baroque movement, as the triumph of the imagination, was able to create a culture that was unified even at the popular level”. By contrast, he adds, “Protestant iconoclasm impoverished the imagination attempting to Christianise culture through exclusively rational means, namely, the Bible and the sermon” (16).

As has been said above, Catholicism has also had limited artistic freedom throughout history. This dualistic perspective, which seems to exist in Catholicism stems from what Greeley defines as a double tradition within the Church: the high tradition and the popular tradition.

The former is contained in the teaching of theologians and the magisterium. It is cognitive, propositional, didactic. It is prosaic Catholicism. The latter is contained in the teaching of parents, family, neighbours, and friends. It is imaginative, experimental, narrative. It is poetic Catholicism. (76)

Part of this double tradition is the Church’s resistance to display explicit sensual imagery. Although Greeley admits that an ascetic antagonism to the flesh

and sexuality runs through Catholicism, exacerbated by Jansenism⁴¹, and is transmitted through the “high tradition”, he insists that a love for the material world, sensory beauty and the pleasures of the flesh has stubbornly persevered in the popular tradition. Greely also asserts that stories are central to Catholicism:

Religion is story before it is anything else and after it is everything else. It is not necessary that all story forms be maintained. (...) But when a church ceases to be the centre of events which bind together sacred time and sacred space through sacred narrative, it may be a very beautiful, dignified, reverent place, but it isn't Catholic anymore. When a church stops being a treasure house of stories, it stops being Catholic. (36)

The gospels and the other narratives of the Scripture are fundamental in all Christian traditions, but Catholicism, with its rich lore of Saints' lives and legends, folklore spectacle, popular traditions and the sacramental aesthetics in art from the Romanesque to Baroque, has perhaps foregrounded the narrative aspect of Christianity more than other denominations. Catholic novelist Ron Hansen is a good example of the way his Catholic upbringing nurtured his vocation as a writer:

Looking back on my childhood now, I find that church-going and religion were in good part the origin of my vocation as a writer, for along with Catholicism's feast for the senses, its ethical concerns, its insistence on seeing God in all things, and the high status it gave to scripture, drama, and

⁴¹Jansenism was a reform movement in seventeenth century France, named after theologian Cornelius Jansen, later bishop of Ypres, that taught a very pessimistic view of human nature and stressed predestination and humanity's inability to perform good works without God's grace. Jansen denied human free will and God's desire to save everyone as he inferred from St. Paul's warnings to Timothy (1 Tim. 2:4).

art, there was a connotation in Catholicism's liturgies that storytelling mattered. Each Mass was a narrative steeped in meaning and metaphor, helping the faithful to not only remember the past but to make it present here and now, and to bind ourselves into a sharing group so that, ideally, we could continue the public ministry of Jesus in our world. (2001, vii)

Greely also sees Catholicism as less afraid of the imaginative dimension of religion than are Protestantism, Judaism, or Islam, because it is "the most sacramental of the four religions, the one most likely to see the transcendent lurking in the objects, events, and people of creation" (Greely, 77).

Although some may find these thoughts debatable, Greely reminds us that he refers to the tradition as a whole, not of each individual Catholic: "Many Catholics act as if creation is Godforsaken, while many who are not Catholic act as if the whole of creation is sacramental and revelatory of God" (Greely, 18). It is not the individual, therefore, but the tradition and the ability or the capacity of the participants/readers, spurred by their upbringing, background, habit or just their receptivity to a spiritual dimension, what makes this analogical or sacramental sensibility an important characteristic of Catholic fictions and, by extension, of most Catholic art.

When Saint Jerome translated the Bible into the Latin Vulgate,⁴² he chose the Latin *sacramentum*, sacrament, for the Greek *mysterion* (μυστήριον), mystery.

⁴² The Vulgate is a late fourth century translation of the Bible. It was largely the work of St. Jerome, who was commissioned by Pope Damasus I in 382 to make a revision of the old Latin translations. By the 13th century this revision had come to be called the *versio vulgata*, that is, the "commonly used translation". In the 16th century it became the definitive and officially promulgated Latin version of the Bible in the Roman Catholic Church.

In the synoptic Gospels *mysterion* generally refers to “the knowledge of the *mysteries/secrets* of the kingdom of God” (Matthew 13:11, Mark 4:11 and Luke 8:10), and in Saint Paul’s Epistles, to Christ Himself as the perfect revelation of God’s will.⁴³ Tertullian (c.160-c.225) first used the Latin word *sacramentum*⁴⁴ when he talked about the rite of Christian initiation, understanding the word to mean a sacred action, object, or means. And Saint Augustine (354-430) further clarified the term by defining sacraments as “visible forms of invisible grace” (Guzie, 39).

Throughout the centuries, there was a tendency to see more and more events as sacraments until the sixteenth century, when the Protestant Reformation limited the sacraments to Baptism and Eucharist, the Gospel sacraments. The Roman Council of Trent, nevertheless, decreed that signs become sacraments only if they become channels for grace. Twentieth-century theology has used the term in a far more inclusive way. The *Oxford Companion to the Bible* describes sacraments “as occasions of encounter between God and the believer, where the reality of God’s gracious actions needs to be accepted in faith” (Suggit, 666). John Neary in his *Like and Unlike God* considers Thomism to be the “most obvious blossoming of the analogical imagination in Christian history” (Neary, 23). Thomas Aquinas’s positive view of the natural world as basically good, although fallen, is the opposite view to that of the dialectical imagination, which stresses the depravity of the fallen world. For Aquinas, grace builds on nature, and the

⁴³ Cf. Romans 16:25, 1 Corinthians 2:7, Ephesians 3:5-9, Colossians 1:27 and 2:2, and 1 Timothy 3:16.

⁴⁴ From *sacrare* meaning “to make sacred”, initially carried the idea of a sacred military oath. Here is the twofold idea, central to sacramental theology, of tangible sign (rite, oath) and supernatural reality (sanctifying grace).

supernatural on the natural. Thomism has influenced Catholic thought, due to its massive use in sermons, catechetical materials, devotional works, etc., and has played an important role in the Catholic way of looking at the world.

This is a natural idea if we take into account the fact that a religion that has at the centre of its liturgy the Seven Sacraments and uses material things to make the sacred present will encourage an analogical vision. In the Church's understanding of sacrament, the physical matter and form are not just a sign of a spiritual reality, they also confer grace *ex opere operato* (by the very fact of the action being performed), since, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "from the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and His Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister" (1128).

In Catholicism, God's divine power can be communicated through such mundane material as water, wine, bread, and oil where matter becomes some sort of divine language. Furthermore, a tradition that has decorated its churches with statues, pictures, stained glass, and altarpieces, and whose treasured belief in the Communion of Saints means that those who are in heaven can hear our prayers and help us meet them in the future. Michael Rose, in *Ugly as Sin: How They Changed our Churches from Sacred Places to Meeting Places* (2001), explains how some of the Catholic churches that were built after Vatican II were plain to the point of being austere and almost completely devoid of religious art. To some extent, this trend was a reaction against what many considered a mediocre and

tawdry decoration of many pre-Vatican II Catholic churches. The cure, however, was in most cases worse than the disease.

This belief that God loves the material world enough to make it the vehicle of sharing His life with humanity is a natural consequence of the dogma of the Incarnation. Chesterton makes the point that, although early Christianity was influenced by Platonic ideas that devalued matter, the centrality of the idea of the Incarnation in Western civilisation, made it “inevitable that there would be a return to materialism, in the sense of the serious value of matter and the making of the body. When once Christ had risen, it was inevitable that Aristotle should rise again” (Chesterton, 73). This positive view of the world is called incarnational or sacramental.

According to the *HarperCollins Encyclopaedia of Catholicism*, the principle of sacramentality means “the notion that all reality, both animate and inanimate, is potentially or in fact the bearer of God’s presence and the instrument of God’s saving activity on humanity’s behalf” (1148). It is this thought that Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins proclaims, “The world is charged with the grandeur of God./ It will flame out, like shining from shook foil” (Hopkins, 27).

When we describe something as “sacramental”, such as a text, a ritual, an experience, it derives from the complex conception of sacrament as practiced in the liturgy and theorised in theology within the scope of the Christian tradition. Its symbolism points to the paradox of the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, and his sacrificial death on Calvary. St. Paul describes Christ’s passion and death as

skandalon (σκανδαλον) literally “a stumbling-rock”⁴⁵ in 1 Cor. 1:23, that is, an obstacle or fall which will develop the two concepts of cause and effect, eventually of fall or salvation.

As has been explained above, these images encapsulate the famous lines from the Fourth Gospel of “*the word made flesh*” which, at the same time, also imply a two-fold discourse: the scandal of language, word, and the scandal of the body, flesh. The Catechism explains that, “the visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament” (1131). Consequently, the key to understanding sacramentality is mediation.

Thus the sacramental imagination allows us to recognise transcendence in immanence. Easy as it may seem to describe, it is much harder to give an account of its operations and to lay out its implications. This difficulty may be in part due to the inherent mystery to which the sacramental imagination responds: the fundamental graced nature of created being as a mediation of divine presence as described in Genesis 1-2. The sacramental depth of created reality seen by the eyes of faith is almost impossible to prove in objective terms. Indeed its presence is a mystery that is grounded in God’s “discretion”⁴⁶ – the fact that God evades our direct experience. Lastly, the difficulty is caused by the fact that “sacramentality is both the *structure* of creation and a *process*, our active

⁴⁵ The Greek Word *skandalon*, unknown by classic authors, is used to translate two Hebrew substantive verbs meaning obstacle or tramp, something on which one easily stumbles. This primitive meaning of “fall” will endure both as cause and effect.

⁴⁶ See Duquoc. He uses this term to explain how the mystery of the sacramental impulse is based on God’s own ineffability which makes it harder for us to understand since God is not an object of our knowledge in the way that other objects are.

encounter with creation [...] It is therefore not a thing to be defined or a text to be decoded, but rather a performance to be experienced, a praxis demanding our participation” (Godzieba, 17).

While theology would analyse this mystery, this scandal, continuously keeping an eye on the limits and stability of its own study, the fictional discourses of literature and the arts are free to explore this scandal in a manner that simultaneously enriches and challenges notions of sacrament and sacramentality and, by extension, what it means to describe the Church as a “Eucharistic community”.

Hence my effort to understand why the notion of the sacramental imagination has endured, despite significant cultural shifts and movement away from the traditional practices of the Catholic faith. Not only theologians, philosophers and religious communities, but also writers and other artists continue to make use of the language, image, and evocation of the sacraments.

Since the rise of the Catholic novel in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, writers and artists have drawn upon sacramentality precisely because of the scandalous and subversive power of the Eucharistic mystery. The thematic and symbolic tensions, the ambiguity and destabilising effect inherent to sacramentality that the artists of Catholic Reformation had already used extensively, provides the popular imaginary with useful patterns to learn, interpret, and reinforce their faith.

The passionate mysticism of the Catholic Reformation infused the arts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In literature, there appeared a new

emphasis on heightened spirituality and on personal visionary experience acquired by way of the senses. Equally important as faith was the passionate embrace of the interior “voice” which gave expression in painting and sculpture. Paintings and other artwork reflected the sort of mystery, shadows and ecstasy very literally “felt” in popular spirituality, especially in Castile, translating that kind of Iberian emotion into an almost “standard” of the Catholic Counter-Reformation triumphalism.

The religious zeal of Catholic Reformers inspired a tremendous surge of artistic activity, especially in Italy and Spain. The clearly defined, symmetrical compositions of High Renaissance painters gave way to *mannerism*, a style marked by spatial complexity, artificiality, and affectation as well as a new psychological intensity to visual expression. Their painting mirrored the self-conscious spirituality and the profound insecurities of an age of religious wars and political rivalry. Moreover, these characteristics have made this sacramental imagination such a fertile trope that it is more valid than ever within a postmodern context preoccupied with themes of language, self-reflexivity, embodiment, and ambiguous discourses such as reality/fiction, presence/absence, immanence/transcendence, self/other, and so on.

Baroque secular and religious celebrations allow people to partake of the splendour and spectacle associated with key institutions of the Spanish state: the Church and the Monarchy. Thus, the elaborate representation of sacramental plays on the feast of Corpus Christi gave visibility to the concept of transubstantiation as well as to other teachings of the Catholic Church. At these public spectacles,

the audience would be expected to be engulfed in a sea of emotion and be guided toward an affirmation of faith. An excellent example of how Baroque aesthetics and the spirit of the Catholic Reformation united both consciously and unconsciously is the work of Velázquez, who blended the sacred and the profane in perfect harmony.

The medieval confusion between the sacred and the profane was negotiated by the Counter-Reformation artistic impulse thus resulting in an effective tension between both forces. The mixing of daily, homely, and earthly elements with heavenly, miraculous, and sacred scenes probably had begun before the “official” Catholic Reform in Trent as visual arts and literature show. The Council art was subtly changing and this process of depicting the tension between the sacred and the profane improved.

Velázquez’s 1618 painting *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*⁴⁷ exemplifies this development in Spanish art of the time as well as follows the Counter-Reformation guidelines of “the usefulness of the ‘active life’ to counter Lutheran assertions of the spiritual adequacy of ‘faith alone’” (Bray, 122). Velázquez has painted the interior of a kitchen with two half-length women to the left. On the table are a number of foods, perhaps the ingredients of an *alioli* sauce – a garlic mayonnaise made to accompany fish – quite usual in Spanish food, which is being prepared by the maid.

In the background there is a biblical scene from the gospel of Luke: the story of Christ in the house of Martha and Mary. The scene is seen here through

⁴⁷ See appendix 8.

an opening in the wall or a picture on the kitchen wall. When Martha complained to Christ that while Mary sat listening to him she was left to serve the meal alone, Christ replied: 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her' (Lk 10: 40-42). The plight of Martha clearly relates to that of the maid in the foreground. She has her cheeks red as if she were upset and the old woman behind her points to the biblical scene to comfort her or, conversely, to rebuke her thus reinforcing the background scene. We recognise the typical Spanish food, but as the old woman points out and the fish symbolise, the authentic "food" is in the background.

As Mary is attentively "eating" Jesus's words, we are also invited to eat the body of Christ. The maid looks out of the painting towards us thus inviting us to take part in her scene. The contrast between the stylised painting in the background and the grotesque features of the foreground scene brings the sacred into active and creative contact with reality. This may be seen as an early example of Velázquez's interest in layered composition, a form also known as "painting within the painting". He continually exploited this form throughout his career. This "story within a story" narrative device or *misse-en-abyme* was often used by Spanish artists during this period.

In this technique, the inner story often has symbolic and psychological significance for the characters in the outer story. There is often some parallel between the two stories, and the meaning of the inner story is used to reveal the truth in the outer story. Stories-within-a-story may disclose the background of

characters or events, tell of myths and legends that influence the plot, or even seem to be extraneous diversions from the plot. It can also be observed a kind of mirror image or effect, which forces the viewer or reader to interrogate himself. Often the stories within a story are used to satirise views, not only in the outer story but also in the real world.

If sacramental theology tries to express the real action of Christ's saving grace at work in the Church, the sacramental imagination in literature and art in general will attempt to draw the consequences of this into fiction, poetry, painting, etc. O'Neill refers to "the Pattern of Christ" (57) which is concealed in art thus imitating God's communication with the world. A belief in the sacramental system requires an aesthetic that tries to draw out and depict the sacramental paradox, expressing the visible with the invisible, the mundane with the celestial, in an attempt to harmonise the workings of art with the workings of grace. Catholic art, consequently, acquires what William Barry called the task of "bodying forth" those sacred realities that constitute the fulfilment of Catholic life (183). And this "bodying forth" is precisely the key to understanding the paradox of the sacramental imagination.

Nowhere in the Gospels is this paradox more noticeable than in Luke's account of the encounter between the Risen Christ and the two travellers on the road to Emmaus (Lk, 24:13-35). In this narrative, Cleopas and another disciple are on their way to Emmaus when they meet Jesus, although they do not recognise him, and discuss their sadness at recent events of Christ's passion and death. They tell the story of Jesus although He is present. In fact, He is the focus of the

narrative, but He is absent at the same time. Then Jesus explains to them the Scriptures about Himself, a hermeneutical discourse embedded in the Gospels where the Word leads to the Sacrament in the liturgical act.

As they approach the village, Jesus acts as if he was going farther, and they urge Him strongly: “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over” (Lk, 24:29). The Gospel of Luke states that Jesus stayed and had supper with them. Once Jesus had used his Word to disclose Himself, then He was about to use his body to complete the Sacrament. During the supper at Emmaus, He breaks the bread – the meal itself resembles the Eucharist – He “took bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to them” (Lk, 24:30), and this seems to be the moment of recognition, of *anagnoresis*, the same moment when his physical body disappears from their sight while “their eyes were opened and they recognised Him” (Lk, 24:31).

The Eucharistic meal becomes the encounter with the Risen Christ who is made known to them in the breaking of the bread. The paradox of the Sacrament is fully shown when He is totally absent to their perception while his body is physically present. By the end of the narrative, however, the situation is reversed when He is present to them when his body vanishes.

In the subsequent encounter with the eleven disciples, what Jesus presents as evidence is not the hermeneutical discourse that they lack, but his own body and blood: “Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have” (Lk, 24:39). They barely see Jesus, they barely believe in his presence while He is physically

present. John's gospel goes further when depicts how Christ's body materialises inside a locked room (Jn, 20:19).

The climax of the account, however, is when Thomas's doubt turns to belief when he not only sees Him but he is also invited to touch Him, even to reach out his hand and put it in the wound in Christ's side (Jn, 20:27). Jesus, then, asks for some food, which implies that the sacrament is going to be performed. His body is going to be offered, again, not the physical body that Thomas wanted to see and touch – since that is the old body before his sacrifice, which is now absent – but the new one, the sacrificed and broken body, the only re-presented once and again in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Jesus finally says to Thomas: "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed" (Jn, 20:29). Thomas's test seems absolute: believing without seeing, without direct physical evidence is unthinkable. The shocking invitation to thrust his hand into the wound emphasises the physicality of the body, a necessary step for us to understand Christ's resurrection, because it is the resurrection of the body, his human form which represents our hope in resurrection. Indeed, for the believers of the time of the Gospels and Epistles and for those to follow in history, Thomas's test will be impossible so they will have to rely on the testimony and the promises made by Jesus.

Consequently, Christianity and the creative arts have maintained a difficult relationship throughout history. On the other hand, the arts have been utilised by Christian worship, especially in Catholicism, as illustrative tools to the aims of

theology and liturgy as well as a more accessible way of conveying the life of Jesus Christ. However, the arts, on their part, offer a unique perspective on the scandalous and subversive implications of the Catholic faith. In postmodern terms, we could call this mutual relationship between the arts and Catholicism a “deconstructive” connection – depicted by Cervantes four hundred years before. Consequently, the arts seem to negotiate the “profanity” inherent to the sacred, that is, the subversive core of the Eucharist in terms that theology will not use.

I.7 CATHOLIC AESTHETICS IN CERVANTES'S NOVELS

Catholicism, art and literature enjoyed a particularly close relationship during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Spain. It would be futile to discern whether that relationship privileged one over the other, even more if we take into account that the Counter-Reformation had also played an important role in politics. The point is that *image* defined the aesthetic and theological principles of the Counter-Reformation. Ana María Laguna claims that it is really the Spanish Golden Age of “collaborative efforts among writers, who consider themselves painters of words, and painters, who complementary think of themselves as writers of images” (15). The allegedly excessive use of the visual arts on the part of the Monarchy and the religious hierarchy produced a cross-fertilisation in literature that gave way to important innovations.

Thus, the modern novel that Cervantes originated by rearranging past and present literary elements conveyed a new perspective, a new perception of the world. Catholicism and its complex set of narratives pervaded every dimension of a society stimulating and inspiring the *imaginarium* of Cervantes and his contemporaries. Sets of opposites such as past and present, fact and fiction, madness and sanity, or sacred and profane were neutralised and put into question

in order to give artistic expression to the deepest mysteries of life and faith. The efforts of the Council of Trent to inculcate people with the tangibility of the mysteries of faith, especially the Sacraments, gave rise to a fondness for the visual expression, as Laguna claims, which “entailed a singular mental habit and alternate form of reading that affected both literary production and consumption” (37). Not only was Cervantes aware of this tendency, but he also made the most of it and expressed that aesthetic impulse in his novels.

Sacramental aesthetics became central in the development of arts and literature. As has been analysed above, the mystery (*skandalon*) of the sacrament is established as a two-fold scandal of language and body. Thus, when narratives, textual or visual, take on a sacramental character raise the hermeneutical problem of how to determine meaning, how to interpret the whole image: language and body. The unsettling and, at the same time, comforting image of the body broken and torn to be eaten, received into one’s own body, provokes multiple interpretations.

The Eucharist shows the body at the point of utter glory, triumph, community, and presence, but also at the point of complete abasement, abjection, abandonment, and absence. The Eucharistic paradox creates new narratives of the body as most really present precisely in this absence. These narratives will negotiate the Eucharistic body as a body *fractured*, *consumed*, or *eroticised*.

The sacramental narrative of *fracturing* is constantly reproducing the brokenness of the body of Christ. The traditional metaphor used by Catholic mentality for describing the dynamic wholeness of creation and humankind’s

relationship with God is the human body. Attentiveness to this relationship between body, mind, and world is an important way in which the Catholic intellectual tradition brings the promise of Christ among us to endure the struggles of human existence.

The body can be seen as a metaphor for a force field in which the forces of life and death compete. Central to the Catholic view of this tension is that God the Son became a human being and as a divine-human person affirmed the goodness of the body and provided the means by which the force of life could triumph over death. The struggle is a stage for a more profound spiritual transformation that integrates the body, mind, and spirit of the person through the communion.

Jesus Christ continues through the ages to become incarnate in his body, the Church. In this body, integration and wholeness are brought about through Christ's acting in the members of the body, particularly through the sacraments. However, the bread that unites us, Christ's body, has to be broken. The paradox of brokenness that is wholeness, wholeness that is brokenness. Our unity, as a body, is fragmentary. We are one and, at the same time, we are many.

The fractures, the distance not only between each individual and every other, but even within our divided selves, is acknowledged and enacted in the breaking of the bread, the fracturing of Christ's body. It is no longer a loss to overcome, but a celebration of our true imperfect humanity, broken yet redeemed, in Christ's fractured body. Catholicism, both in theological and artistic imaginations, cannot but be haunted by the image of Christ's broken body. The

Catholic depiction of an almost grotesque body exposing its gaps and fissures is precisely the central symbol of the Eucharist.

The most frequent image of Christ's body is the abject, emaciated body of Jesus in his Passion and then, the spectacle of the crucified Jesus, skin stretched tight over his ribcage, severe bleeding wounds from the flogging, and the crown of thorns on his head, blood trickling down from his scalp to his breast. It is a dying but not-yet-dead body, but paradoxically one from which life springs forth. A body abandoned and nailed to a dead tree, but also a body accompanied and remembered, nailed to the Tree of Life. Velazquez's *Christ Crucified* (1632)⁴⁸ encapsulates these reflections. It shows a good, perfect indeed, man being humiliated, injured, and ultimately killed.

It is sympathetic to sorrow and pity without being hysterical or vengeful. It invites us to contemplate the centrality of human suffering and sacrifice while it strengthens us offering consolation. This visual representation of Christ's Eucharistic body also emphasises the degradation of the body, what Mikhail Bakhtin calls the "grotesque realism" in his study on Rabelais:

Degradation here means coming down to earth, the contact with the earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time. To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better. To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and

⁴⁸ See appendix 9.

copulation, conception, pregnancy and birth. Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one. To degrade an object does not imply merely hurling it into the void of nonexistence, into absolute destruction, but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth takes place. Grotesque realism knows no other level; it is the fruitful earth and the womb. It is always conceiving. (Bakhtin, 1984, 21)

Christ's degraded body is grotesque as shown in the crucifixion and resurrection wounded, bleeding or pierced, but it is a reproductive body, He gives life. These transgressions of bodily integrity of the crucified, Eucharistic body as a grotesque body and *vice versa* characterise the unconscious popular sacramental imagination and pervade both the visual arts and literature.

Thus, as Bakhtin goes on to say, "The grotesque body [...] is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body" (Bakhtin, 1984, 317). According to Bakhtin, these transgressions are recognisable from within the profane framework of festival and carnival since "nearly all the rituals of the feast of fools are a grotesque degradation of various church rituals and symbols and their transfer to the material bodily level" (Bakhtin, 74).

After the bread has been broken, it is consumed. The Eucharist *skandalon* takes a step further and invites the faithful to eat the broken body of Christ. The sacrament is both communion and communication and, consequently, Christ's body, the Word is food. All over the Mediterranean territories, food has always

been, and still is, more than a bodily function and necessity. Consuming food means gathering together and communicating. Food has symbolised for the Jews, and later for Christians, the relationship among human beings and God.⁴⁹ Accordingly, food was identified with God's word symbolising law and covenant. Food becomes body as well as language, as it communicates only by being consumed.

The earliest Christians chose to eat a meal together as a ritual representation of their fundamental belief in the incarnation of God in Christ and their faith in the resurrection of the body. This is what Jesus told them during the Last Supper and the supper at Emmaus. However, from the very beginning, this practice was considered a scandalous habit in the eyes of those outside the Christian communities and was imbued with overtly cannibalistic symbolism. Early Christians were accused of cannibalism, incest and infanticide, because of misunderstood sacramental practices, as both Justin Martyr and Tertullian wrote.⁵⁰

Indeed, in his attempt to expose the absurdity of this pagan misunderstanding of the Christians' sacred rites, Tertullian unintentionally validates this misinterpretation by pointing to the cannibalistic rites already existing in the culture and detailing the bloody practices of several tribes. Elaine Pagels connects Tertullian's response to the scandal of early Christian Eucharistic practice:

⁴⁹ See Feeley-Harnik, 1981.

⁵⁰ While Justin Martyr attempts to explain the confusion through a detailed description of the Christian practices, Tertullian uses sarcasm in his response thus maintaining the scandal, in a way. See Justin Martyr, 2008, *First Apology*, ch. LXV-LXVI, and Tertullian, 2004, *Apology*, ch. VII-VIII.

But other early followers of Jesus, like the majority ever since, saw the sacred meal in a much stranger – even macabre – way: as eating human flesh and drinking human blood. [...] Despite his sarcasm, Tertullian cannot dispel the shocking fact that the Christian “mystery” invites initiates to eat human flesh – even if only symbolically. Pagans might be repelled by the practice of instructing newcomers to drink wine as human blood, but for devout Jews, whose very definition of *kosher* (pure) food requires that it be drained of all blood, would be especially disgusting. (Pagels, 27-29)

It is evident that the paradox is present in the sacramental symbol and that Tertullian’s attempts to ridicule the accusations of cannibalism simultaneously revealed the inevitable association of the Christian Eucharist with cannibalism from its earliest practices. Jesus broke with the past, the ancient law of the Jews, and this practice might have set his followers apart from Jewish communities and customs.

Pagels observes that “by placing the drama of Jesus’s death at the centre of their sacred meal, his followers transformed what others would see as total catastrophe – what Paul calls ‘scandal’ – into religious paradox: in the depths of human defeat they claimed to find the victory of God” (31). The four Gospels, therefore, interpret the Last Supper as a symbol of renewal, as Pagels puts it, “as a kind of death-feast, but one that looks forward in hope” (40). Accordingly, when Christ gave his Body and Blood to save humanity, the sacrificial system of ancient rites was annihilated as well.

Cervantes also used the trope of cannibalism literally in the *Persiles*, displaying the sacramental impulse of his novels' aesthetics. As we have seen above, Cervantes wrote his last novel as a homage to Heliodorus's *The Ethiopica*, a work he admired and wanted to imitate. However, Michael Armstrong-Roche calls our attention to the fact that the *Persiles's* creative response implies "a potential ideological challenge [...] exemplified by its handling of the sacrificial theme" (38).

In *The Ethiopica* the epic journey of the heroes ends with the matrimonial and political resolution, which is celebrated by the abolition of human sacrifice. The *Persiles* reverses *The Ethiopica* by opening with a reference to the practice of human sacrifice described in the concluding pages of Heliodorus's novel. In *Persiles*, the ritual sacrifice of the Barbaric Isle is located at the beginning of the novel and repeated throughout with metaphorical and literal variations. Armstrong-Roche goes on to say:

The thwarting of human sacrifice in *Persiles* is no triumphant end of the road. Its recurrently enacted (and not always neutralised) threat is the archetype for the whole journey from beginning to end. In *Persiles*, it remains ever-present – even in the very heart of classical and Christian "civilisation" – and not, as in *The Ethiopica*, an exotic practice, confined to the geographic margins. (38)

In Heliodorus's novel, moreover, the epic journey of the heroes ends in the Egyptian capital of Meroe, where the matrimonial and political resolution is celebrated and carried out by the abolition of human sacrifice – a practice related

to the Ethiopian religion in the novel. Conversely, *Persiles*, by reversing Heliodorus's quest from the centre to periphery (Greek – Ethiopian), also alters the meaning of the human sacrifice. Its metaphorical repetition turns it into a custom practice, which will be necessary for the heroes to become good Catholics in Rome. Heliodorus closes his novel with the apotheosis of religious conversion under the Hellenistic political rule.

The sacrificial ritual is relegated to an exotic practice, confined to the geographic margins of civilisation. In Cervantes, however, the sacrificial ritual is ever-present – even in the heart of Christian civilisation – since Rome is the place where the ritual is most necessary for conversion. This association of the cannibalistic sacrifice with the conversion ritual shows Cervantes's sacramental imagination, above all once the reader considers the novel as a whole after finishing it.

The barbaric sacrificial impulse provides an ethical significance that constantly challenges the Holy See in Rome and everything it represents. *Persiles* describes a paradoxical formulation of the encounter with “the other”, and forces the reader to reflect on the alleged good Catholic practices of a Rome, in Armstrong-Roche's words, “in need of spiritual enlightenment by the lights of its own tradition” (113). As the Northern European pilgrims “make their way across land from Portugal to Rome's heart of darkness, they witness episodic cases of barbarism at home in the Catholic South in which wrathful kin (fathers, brothers, uncles), suitors, spurned lovers, and crazed coreligionists strike out blindly and even violently and in which corrupt justice is the political norm” (74).

Consequently, the barbaric isle of Thule does not stand in stark contrast to civilised Rome, but their ethical significance seems almost reversed.

[R]epresentative Catholic characters and institutions consume hearts in (largely) metaphorical variations on the Barbaric Isle's ritual sacrifice. As the protagonists move away from the Barbaric Isle toward Rome, the motif of the eaten heart begins to take on a symbolic charge, as an emblem of the atrocities committed in the name of love. (Armstrong-Roche, 74-75)

There is a paradoxical tension between the Christian law of the Northern Gothic place of Periandro and the barbaric customs of the Catholic South. The metaphoric Eucharistic sacrifice is moved to Rome where the inversion of the sacramental image is completed. From the cannibalistic ritual of the Barbaric Isle, through the continuous episodes of violence along the way, the protagonists finally achieve their goals – Catholic instruction and marriage – by means of a human sacrifice: Maximino's death.

The *Persiles* begins in medias res,⁵¹ when we find Periandro in a dark pit hearing, but not understanding the words he can hear. The barbarians pull him out of the pit in an act that symbolises his birth. The allegorical dimension of the scene, repeated throughout the rest of the novel, depicts how the protagonist is taken from darkness to light. The novel itself is a journey from the dark barbaric North to the bright civilised South, from pre-Christian ignorance to Revelation. The cannibalistic ritual at the beginning works as a clash between darkness and

⁵¹ It was customary in Byzantine romances. It may have its origins in oral tradition and it became a stylistic convention in epic poetry, the exemplar in Western poetry being Homer's *The Illiad* and the *Odyssey* (9th C. BC).

light – literally a *chiaroscuro* – which, as the protagonists’ journey progresses, is distorted as the conspicuous inversion of the Eucharist reveals. Cervantes creates a dichotomy between Law and custom, between the Law of Nature and the Law of Grace.

This conflict, however, is not resolved in the novel, which forces us to observe the joint presence of light and dark and not the prevalence of one or the other. As González Echevarría explains, “[t]he baroque way of the *Persiles* implies that Revelation and light might dwell in Rome, but also darkness and desire; as Quevedo’s memorable sonnet says, ‘Buscas a Roma en Roma, oh peregrino/y en Roma a Roma no la hallas’” (229). Consequently, although the *Persiles* is often seen as a product of the Counter-Reformation, the novel’s Catholic orthodoxy is more akin to St. Paul’s message in Corinthians 1, 13, a well-documented passage of Catholic reform practices which became highly internalised by people in sixteenth-century Spain.⁵²

St. Paul was not only associated with converts on account of his vision and subsequent fall on the road to Damascus, but also with an emphasis on the spiritual, the importance of self-examination, of grace over law. This Pauline connection in the *Persiles* is signalled by several references in the text to St. Paul and to St. Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians. The dénouement of the novel

⁵² Building on certain texts from St. Paul, such as 1 Cor. 13, medieval theologians had distinguished sharply among faith, hope and charity, which they described as the three theological virtues. Thomas Aquinas explained how the theological virtues order human beings toward the beatific vision; through charity, the highest form of love, we enter into an affective union with God, the source of our eternal blessedness (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia-IIa, q.62, art.3). This explanation became a common feature in the documents of the Council of Trent and, consequently, in sermons and offices all over Spain. For Catholics and Protestants alike, St. Paul’s epistles became a touchstone, an indispensable authority, because aspects of his writings were taken up by Erasmists in the Church and by Lutherans outside it.

takes place in the shadow of the Roman basilica of St. Paul. Although the pilgrims had been born in “partes tan remotas y en tierras adonde la verdadera fe católica no está en el punto tan perfecto como se requiere”, Rome is not precisely the most virtuous place, as we have seen (*PS*, IV, 5. 387).

Rome is indeed the place where lessons in Catholicism (and in “civilisation”) are given and received, but it is our “less than perfectly Catholic” protagonists who give them instead. The pilgrimage from Thule to Rome has transformed the protagonists – an inner journey – where they have internalised and reinforced the virtues of Catholicism: faith, hope, and charity. It is in the very act of their pilgrimage that they have acquired those virtues, and it is symbolised by the revelation of their true identities, when they recuperate their real names. Thus, the protagonists avoided being eaten by cannibals (inversion of Eucharist) in order to become sacraments themselves through their pilgrimage. As Chauvet explains in *Symbol and Sacrament*, “the process of becoming Eucharist is thus only a particular modality of the process of Christian identity” (281).

In the first epistle to the Corinthians (12-15), St. Paul holds forth on human speech, and directly connects brutality and violence to the lack of human communication. He states that a person becomes a barbarian to others in the absence of comprehension: “If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a barbarian to the speaker, and the speaker is a barbarian to me” (1

Cor 14, 11).⁵³ As we have seen above, Cervantes uses a myriad of languages in his novels.

Foreign languages, miscomprehension, translation, and the search for identity constitute a polyglot labyrinth of Babel that, in Cervantes's main novels, takes the form of pilgrimage. The Christian journey allegory of the Fall from Grace to the Word Incarnate is accomplished through the constant cannibalisation of language – the barbarian cannibalistic ritual of eating the heart of the foreigners – and Maximino's human sacrifice to save his brother's life.

The inversion of Christ's sacrifice and the continuous symbolic Eucharists are carried out both chronologically and symbolically. At the beginning of the novel, the barbarians eat the hearts of foreigners waiting for their saviour and conqueror to come. As the novel goes on, the continuous translations into different languages, and finally the sacrificial death of Maximino, who saves the protagonists and blesses their love, represents other examples of symbolic Eucharists. At the same time, the protagonists' journey from the Barbaric Northern territories to civilised Rome, which is also inverted – since the *Persiles*'s Romans are not as virtuous as the pilgrims expected them to be – becomes the triumph of love, a love that should turn the bloody sacrifice into a bloodless remembrance ritual. Brannon Hancock explains that, “[w]hen Jesus gave His Body and Blood for the life of the world, the sacrificial system of old was

⁵³ Although St. Paul was raised in a Hebrew family, he wrote in Greek. The Greek word *barbaros* (βάρβαρος), 'barbarian' meant someone who spoke words sounding like *ba ba*. To the Greeks, the *barbarians* were foreigners, and principally the Persians, but the word carried no depreciatory overtones in itself. Over the centuries the non-Hellenic, non-Roman, or non-Christian peoples became regarded as enemies who violated and plundered the civilized world, and this gave rise to the unfavourable connotations of the term *barbarian* and associated words.

annihilated as well. No more must flesh be destroyed or blood spilled as payment to God for sin” (124-125).

If these interpretations of the sacrament of Eucharist seem transgressive or even aggressive, Jesus’s condemnation of the old rituals must have been incredibly scandalous. In the ancient sacrificial rituals, blood was synonymous of life and it contained the virtues of its owner. Consequently, the spilling of blood was the outpouring of life and virtue. For this reason, Jews were forbidden to consume blood. However, Jesus scandalises the sensibilities of those who stuck to the Old Faith: “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you have no life in you” (John 6, 53).

He did know that these words would offend most of his listeners: “From this time, many of His turned back and no longer followed Him” (John 6, 66). The point is that even his disciples are not able to understand his words when He explains that “the spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you – they are full of the Spirit and life” (John 6, 63).

His emphasis on the body and blood turns out to be spiritual rather than physical. However, this easy explanation is paradoxically misinterpreted by those close to Him. On the one hand, they felt disgust and repulsion by the cannibalistic physical act; on the other, they needed to transgress purely physical states of the body in order to recover their own flesh and blood after death to comprehend the resurrection of the body. Hancock analyses this paradox:

[Death] is the rending apart of flesh and spirit, a perversion of God’s intention for creation, as we see in Jn. 19:30 when Jesus gives up His spirit

(*pneuma*), leaving only his useless, destroyed body stretched upon the cross. Furthermore, a purely spiritualist reading of Jesus's words here is unsustainable after Jesus's *bodily* resurrection, where flesh is restored and (re)inhabited by the spirit. (134)

In the sacramental impulse common to baroque aesthetics, however, the image of the broken body of Christ on the cross is seen as his triumph over death. It is not a perversion of God's intention, as Hancock affirms, but the perfection of his intention. Velázquez's *Christ Crucified* is one of the innumerable images that one can find in any church to inspire and remind us of his sacrifice, which enables resurrection as well as salvation and it is available through the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Indeed, as Hancock goes on to say, "The cross of Jesus is the *coincidence* of such opposites as flesh and spirit, life and death" (134). This transgression of meanings, planes, and frames has been a constant in baroque art and might have its origins in the way people internalised the sacramental imagination of a Catholicism that imbued most levels of society.

Cervantes was well aware of the permeability of opposite terms such as flesh and spirit or life and death. He negotiated that fluidity by viewing reality as a kind of fiction, and fiction as a kind of reality. Don Quixote, for example, converts the world to his own point of view through the sheer force of his madness to the point of making most of the novel's "sane" characters end up acting like fools. Taken to the extreme, the sacramental imagination, especially

the Eucharist, might be considered a sort of delusion when observed from an external viewpoint.

Don Quixote recurs to the enchantment of a *malin génie* (evil genius)⁵⁴ to explain the lack of adjustment between sane doctrines and the facts of experience. At times, Sancho himself even loses his good sense, as happened in the episode of the wine skins slashed by Don Quixote (I, 35) which he took to be giants and the spilled wine their blood. In the light of the debates of the seventeenth century held by mechanical philosophers such as Galileo, Gassendi, and Descartes, regarding Christ's actual presence in the Eucharist and Eucharistic transubstantiation, madness would be easily regarded as a consequence of the metaphysical difficulties posed by these doctrines.

Thus, we return to St. Paul's words to the Corinthians: "but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" (1 Cor. 1: 23). St. Paul seems to interpret that a suitable way to comprehend the mystery of Christ is through scandal (stumbling block) and madness (foolishness).⁵⁵ On the other hand, he might suggest that this is the way others outside the sacramental imagination would see it.

Not only does Cervantes open the debate between reality and fiction, he also invites us to choose a side. Sancho's definitive question "¿Qué gigantes?" (I, 8. 75), before Don Quixote charged at Rocinante's full gallop and attacked the

⁵⁴ See Descartes (1998). In his 1641 *Meditations on First Philosophy*, René Descartes hypothesised the existence of an "evil genius", a sort of personification who is "supremely powerful and clever, who has directed his entire effort at deceiving me" (62). According to the philosopher, this genius presents a complete illusion of an external world, where in fact there is no such external world in existence.

⁵⁵ Actually, *scandal* and *madness* are the terms used by the Aramaic Bible translated into plain English for *stumbling block* and *foolishness* respectively.

windmill, encompasses the whole scene. Much has been written on the points of contact between the works of Cervantes and Descartes; Descartes might have read *Don Quixote* early in his career since Cervantes's novel was translated into French soon after publication. Sometimes it seems as if Descartes would have learnt from Cervantes some of his philosophical concepts. – “‘Pues, ¿quién lo duda?’ – respondió Don Quijote. – ‘Yo lo dudo’, replicó Sancho Panza” (*DQ*, I, 7. 74).

Don Quixote and Sancho Panza appear as two selves of the same person, a kind of *double* motif, which forces the reader to take sides or, at least, to see the image/story from both sides of the picture. Cascardi explains:

Don Quixote's reply to his critics is important because it shows how the imagination can be given free reign without running the risks of scepticism, without losing confidence in our ability to distinguish imagination from reality; this is done by characterising the imaginative experience in such a way that it is free from the *rational* objections that might be brought against it, free from the epistemological means by which we customarily indict it. (1984, 117)

Ironically, Cervantes seems to have anticipated Cartesian's best known aphorism – together with that *evil genius* – when he is lying on the ground after attacking the windmill: “las cosas de la Guerra más que otras están sujetas a continua mudanza; cuanto más, que yo pienso, y es así verdad (*I think, and therefore it is true*), que aquel sabio Frestón [...] ha vuelto estos gigantes en molinos” (*DQ*, I, 8. 76) (My emphasis).

As Cascardi adds, “Cervantes shows that we relate to the world, including the ‘world’ of our own experiences, in ways other than what the epistemologist calls ‘knowledge’, and that all we know of the world cannot be characterised in terms of certainty” (121-22). Thus, Cervantes includes the imagination and dreams in his experience of the world. As part of his sacramental imagination, he refuses to limit human experience by the “possible” or the “probable”. Cascardi reminds us of Aristotle’s idea in the *Poetics* (1640 a) in which he states that probable impossibilities are better than improbable possibilities.

Accordingly, Cervantes explains the extraordinary or marvellous by reference to madness (as in *Don Quixote* or *The Glass Graduate*), to dreams (as in the episode of the Cave of Montesinos or the talking dogs in *The Dialogue of the Dogs*), or by reference to deceitful magic or episodes of make-believe, especially in the *Quixote*, such as the enchanted head or Maese Pedro’s puppet show.

During the first part of *Don Quixote*, the reader laughs and suffers almost concurrently, because madness is seen from the outside. We observe the violence on our protagonist in amusement, because it is a fictional account, but also in shame, because Don Quixote’s ideals are fair and noble. He is the Biblical scapegoat, the victim, the lamb: his beaten and battered body reminds us of Christ’s body on the cross. As Ziolkowski puts it, “there is something inherently Christ-like about Don Quixote, and something potentially quixotic about Christ” (94).

There is a progressive identification as the novel advances which begins when Don Quixote is dubbed a knight at the inn (I, 3). Inns appear throughout the

novel as places that seem to symbolise rest and food, but also greed and violence, since many innkeepers in the novel are devious. When Don Quixote is dubbed a knight at the inn he considers to be a castle, inns acquire a sort of ceremonial role that turns them into marvellous places where enchantments occur. Moreover, Cervantes uses the inns to expose the blurred distance between reality and fiction by means of Don Quixote's and Sancho's different imaginations.

Sancho eats and drink at the inn with the regulars. He is aware of 'reality' and the corruption of the people inside. On the other hand, Sancho's instinctive desires are satisfied and he appears in communion with the rest of the guests. Conversely, Don Quixote stops at inns reluctantly, but once he is inside, once he eats and drinks, something marvellous happens. The inn becomes a ceremonial place, a kind of church, where the knight's imagination is in communion with his highest ideals, and the place of corruption and greed is transformed into an almost sacred space. The sacramental image is only complete if both imaginations, Sancho's and Quixote's, are mixed.

Things change in Part II, when Sancho reports to his master that the story of their adventures has been written down by a Moorish historian and they are now famous literary characters. From now on, then, Don Quixote's enchantment, his madness, does not belong to him exclusively: it has become the shared property of his readers. Part II provides a reading of Alonso Quijano's infatuation with Aldonza Lorenzo and her transformation into Dulcinea through her various incarnations. The sacramental image of the Incarnation acquires in *Don Quixote* a

complex significance, which ends with the grotesque identification of Alonso Quijano and Aldonza Lorenzo.

González Echevarría points out that “Dulcinea’s final transformation into a transvestite in Part II may signal this: that she is a projection of Don Quixote’s own quest of self, an image of his own buried longings. She would be the self disguised as monstrous other, with gender a contrived difference – a form of alluring otherness”. He supports this idea with two examples: when Sancho gets near Aldonza he notices “un olorcillo algo hombruno” (I, 31). “The peasant woman on a donkey” (II, 10), González adds, “could be a perversion of the knight himself, his distorted self-reflection” (47). Aldonza’s bodily hair and “raw garlic smell” turns her into a mannish girl long before her “travestied” image. Her masculine image is confronted with Alonso Quijano’s dry skin and sorrowful countenance playing a grotesque game of gender confusion.

At the cave of Montesinos, which many consider the centre and culmination of Part II, Cervantes’s baroque sacramental imagination achieves its fullness. The superb descent of Don Quixote into the cave of Montesinos (II, 22, 23) is the crucial moment when the knight is aware of his self-enchantment. Curiously enough, there is a structural parallelism between both parts of the novel: Don Quixote becomes a true *caballero andante*, meets Cardenio, and saves him at the Inn in Part One, 23. In Part Two, 23, the knight descends into the Cave of Montesinos where, as Dudley aptly points out, “he meets his own madness” (1973, 119).

These two episodes serve as the symbolic turning points of each part: Cardenio's salvation at the Inn takes place in that ceremonial place where Don Quixote is battered, beaten, and humiliated. He spills both his blood and the wine from the wineskins. In the Cave of Montesinos, Don Quixote is not sure whether he is asleep or awake, but soon convinces himself that he has all his faculties. The scene of the crystal castle works as a mirror image that allows the knight to observe a perfect reincarnation of himself and his beliefs.

The Cave story is full of sacramental images such as the tale of knight Durandarte's death. The venerable Montesinos had to take Durandarte's heart out of his chest in order to give it to his beloved Belerma. The detailed recounting of how he cut Durandarte's chest with a dagger and the heart in the hands of a mournful Belerma during the funeral procession is reminiscent of the image of Our Lady of Sorrows following Christ's dead body in the Holy Sepulchre. These apparently unconnected images, however, are related to the whole adventure in the cave with its distorted and exaggerated examples of beauty and ugliness, spirit and bodily functions, which are interpolated throughout the story.

The lovely ballad relating the tragic lives of Montesinos, Durandarte, and Belerma is turned into a grotesque story. According to Sullivan "what the grotesque achieves in art is an aesthetic transformation of this unpleasant experience in a halfway acceptable form" (62). The reader confronts with the excision of Durandarte's heart and its being sprinkled with salt, even though he is still alive (a cannibalistic picture), Montesinos's hands full of blood, the

description of Belerma's sallow appearance and the fact that she is no longer menstruating, or when Dulcinea gives Don Quixote a rag from her underskirt.

Those narrative elements focus on the body and its functions. The scene as a whole recalls a grotesque fragmentation of the body, what Sullivan describes as "body parts detached and thrown in incongruous fashion into the coherence and formality of the symbolic order" (65). The comic atmosphere of Don Quixote's corporal sufferings in Part I is transformed into a solemn religious dismemberment through the grotesque in Part II. The reader is able to take part in Don Quixote's sacrifice and ritualistic transformation. From now on, the constant "disenchantments" of Don Quixote and Sancho – the pilgrims on their way to the final and definitive incarnation – are occasions of communion with the reader.

González Echevarría asserts that the *Quixote* is about love more than any other subject, since chivalry belongs to the theme of love and not the other way round. We commented above on the sexual transformation of Aldonza/Dulcinea. González compares Cervantes's novel to a "baroque *Decameron*" due to the fact that, along with Don Quixote's bizarre adventures, the novel depicts nearly every kind of relationship conceivable and specimens of every kind of lover: "from damsels in distress to prostitutes, from would-be courtly lovers to seducers and cheats, from women dressed as men to men dressed as women and to a handsome young man dressed as a woman so as to be *less* attractive to other men" (author's emphasis) (2005, 1).

These images of transformation would be repeated in the *Persiles*. Drinking from the picaresque source, erotic adventures and lascivious scenes are

represented in the *Quixote* by the prostitutes of the first inn and by Maritornes, the homely resident harlot in Palomeque's, whom Don Quixote takes for the beautiful landlord's daughter in the dark of night.

This tawdry world is, according to González Echevarría, "lawless love, or love by the unwritten rules of the whorehouse and the criminal gang" (4). Indeed, the novel shows this sort of commerce between sex and the law, a universe of base instincts and desire. However, this love outside the law is interspersed with "lawful" couples representing every social sector such as peasants Sancho and Teresa, aristocratic middle-aged pairs or the duke and duchess.

Moreover, Don Quixote's quest is the love of his idealised Dulcinea, as the pilgrim's was that of Beatrice in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. In this regard, Don Quixote becomes a pilgrim, as Persiles and Sigismunda will do later, in search of "lawful" love. Among the numerous clashes of love, sex and the law and the subsequent lovers' transgressions in Western civilisation, the story of Adan and Eve and that of Oedipus immediately come to mind. Don Quixote's quest for love turns him into a fugitive. Following the mystic tradition – and also a similar fate to that of John of the Cross when he was persecuted and imprisoned – the pilgrim becomes the fugitive since his ways seem to be outside the law.

As González Echevarría affirms, in Cervantes, "love is checked not by God but by the Holy Brotherhood⁵⁶, not by God's vicars but by the king's appointed agents" (3). Cervantes, González reminds us, wrote after the

⁵⁶ The Holy Brotherhood was established at the Cortes de Madrigal in 1476, two years before the Holy Inquisition. The *Hermandad* combined in itself the functions of a police force and a judicial tribunal in order to suppress brigandage and to patrol and control the roads and countryside.

consolidation of the first modern European state, a modern state which was built upon the Catholic kings' unification policies. Those policies of state control included the establishment of the Holy Office of the Inquisition (1478), not as a product of obscurantism, as it might be seen from our current perspective, but rather as "an institution charged with checking the subjects' fealty to the crown" (25), if one thinks of Catholicism as the ideology of the Spanish state.

On the other hand, the Holy Brotherhood acted as a popular confederation for police and judicial purposes. During the reign of Philip II, the role of the Brotherhood gains relevance and this is reflected in *Don Quixote*, which is full of references to this new legal situation. Gozález Echevarría calls our attention to the famous chapter in which Don Quixote frees the galley slaves (I, 22). He calls it "the prisoner of love" because of the shocking story of one of the prisoners who has been sentenced to galleys because he had had sexual intercourse with four women, two sisters who were first cousins of his, and two other who were not, subsequently fathering a confusing endogamous clan. The prisoner has been found guilty and convicted of stupor and incest. Nonetheless, Don Quixote is fooled by this eloquent and charming man and eventually releases him from the kings' guards violating what we could consider as a sort of federal law.

The knight sets himself up as judge, usurping the king's role. He finds it unfair to send men to the galleys for being lovers since he cannot see anything beyond the pure act of loving. The fact that the incestuous prisoner is a law student, famous for his ability to "fool with people" (a trickster), and who can

speak Latin⁵⁷, provides Cervantes with a subtext to expose some of the flaws of any modern system of centralised judicial practice – by means of the prisoner’s allusion to the corruption of a system from which he is unable to profit.

Conversely, the knight’s interference causes a moral problem since a “sinner” is released without a civil punishment. The totally amoral prisoner is not going to the galleys. Instead, he just flees and fades, leaving the reader with the memory of his sarcasm and his mockery of the law. The libertine slave tries to fulfil his desire with as many women as possible whereas Don Quixote’s pursuit of the ideal woman diffuses desire beyond the physical.

An example of the erotic undertones of Cervantes’s texts can be seen in *Don Quixote* part I, chapters 27-32. These episodes deal with the oxtail borrowed from Palomeque’s inn by the priest and barber as they prepare to dress as a damsel in distress and her squire in order to trick Don Quixote into giving up his penance and return home. The idea of the priest and the barber disguised as women should have made the audience of that time laugh, as Sancho’s reaction anticipates. Cervantes always tried to provoke laughter by means of the parodic image of a man dressed as a woman. However, Cervantes seemed to cause a different reaction in his readers when a woman dressed as a man. In *Don Quixote* (I, 28), they find a boy in peasant’s dress washing his feet in a stream. They admire his beauty and, eventually, when the boy takes off his cap and lets his hair down, they learn that the boy is really a beautiful girl called Dorothea. The description of Dorothea is one of the most erotic passages in *Don Quixote*.

⁵⁷ *Saber Latín* (to know how to speak Latin) is a Spanish idiom that means, “to be pretty sharp”.

The most striking case of transvestism, nonetheless, is the story of morisco Ricote's daughter Anna Félix (II, 63): The talking head has promised the disenchantment of Dulcinea and Quixote looks forward to seeing it. Don Antonio brings Sancho and Don Quixote to the pier, where they board a boat. A Turkish boat apprehends this boat, as they row out to sea. There is a scuffle and two men are shot dead. A young boy from the Turkish boat is seized, they tie his hands and a rope is drawn around his neck. He turns out to be a young Christian woman and begs permission to tell her sad story.

A young man called Don Gaspar Gregorio loved the young Moor and vowed to follow her. She accompanies her uncles to Algiers where the King heard of her beauty and heard of the beauty of Don Gaspar Gregorio, who has accompanied her. To protect Don Gregorio, the young woman says that he is a woman and when "she" (Don Gregorio in a Morisca's attire) is presented to the king, the monarch is so mesmerised that he decides to send "her" as a gift to one of his friends. In the meantime, she (Don Gregorio) is locked in a house. She is finally untied and the noose removed, when a pilgrim aboard calls her Anna Félix. Then we learn that this man is her father Ricote. Sancho is astonished and vouched for his friend Ricote and her daughter.

Cervantes, in the "strange adventure of the beautiful morisco", displays a certain level of dramatic irony while the brave Anna Félix, dressed as a man, is telling her story with her hands tied and a noose round her neck. Truths are revealed through deceit and disguise in a chapter that plays with inversion and subversion – a technique Cervantes would use in his last novel *Persiles*. Earlier in

the chapter, Ricote explains the pain of forced exile and the love for his true country: Spain. His daughter, however, appeals more to her Catholicism than to her Spanishness. She, dressed as a he, confesses:

De aquella nación más desdichada que prudente sobre quien ha llovido estos días un mar de desgracias, nací yo, de moriscos padres engendrada. En la corriente de su desventura fui yo por dos tíos míos llevada a Berbería, sin que me aprovechase decir que era cristiana, como en efecto lo soy, y no de las fingidas ni aparentes, sino de las verdaderas y católicas. No me valió con los que tenían a cargo nuestro miserable destierro decir esta verdad, ni mis tíos quisieron creerla, antes la tuvieron por mentira y por invención para quedarme en la tierra donde había nacido, y, así, por fuerza más que por grado, me trajeron consigo. Tuve una madre cristiana y un padre discreto y cristiano ni más ni menos; mamé la fe católica en la leche, crieme con buenas costumbres, ni en la lengua ni en ellas jamás, a mi parecer, di señales de ser morisca. (*DQ*, II, 63. 1039-40)

This story takes us back to the moment when Sancho and Ricote embrace and separate after wishing each other good luck (II, 54). They unconsciously cross a metaphorical threshold toward modernity. The peasant Sancho begins to think of himself as a Spaniard and a loyal subject of his king. Just as Prince Hal has to reject Falstaff in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* (II, 5.5) to become a righteous king, Sancho renounces his solidarity with Ricote. From this moment on, there will be no local dimension beyond the reach of royal power. William Childers explains:

This penetration of a centralised authority into all aspects of everyday life does not take the external form of a tyrannical imposition but rather appears as a preference of the people themselves. In this fashion, the medieval popular culture that had mediated between religious traditions is eroded, and the incipient Spanish nation learns to accept its new identity with little or no resistance. (2006, 183)

The gap between Old Christians and former Muslims is emphasised. Consequently, in the place of an intimate encounter between two neighbours who share a meal by the roadside, we see how both Sancho and Ricote embrace and say goodbye accepting the new situation. As Childers goes on to say, “[I]n the denouement of this tale in chapter 63, the carnivalesque aesthetic gives way to a Baroque *mise en scène*” (183). Therefore, the anachronistic world of Ricote recedes into the background and his daughter’s “new world” takes centre stage. From Ricote’s nostalgic acceptance of the end of an era to Anna Félix Ricota’s claim of his right to belong. Her elegant prose style contrasts with the simpler language used by Sancho and Ricote. As in a play, Anna Félix performs dramatically exposing the theatricality and artificiality of the scene precisely in order to call the reader’s attention.

Through a narrative technique that carefully regulates the distance between the reader and the protagonists, Cervantes achieves a bittersweet tone by mixing elements of the carnivalesque, such as cross-dressing and gender and identity changes, with political issues. According to Childers, “the political scene is thus eroticised. Transgression of the king’s order of expulsion is the only means by

which these lovers' desire can be fulfilled" (184). This does not mean that the transgression should be justified, as Don Quixote's transgression freeing the galley slaves is not justified either.

However, Anna Félix's longing to become a Spaniard is highlighted by a series of transgressions that reach their climax when she claims that she drank her Catholic faith in her mother's milk. She claims to have received communion with this strong metaphor continuing with the transgressive nature of the chapter. Consequently, this inversion of the Eucharist completes the whole scene in which politics and religion interweave. Anna Félix's story and description eroticise both the political and the religious issue representing Spain, the new modern nation, through a baroque *mise en scène* so familiar to the readers influenced by the Counter-Reformation aesthetic impulse.

Finally, they sent a boat to rescue Don Gregorio, Anna Félix's future husband, because the wedding will be the only way for Anna to join the Spanish Christian society she idealises. Cervantes plays with his readers' knowledge of the rules and contrasts it with Don Quixote's breaking of those rules in the slaves' scene. The knight becomes the inverted image of the prisoner, but their fates are both sealed and never to be fulfilled because, as González Echevarría states, "prison and the altar are the sites where love is captured in the net of the law" (4).

Countless analyses have been written about almost every aspect of *Don Quixote*, but this research deals with those topics that have to do with the aesthetic impulse of the Counter-Reformation and baroque art. Feeding from Medieval and Renaissance sources, the Spanish Catholic imagination would develop into a

complex series of motives and images that, as have been explained above, became part of the collective imagination. Following this line of argument, in Part I of *Don Quixote*, Don Quixote starts his first sally at dawn, rides out into the countryside, and finally arrives at an inn just as night is falling (I, 2). The reader meets the knight-errant.

In Part II, Don Quixote and Sancho set off on their third sally at night in order to get to El Toboso at dawn and see Dulcinea. However, they decide to wait, because they want to arrive in the town at night so as not to be noticed (II, 8). These words, together with the obscure and mysterious tone of the second part, have been associated with the Spanish mystic tradition.⁵⁸ Cervantes made several tentative comparisons between Quixote's belief in knight-errantry and religious belief.⁵⁹ When Sancho asks Don Quixote whether it would not be easier to become famous and secure a spot in heaven by becoming a saint, rather than a knight, Quixote explains that "chivalry is a religion" and knights can become saints as well (II, 8).

Don Quixote's exit from the cave of Montesinos has been compared to the writings and experiences of mystics such as St. Teresa de Ávila or St. John of the Cross. Indeed, the knight is pulled out of the cave with his eyes closed as if a mystic state, and even it is painful for him to speak of his experience. The cave, as

⁵⁸ See Fernando Rielo's 1982 *Teoría Del Quijote: Su Mística Hispánica*.

⁵⁹ The comparison is especially significant because the novel was written just before the beginning of Enlightenment, a period that emphasised reason and self-sufficiency over mysticism and faith, and brought about intense debates about the nature of some dogmas among the philosophers, as has been outlined above.

Pierre Groult claims, is the place of some revelation or intuitive knowledge, hallucinatory perhaps, but conveying mystic ecstasy.⁶⁰

The contribution of Spanish Catholicism to the revival and renewal of the Church was significant. It played a decisive role in the ecclesiastical and hierarchical sense; that renewal can be better observed, nonetheless, through the works of Teresa of Ávila and John of the Cross – in their reform of the order and the subsequent establishment of the Discalced Carmelites – whose writings were deeply embedded in the very fabric of this Spanish heritage from which the Carmelite mystical tradition nurtured. Faith was transmitted through the passionate embrace of “the interior voice” reflecting the sort of mystery, shadows and ecstasy literally “experienced” in Castilian spirituality, which emerged as a “standard” of the Catholic Counter-Reformation triumphalism.

Before looking for his beloved Dulcinea, Don Quixote’s decision to wait for the night “so as not to be noticed” bear considerable similarities to St. John of the Cross’s famous first lines of his poem “Noche Oscura”: “En una noche oscura/con ansias en amores inflamada/ - ¡Oh dichosa ventura! - /salí sin ser notada/estando ya mi casa sosegada”.

According to Rielo, the knight’s quest becomes a sort of mystic experience which aspires to the *unio mystica* (the journey of the soul from its bodily home to its union with God). “It was on the stroke of midnight” when Don Quixote and

⁶⁰ See Pierre Groult, 1954.

Sancho entered El Toboso; however, that night was *entreclara*, which gives the scene a mysterious/mystic tone (II, 9).

Both light and darkness build the chapter frame as in the *chiaroscuro* pictorial technique, something proper to the baroque, as has been explained, which mix the two levels of the scene: Sancho's, whose clear perception of reality would need a totally dark night "so that he could find an excuse for his ignorance in the darkness", and Quixote's, whose obscure perception of reality would need daylight. The shape of the building he had seen is not Dulcinea's castle, but the principal church of the town. He exclaims: "Con la iglesia hemos dado, Sancho" (*DQ*, II, 9. 610).⁶¹

Unlike the Protestant reformers, the Spanish mystical tradition addresses aspects of this theological understanding of man vis-à-vis God, whether one was worthy of the love of God or was a sinner whose last hope is the justification given by Christ. In each case, the interior movement of the soul in search of the Beloved within oneself, and the movement outward of the soul in search of the Beloved in the darkness of unknowing, as a pilgrim on his way through shades and dangers, but doing so in profound faith and hope.

Cervantes made several tentative comparisons between Quixote's belief in knight-errantry and religious belief. When Sancho asks Don Quixote whether it would not be easier to become famous and secure a spot in heaven by becoming a

⁶¹ "Con la iglesia hemos dado". This statement is one of the best known in the novel (actually, it has become a ready-made phrase in Spanish), for it has been interpreted as meaning that the protagonists have "run into" the Church in the sense of coming into dangerous conflict with the institution. The sentence is sometimes cited using another verb to underscore the meaning of *dar*: the verb is *topar*, which Sancho uses a few lines down. According to Martín de Riquer, this is over-interpretation, and the sentence means only what it says: the building is a church. See Riquer (1976), p. 134.

saint, rather than a knight, Quixote explains that “chivalry is a religion” and knights can become saints as well (II, 8).

The second part of the novel is the narration of the knight’s journey in search of Dulcinea, not only to disenchant her, but also to “disenchant” his own soul. The knight’s (blind) faith has eventually led both of them to a church instead of an inn. The reader, therefore, meets the knight-saint.

Coming as Spain did, from the warrior mentality of the *Reconquista*, and the unifying impulse of state control by way of the Church and the Holy Inquisition, many historians saw the coercion existing in the Spain of the Counter-Reformation, which has helped to spread the “black legend” of the Spanish Inquisition⁶² and the rules under Philip II. Spanish mysticism, with all its mystery and passion fuelled the confidence of Imperial Spain to spread Faith and hold the banner of Catholicism. The ambivalence of warriors and *fidei defensors*, triumphalism and detachment became a trademark of Counter-Reformation Spain. These ambiguous images, those coming from the victory of the *Reconquista* and the discovery of a New World together with those from the mystic experience of the journey towards God – dark night of the soul – the humiliating personal experience of utter desolation, loneliness and loss, converge in Cervantes.

Don Quixote and Sancho as well as Persiles and Sigismunda are pilgrims journeying through triumph and humiliation, lightness and darkness that reflect how the Counter-Reformation church re-invented pilgrimage. According to Wes

⁶² Henry Kamen, in his 1999 *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision*, establishes two sources for the Black Legend of the Spanish Inquisition. Firstly, an Italian Catholic origin, and secondly, a Protestant background in Central and Northern Europe.

Williams, pilgrimage was “a metaphorical progress, instantiated in the Stations of the Cross, and so to alleviate the need for movement beyond the parish bounds, let alone those of Europe” (2011, 243). Cervantes was surely aware of this and of the metaphorical nature inherent in the narrative of pilgrims. For one of the great themes of Baroque literature was the pilgrimage. Williams adds:

To be a pilgrim is to be not so much a person as a character, a representative, an example. A contemporary instance of an ancient metaphor, proving with both his journey and his narrative the continuing validity of the genre, the pilgrim tells his story in necessarily imitative, borrowed terms, rather than in ways which stress the novelty or particularity of his own experience. To be a Christian pilgrim, furthermore, is to follow Paul’s example in the letter to the Hebrews, avowing citizenship of “another country” and adopting a liminal position not just for the length of the journey, but throughout the pilgrimage of life. Having “no abiding city”, the pilgrim strictly “belongs” neither at home, nor in Jerusalem. (2009, 217)

Thus, Cervantes takes advantage of the Spanish Catholic imagination in order to create his great novels around the theme of pilgrimage. By means of the familiar structure of pilgrimage, the author is able to explore in depth the inner journey of his characters and turn the particular story of his characters into a universal lesson for his readers. The very meaning of pilgrimage as a metaphor for life turns our attention to destiny, to death. The image of destiny/death looms over the whole narrative of pilgrimage.

This is the mysticism inherent in pilgrimage, its spiritual potentiality whose objective is the encounter with God through the *via negativa*. The journey might take up the space in which we experience the absence of God, always taking into account that that very absence is also full of God. As Turner states on the mystical nature of pilgrimage, “pilgrimage may be thought of as extroverted mysticism, just as mysticism is introverted pilgrimage. The pilgrim physically traverses a mystical way; the mystic sets forth on an interior spiritual pilgrimage” (2011, 33-34).

Cervantes, consequently, made sure that his views on religious issues remained, if not completely veiled, at least ambiguously expressed. What we know, however, is that he was keenly aware of the central role played by religion in the lives of Spaniards of all backgrounds. As Christina Lee observes, “in all his works of fiction, he shows an anthropological interest in depicting how his contemporaries lived in a world ruled to a large extent by religious myths and rituals. Mysticism is a subject that Cervantes tackles in a similar manner.” (2010, 367).

Cervantes adapts the Spanish mystical tradition to the context of his secular world. Thus, he creates an ambivalence in his novels: if we approach them from the narrative of pilgrimage, concreteness and historicity dominate whereas from the narrative of mysticism, the interior process leads to a goal beyond conceptualisation. True to baroque aesthetics, Cervantes uses pilgrimage and takes advantage of its attributes of liminality in passage rites: reflecting on basic

religious and cultural values, his novels illustrate a ritualised enactment of correspondences between religious paradigms and shared human experiences.

Pilgrimage in *Don Quixote* might be described as leading from a mundane centre to a sacred periphery, which suddenly becomes central for the individual. In the *Persiles*, conversely, the pilgrims travel from a mundane periphery to a sacred centre, which eventually becomes peripheral for the individual. According to *The New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, “a pilgrimage may be described as a journey to a sacred shrine or sanctuary for a religious motive” (11: 362). In both novels, the pilgrimage theme serves as a sort of pretext for the main plot, a structural element whose origin as a religious motif has been used to support an allegorical reading of both works as examples of the *peregrinatio vitae*, a narrative of spiritual progress.

Childers does not share this allegorical reading and suggests that for Cervantes’s characters “the goal of pilgrimage is to enrich this life and the relationships we have in it with other people by seeking a shared experience of the holy which can infuse some of its power into our earthly existence” (86). It is then a quest to find the sacred on earth, to see traces of divine grace in ordinary and mundane life. This brings Cervantes’s representation of pilgrimage closer to the experience of real pilgrims than to an allegorical “pilgrimage of life”. Childers goes on to argue that pilgrimage, for Cervantes, serves as a device for exploring “social interaction and cultural negotiation [as] its underlying themes” (86).

Andrew Greeley, discussing on American Catholicism, stresses the Catholics’ strong sense of family and local community based on the tendency to

see religion as festivity and celebration since “festivals are so much a part of the life of Catholics that they notice them only when they’re away from home, in a place where there are no such festivals”. As he goes on to say, it is arguable that the festival as a point in sacred time is less important to Catholics today than it was in the past, but “we still have festivals and liturgical seasons and big celebrations, so the resource remains for those who understand how important feasts still are in the rhythms of human life” (49).

He alludes to David Lodge’s *Therapy* (1995), which narrates the pilgrimage of his protagonist to the Festival of Santiago de Compostela, a pilgrimage that, together with the reading of Kirkegaard, heals the man’s soul. In the novel, Lodge describes the mid-life crisis of Tubby Passmore, a sitcom writer, who takes a “writing therapy”. The novel, then, takes the form of a journal in several chapters as Passmore writes about other characters and his own life. Thus, we have Lodge, the writer, writing Passmore, the writer, writing other characters along the way. Lodge uses pilgrimage with a Catholic imagination, not only as a religious allegory of the way of life, but also as a place for celebration and communion with other people. As Greeley puts it.

[t]he Catholic imagination, then, revels in stories that are festivals and festivals that are stories. The church, whether cathedral or parish, is not the only place where these stories of God’s love incarnated in space and time are told. But it is the place where the story treasures are stored and out of which they flow. (52)

Cervantes's protagonists/pilgrims also narrate other characters' stories along their journeys and places that are made "sacred" by several images of inversion of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. Cervantes, therefore, used that Catholic imagination shared by his countrymen to enrich his novels and, at the same time, to make them accessible to everyone.

Cervantes made extensive use of this and other innovative techniques in his novels. We have explained how Cervantes's writing, especially his two main works *Don Quixote* and *Persiles*, originated a new genre that we know today as the modern novel. Our main argument is the fact that Cervantes was the first writer who wrote about the writing of a novel, a new form to tell a story in prose. He consciously worked hard to create a new genre, but he probably never knew the real magnitude of his creation. We have also explained that he wrote at a time of strong cultural and social changes and under the influence of the Counter-Reformation, which had a great impact on his stories and on the aesthetics of his works.

This formative and aesthetic influence allows us to affirm that he also created the main guidelines for the modern novel. Consequently, and this has been our line of argument so far in this chapter, the modern novel developed from a Catholic imagination. A sort of Catholic imagination spurred by the impulse of the Counter-Reformation in the background and clearly delineated by a strong sacramental sensibility, progressively turned into a rich source of meanings familiar to the minds of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Spaniards.

I.8 CONTEMPORARY RECEPTION OF CATHOLIC AESTHETICS

Society at the end of the sixteenth century, Carroll Johnson explains, “might be described as one that had a particular devotion to tradition and a particular aversion to change” (9). Indeed, the Council of Trent reacted against the Protestant Reformation affirming traditional Roman Catholic practices, and Spain was “the official champion of Catholic orthodoxy in Europe” (10). The Inquisition was an efficient guarantor of conformity and censorship and controlled what could or could not be published.

However, this control paradoxically served as the catalyst for subtle ways of expression among the dissident voices of merchants, intellectuals, and even members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. This situation shaped Cervantes’s writing and the subsequent reception of his works. According to Johnson, “Cervantes adopted a rhetorical strategy based on pervasive and systematic irony. Ambiguity is the watchword. The same text can be interpreted to support or to subvert the dominant ideology, depending on the reader’s own ideological orientation. This applies equally to the reader of 1600 and to the reader of 1990” (10).

Johnson illustrates his theory with an example: Cervantes’s play *La Numancia* or *El Cerco de Numancia* (*The Siege of Numantia*), written around

1581-85. The play is a tragedy that tells the story of the siege of the chief Celtiberian city of Numantia in 133 B.C. whose heroic inhabitants committed mass suicide rather than surrender to the forces of the Roman Republic led by General Scipio and come under their domination⁶³. The terrible fate of the city is revealed at the beginning. Scipio appears with his generals in the Roman camp before Numantia. He explains that this war has been going on for many years and that the Roman Senate has sent him to finish the task. He reprimands his troops, whose martial spirit has begun to be superseded by the pleasures of Venus and Bacchus. The soldiers are re-inspired with courage. Numantian ambassadors enter with proposals for peace, which are rejected. The only way out is to win or die.

Two allegorical figures appear: Spain and the river Duero, on whose banks Numantia stands. These allegorical characters consult fate and discover that Numantia cannot be saved. The lengthy speech dealing with Spanish history has been taken as a moment of praise for the future Spanish empire. Scenes of destruction and mass suicide ensue, as men kill their women and then turn the sword on themselves or duel with each other. The allegorical figures of War, Sickness and Hunger take over the stage in an apocalyptic image. In the last scene, when the Romans enter the city, Bariato, the last youth left alive, refuses to give Scipio the city keys, and commits suicide by throwing himself from a tower.

Consequently, the Roman general realises that he cannot go home with slaves and spoil, and that the small city of Numantia has triumphed over the

⁶³ The Siege of Numantia is narrated in Titus Livius's (Livy) work *Ad Urbe Condita* (27-25 BC), from previous sources by Polybius and Salustius.

power of the Romans. The allegorical figure of Fame enters at the end of the piece, and announces the future glory of Spain, a great power that will rise out of the ashes of Numantia like the phoenix.

Schevill and Bonilla point out that Cervantes's choice of Bariato as the name of the last Celtiberians is a homage to Viriatus, the most important leader of the Lusitanian people that resisted the Roman expansion into the regions of western Hispania, especially Lusitania (comprising most of Portugal and Galicia), who was betrayed and killed a few years before the fall of Numantia. According to Aaron M. Kahn, the use of the name Bariatodid not serve only as a homage to the hero, but also implied more perspectives.

On the one hand, Bariato, representing Portugal, throws himself from the tower to join his fellow Numantians, who symbolise Spain, in the "ultimate celebration of unity". As Kahn goes on to explain, "this episode could be seen as a celebration of Phillip's ascension to the Portuguese throne, enacting the ideal reunification of the ancient Roman province of Hispania, despite Rome being the enemy in the play" (147). On the other hand, it could be interpreted as a covert criticism of king Philip's imperialism since this "allusion to Philip's absorption of Portugal into the Spanish Empire is the last in a string of predictions the Duero makes concerning what in the second century BC is Spain's future history" (147).

Following with Johnson's theory of the ambiguity in Cervantes's texts, *La Numancia* has endured several interpretations throughout Spanish history:

In 1937, during the Spanish Civil War, Cervantes's play was staged in Madrid to inspire the mostly leftish, republican defenders to resist General

Franco's besieging army to the last. In 1956, when Franco was in firm control, the same play was staged by his government to commemorate the victory over the defenders of Madrid in 1937. Does this play celebrate authority or resistance to authority? Clearly, it can be perceived to do either. By adopting his strategy of irony Cervantes assured the publications of a series of works with a dangerous, subversive potential in their own time, and he simultaneously assured the creation of permanently unresolvable problems of interpretation for all the generations who have come along since, whose lives are not circumscribed by the oppressive realities of Spanish life in 1600. (11)

This use of the Cervantine text illustrates the difficult task of interpreting his work. It is well known that in sixteenth-century Spain, Catholic unity was extremely important. Cervantes might well be drawing a parallel between the *Pax Romana* and a new *Pax Hispanica*. As Kahn suggests, "Cervantes, although not opposed to the idea of hereditary monarchy or moral and just expansion, is a sharp critic of oppressive and tyrannical imperialism, especially in light of the apparent abandonment of the conflict against Islam" (25). Actually, from the perspective of the sixteenth century, the ideals of ancient Rome were often interpreted in terms of justice and destiny. Consequently, destiny was synonymous with fortune and fame, and Roman history was appropriated in its most positive sense as an example of European unity against Islam. The battle of Lepanto, where Cervantes bravely fought and later described as "the greatest event ever seen in past or

present times, or that future times can ever hope to see”,⁶⁴ would probably have exemplified these ideals of unity with Rome as the centre of Catholicism.

It is not the aim of this research to discuss whether Cervantes was an orthodox Catholic or just a lapsed one, but the influence of the Catholic imagination on his writings. Either of the two extreme views is misleading, as Ziolkowski suggests:

To regard Cervantes as an orthodox, reactionary spokesman for Tridentine didacticism is to overlook his novel's aforementioned ambiguity. To regard him as an iconoclastic freethinker parodying the Ignatian or Teresian piety allegedly embodied in the knight, is to overlook the gradual shift that the narrative encourages us to hold towards the hero, from ridicule and derision in the early portions, to pity, respect, and identification in the later portions. (26)

The key to Cervantes's relationship with Catholicism should be approached from an aesthetic perspective thus focusing on how the broad background of Catholic traditions and observances was fixed in the imagination of the population. This background soon established an interplay between that Catholic imagination and the arts, an interaction between the secular and the profane. As Forcione puts it, the hallmark of Cervantes's religious consciousness is that it is “profoundly undoctinaire”, being “alive with a complex ferment of spiritual and secular tendencies” (1982, 354). Indeed, much has been written about Cervantes's novels and their ability to subvert dominant discourses in a

⁶⁴ See Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, in part two, prologue to the reader, p. 517.

subtle way by means of a dialectical exposition of ideas and multiple points of view.⁶⁵

When Cervantes writes to the reader directly (*lector mío*), that is, to an allegedly ideal reader, he seems to be drawing the readers' attention to the activity of reading as a liberating activity, in contrast to the didactic and guided potential of the commercial, public theatre of the early seventeenth century, the *comedia nueva*, and probably distancing from other means of socio-political propaganda or dissemination such as sermons and festivals. Cervantes tries to differentiate between the critical reader and the passive spectator who is "caught up in a mass-oriented performance", to use Spadaccini's term, a discussion initiated in *Don Quixote* (I, 48), regarding the facile consumption of books of chivalry as well as the *comedia*.

The problem that arises when studying any aspect of Cervantes's fiction is that *Don Quixote* and the question of its reception over the centuries comes immediately on stage. In this sense, David Lodge has called attention to Bakhtin's notion of the novel as a composite of various discourses and its capacity to resist authoritarian ideologies in order to mediate between humanist-oriented approaches and post-structuralist ones.

While Lodge resists Barthes's theory of "the death of the author" and rejects the idea that there is absolutely no mimetic connection between fiction and reality, he argues that the production, circulation, and reception of fiction today is "obsessively author-centred", where all the attention is paid "on the author as a

⁶⁵ See Spadaccini and Talens, 1993.

unique creative self, the mysterious, glamorous origin of the text; and the question one is asked on these occasions invariably emphasise the mimetic connection between fiction and reality” (1995, 150). Similarly, Cervantes’s novels, especially *Don Quixote*, deal with issues of authorship, readership, and book circulation, whereas the matter of the relationship between reality and fiction is a constant issue in his writings.

Cervantes is able to introduce fictional characters with contemporary problems that affected the real people living in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Spain. These incursions into contemporary historical and social issues bring us back to the question of “representation”, and the problematic relationship between reality and fiction in literature and visual arts. Moreover, this issue brings about the larger discussion regarding the question of truth and reality as discursive constructions. A good example, illustrated by Spadaccini, is the story of Ricote, the *morisco*, in *Don Quixote* (II, 54), who is forced to leave Spain after Philip III’s edict which decreed the expulsion of the *moriscos* in 1609. The most interesting points about this story are Ricote’s ironic reflections on a policy which he both praises, and implicitly, denounces.

The name Ricote is also the name of a municipality in the Spanish region of Murcia. Interestingly enough, Ricote had a community of Moriscos (crypto-Muslims) who were the last to be expelled in 1614, at the time when Cervantes was writing the second part of his novel. Scholars Westerveld and Márquez Villanueva believe that the name Ricote is derived from the village.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ See Westerveld, 2007, and Márquez Villanueva, 1984 and 2010.

Accordingly, Márquez Villanueva comments on Cervantes's possible thoughts about the expulsion of the *moriscos*: "Cervantes cree que la expulsión ha venido a dar prematuro fin a un proceso de asimilación que se deja ver por todas partes" (1984, 125). Ricote "praises" the expulsion and then speaks movingly about the painful experience of exile and about his love for his homeland, Spain:

[M]e parece que fue inspiración divina la que movió a Su Majestad a poner en efecto tan gallarda resolución, no porque todos fuésemos culpados, que algunos había cristianos firmes y verdaderos, pero eran tan pocos, que no se podían oponer a los que no lo eran, y no era bien criar la sierpe en el seno, teniendo los enemigos en casa. Finalmente, con justa razón fuimos castigados con la pena del destierro, blanda y suave al parecer de algunos, pero al nuestro la más terrible que se nos podía dar. Doquiera que estamos lloramos por España, que, en fin, nacimos en ella y es nuestra patria natural; en ninguna parte hallamos el acogimiento que nuestra desventura desea, y en Berbería y en todas partes de África donde esperábamos ser recibidos, acogidos y regalados, allí es donde más nos ofenden y maltratan. (*DQ*, II, 54. 963)

Cervantes might suggest that his majesty Philip III, divinely inspired, could have stopped the expulsion, a sort of collective punishment, which was not shared by the majority of the populace, according to historian Antonio Domínguez Ortiz.⁶⁷ Many Christians suspected the *moriscos* of not being sincere in their Christianity; besides, there were numerous attacks on the Spanish Mediterranean

⁶⁷ See Domínguez Ortiz, 1987.

shores by Barbary corsairs, and the menace of an invasion by the Ottoman empire loomed constantly over Europe. Whatever the case may be, the plight of the moriscos was a major event that called the attention of the population. Cervantes maintains a dialectic and ambiguous discourse as can be observed at the end of Ricote's story.⁶⁸ Ricote's hidden wealth and the connections that he had established with the old Christian aristocracy through his daughter's betrothal will make possible his family's stay in Spain.⁶⁹

The expulsion of the moriscos was also a well-known motive in baroque painting that supported the idea of its effect on society, and how the Spanish monarchy used painting as a mechanism of propaganda to justify its decision to expel the moriscos.⁷⁰ Even Velázquez painted the winning picture for the painting competition auspiced by Philip IV in 1627, on the subject *The Expulsion of the Moriscos*, which unfortunately was lost when the Royal Alcázar in Madrid was destroyed by a fire in 1734. We only have biographer Antonio Palomino's detailed description of the picture in 1724:

⁶⁸ Although Cervantes had written against the moriscos in general in his short novel *El Coloquio de los Perros* (c. 1613), he knew very well the problems of the Moriscos and felt solidarity with them after the expulsion decree. Banished from their Spanish mother country for, among other reasons, not having converted 'properly' to Christianity, they were badly received in Muslim territories for being 'Christians of Castile'. Many of them were robbed or assassinated in North Africa and the majority always lived with the desire of returning to Spain.

⁶⁹ Lots of stories about hidden treasures left by the moors and sad stories about apparitions of morisco girls have survived and are still told nowadays in rural parts of Spain.

⁷⁰ In 1612, Philip III commissioned a series of paintings on the 'Expulsion of the Moriscos of the Kingdom of Valencia', in order to illustrate what he considered as the main achievement of his reign. The pictures were painted between 1612 and 1613 by several Valencian artists and the king ordered copies of several of them to give as presents to certain nobles and to the supreme commanders who participated in the military-political operation. The Spanish monarchy used art as a mechanism of propaganda for its decision to expel the Moriscos, and this took place under the reign of Philip IV, who fully identified himself with the decision taken by his father. In 1627, a painting competition was held in Madrid with the expulsion of the Moriscos as the subject, and painters such as Velázquez, Cajés, Nardi and Carducho took part.

En el medio de este Quadro está el Señor Rey Phelipe Tercero Armado, y con el Bastón en la mano señalando a vna tropa de hombres, mugeres, y niños que llorosos van conducidos por algunos Soldados, y a lo lexos vnos carros, y vn pedazo de Marina, con algunas Embarcaciones para transportarlos. Ay diversos autores que desto tratan; y algunos assegaran, que passaban de ochocientos mil, y otros de novecientos mil. A la mano derecha del Rey está España, representada por vna Magestuosa Matrona, sentada al pie de vn Edificio, en la diestra mano tiene vn Escudo, y vnos Dardos, y en la siniestra vnas espigas, Armada a lo Romano, y a svs pies esta inscripció en vn zócalo. (Palomino, 2008, 27)

In the very introduction to the description of the painting, Palomino justifies the process of the expulsion, which might give us an idea of the official reason for such a decision:

Últimamente hizo de orden de su Magestad el Lienzo de La Expulsión de los Moriscos por el piadoso Rey Don Phelipe Tercero, bien merecido castigo de tan infame, y sediciosa gente; pues siendo Infieles a Dios, y al Rey, permanecían obstinados en la Secta Mahometana, y tenían inteligencia secreta con los Turcos, y Moros de berbería para revelarse. (Palomino, 27)

These words help us see that the expulsion affair became a highly controversial subject and Spaniards reacted in different ways to it depending on several factors such as their region or their personal relation to Moriscos.

However, what interests us here is the description of the picture. Like Cervantes, Velázquez creates an ambiguous scene in which different discourses, even antagonistic ones, may find the picture satisfactory. The “official” perspective is supported firstly by the fact that it is an appointment made by the king himself as a means of propaganda; secondly, by the king occupying the central position, and on his right, the allegory of Spain depicted as a “magnificent midwife”, the mother who nurtures and defends Catholic Spain from enemies.

Another point of view is perfectly available. The miserable and weeping queue of moriscos – represented by men, women, and children – as if expelled from Paradise by the king, who usurps God’s position, depicts a scene full of cruelty and inhumanity; secondly, the allegory of Spain again, the point of irony in the picture, is a midwife, the mother of all Spaniards, of all born at the foot of that building where she is sitting now.

Roman midwives have been a common element of allegory throughout the history of painting. A woman wearing a red tunic or a Roman armour was a customary image used as an allegory of Spain during the Renaissance and the Baroque periods. Since this proliferation in the seventeenth century, the midwife allegory has been used extensively until the twentieth century. Famous examples are those images representing the First Spanish Republic in 1873 and the Second Spanish Republic in 1931. Both images depict midwives as allegories of Spain with iconographic elements representing the virtues of a liberal and democratic

state⁷¹. Virtues are represented by traditional icons, but also by new ones in a deliberate, and apparently successful, attempt to ward off criticism and avoid censorship.

The aesthetics of the baroque is repeated and reproduced by both the absolute monarchies and the liberal republics in Spain, thus showing the strength and ambivalence of a cultural representation which emerged in a period of tension and controversy, but also of extraordinary artistic achievement. Maravall establishes a parallelism between the hegemonic role of the state and the movements reacting against the repressive nature of absolutism since both opposing perspectives share a similar aesthetic sensibility. It can be easily observed how the culture of the baroque aesthetics was used and abused throughout Spanish history precisely because this aesthetic impulse has been internalised by people since the sixteenth century.

Mostly during the seventeenth century, the culture of the baroque was a culture of spectacle, according to Maravall, which sought to mobilise the human senses to bring about, among other things, a commitment of the masses to absolute monarchies. However, “baroque” is not simply an ideological expression, but “a concept of epoch that in principle extends to all the manifestations making up this epoch’s culture” (1986, 6). Moreover, the idea of the “baroque” prior to Maravall’s study, was above all an aesthetic one, developed by Heinrich Wölflinn

⁷¹ The Allegory of the *Proclamation of the Spanish Republic* appeared in 1873 in the satirical magazine *La Flaca*, by the Catalan artist Tomás Padró Pedret. This image achieved such an enormous popularity that was used again for the Second Republic propagandists in a lithography made by Durá from a design by J. Barrera. On this second occasion, they changed some elements to adjust new ideas and symbols as the tricolour republic flag, a lion instead of the former cock (to avoid scorn) and other elements representing progress. See appendixes 10 and 11.

in his influential study *Renaissance and Baroque* (1888). For him, “the baroque is a search for the intimidating and overwhelming” (43) and “massiveness and movement are the principles of baroque style” (58).

Wölflinn’s study is famous because it was the first to study the differences between Renaissance and Baroque. According to him, unlike the art of the Renaissance which strove for perfection, “the effectiveness of baroque depends on the stimulating quality of a formlessness which first has to be overcome”(70). Wölflinn brought about a change in the perception of the Baroque in his publication, which saw it not as a degeneration of the Renaissance but as an autonomous, valid style.

He placed its origins in the Counter-Reformation impulse, and considered it to be “developed without models” (23), and, most of all, in clear opposition to classical art, “painterly” instead of linear (29). In this line of argument, but not in specific aesthetic terms, Maravall builds his theory considering the Baroque epoch as a “guided structure” which utilised “mass-oriented” cultural products such as the sacramental and secular plays that were staged in the urban centres of Spain, as well as the performances of sermons by famous preachers on sacred occasions and spectacular displays connected with religious and secular celebrations.

Eugenio D’Ors was the first to define the word *baroque* as a style of culture and a manifestation of life, not as a historical style.⁷² D’Ors, in *Lo Barroco*, follows Wölflinn’s theories and defends that *the baroque* is a permanent

⁷² Actually, the term *baroque* was initially used in a derogatory sense, to underline the excesses of its emphasis. In particular, the term was used to describe its eccentric redundancy and noisy abundance of details, which contrasts the clear and sober rationality of the Renaissance. This meaning changed positively when Eugenio D’Ors published *Du Baroque (Lo Barroco)* in Paris in 1935.

manifestation in human life, a historical constant. This is what he calls an *eon*, a *noumenon*, not a *phenomenon*.⁷³ These moments in art history where the baroque “occurs” are considered as baroque *eons*. There is a Classical Eon and a Baroque Eon, which are opposed, according to D’Ors, as reason is opposed to life. In his own terms, “Classicism is the world of things that weigh, Baroque is the world of things that float” (2002, 102).

He defends that the baroque is “secretly inspired by a nostalgia for the lost Paradise” (35) and those *eons* would be supra-temporal systems, historical constants, universal elements of culture. His first example to illustrate *eons* is the Christ, an idea that endures throughout history, since for the Christians in Alexandria, the Christ, being God, shares in God’s eternity even though He had a temporal, historical existence.⁷⁴ In this line of argument, D’Ors defines an *eon* as “una idea que tiene una biografía” and “puede experimentar contingencias y dificultades [...], pero no puede dejar de existir” (1964, 39).

The most interesting point about D’Ors’s theories for our research is the concept of aesthetic sensibility and impulse as a “historical constant”, something that is acknowledgeable, recognisable by different people in different periods of history. Moreover, the period when the baroque aesthetics flourished also marked

⁷³ The Greek word *noumenon* (νοούμενον) is the middle-passive present participle of νοεῖν (*noein*), "I think, I mean", which in turn originates from the word "nous" (from νόος, νοῦς, perception, understanding). *Noumenon* came into its modern usage through Kant’s philosophy where it is a posited object or event that is known (if at all) without the use of the senses. It is used in contrast with, or in relation to *phenomenon*, which refers to anything that appears to, or is an object of, the senses.

⁷⁴ Eon (aeon), from Greek ὁ αἰών (*ho aion*), meaning “lifespan”, was also a God in Phoenician and Roman mythology who represented eternal time, without beginning or end, in contrast to Chronos who represented divided time “that passes” in past, present and future. According to D’Ors, there is a Classical eon and a Baroque eon, because they are not styles or sensibilities with a beginning or an end, but they reappear and alternate throughout history.

a milestone in culture according to several historians, philosophers and other scholars such as those analysed above. That significant gap between the Classical and the Baroque developed into a series of theories that have eventually resulted in the concept of *neobaroque*, which enriches the debate between modernity and postmodernity from the perspective of a “persistence of the baroque” along the history of Western civilisation.⁷⁵

Jean Rousset pointed out in 1953 the existence of close links between that baroque of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and modern art. Rousset’s thesis on French literature of the baroque period, published under the title *La Littérature de l’âge baroque en France: Circé et le paon*, was one of the first works to use the term baroque to refer to literary studies. In this work, the French critic founds the notion of a literary baroque, defined by two aesthetical principles: inconstancy, metamorphosis, and *trompe l’oeil*, deceive the eye (symbolised by the Greek goddess Circe), on the one hand, and ostentation, scenery, and ornamentation (symbolised by the peacock), on the other.

Although Wölflinn places his theories observing the baroque in Rome and Rousset in French literature, most analyses point to Spain as the place where the baroque arose. Werner Weisbach in 1921 stated that the baroque was the art of the Counter-Reformation, which was carried out mainly by the Spaniards.⁷⁶ Indeed,

⁷⁵ Indeed, after Wölflinn’s works and within the different mutations of baroque style, the commemoration of the tercentenary of Gongora’s death is significant. The *Generación del 27* (Generation of 1927) in Spain used the event to forge a purely modern identity in their art, around the Baroque, thus embodying a change in style and the theories of Ortega y Gasset, self-reflexivity, the poetry of Federico García Lorca and other writers of his generation, and the philological and stylistic preoccupations of Ramón Menéndez Pidal and followers such as Dámaso Alonso and Alfonso Reyes.

⁷⁶ See Weisbach’s *El Barroco: Arte de la Contrarreforma*, 1942.

Spanish art and, above all, literature showed an incomparable fruitfulness during that epoch with writers such as Cervantes, Góngora, Quevedo, Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca, Tirso de Molina, and Gracián among others; in the same way, it is difficult to find in the history of literature a period so fertile in literary trends and genres as well as perspectives and manifestations such as cultism, conceptism, picaresque, drama, and the novel of adventures.

It is obvious, then, that thanks to this height and splendour in Spanish literature, the American continent has become the most productive place of baroque art.⁷⁷ The Spanish American Baroque, also known as the *Barroco de Indias*.⁷⁸ has gone through an important critical revision in the last few decades as part of a wider reconsideration of colonial Latin American cultural production and, more recently, as part of a scholarly focus on transatlantic and hemispheric studies.

An integral element of the Counter-Reformation in Europe, the Baroque travelled to the Americas to become one of the central literary and artistic expressions of the new identities being forged in the viceregal capital cities and as well as on the more remote frontiers of the Spanish and Portuguese empires. The exuberance of these aesthetic traditions is mirrored in the equally dynamic theoretical and critical paradigms inspired by the cultural production and the

⁷⁷ See Lezama Lima 1988. He affirms that if the Spanish Baroque became the art of the Counter-Reformation, the Baroque introduced in America as an instrument of colonisation has become the art of the “Counter-Conquest” (*contraconquista*). Thus, the Americans transformed the Baroque into an art with which they are able to express their identity.

⁷⁸ Picón-Salas 1994 (originally published in 1944) coined the term “*Barroco de Indias*” and introduced ideas that would be more fully developed by later scholars, including the recognition of indigenous contributions and transculturation to the cultural production of the period, cultural syncretism, the “hybrid” nature of the creole elites’ cultural production, and the important contributions of the Jesuits to the development of “creole consciousness.”

debates on the sociopolitical as well as cultural uses and consequences of the Baroque and Neo-baroque representational styles.

The New World Baroque, therefore, is understood as the result of transatlantic colonisation, slavery, and trans-culturation, and is often posited as the foundational literary movement of Latin America.⁷⁹ If the historical Baroque was the aesthetic response to imperial crisis and religious schisms in Europe, it became the mode by which colonial subjects began complex processes of identification in Latin America. Those performative practices initiated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and continue to this day.

Critics influenced by the Enlightenment and dedicated to the poetics of Neoclassicism, Romanticism, and Realism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries marginalised the historical Baroque, which inspired renewed interest around the turn of the twentieth century. A series of historical factors and literary coincidences joined to inspire a new generation of writers, on both sides of the Atlantic, devoted to Baroque aesthetics.⁸⁰ From 1878 to 1940 the most important examples of early reconsiderations of Baroque art and literature by European thinkers flourished. That would become the foundation for the theorisation of the Neo-baroque, including essays by Heinrich Wölfflin, Walter Benjamin, Eugenio

⁷⁹ Critics have recognised the historical Baroque as both an imperial imposition on the subjugated Spanish colonies and as a more localised expression of resistance and creole consciousness, leading most scholars to understand that there are multiple Baroques in the Americas: those that reflect and mimic metropolitan power and prestige through the ornate literary and artistic styles of a “transplanted” European Baroque, financed by the exploitation of African and indigenous American labour, and the contestatory artistic interventions by marginalised Africans, Indians, Mestizos, and, above all, Creoles.

⁸⁰ See Zamora and Kaup 2010.

d'Ors, and South American critics from the same period such as Alfonso Reyes, Ángel Guido, and Pedro Henríquez Ureña.

Of course, writers also contributed to the renewal of the Baroque, from Rubén Darío's modernist recuperation of the Spanish classics to the Generation of 27's celebration of Luis de Góngora's poetics in the tercentenary of his death, to the Mexican "los Contemporáneos," to Argentina's Jorge Luis Borges. In their interest in the Baroque, those writers shared an acute inconformity with modernity and a desire to create alternative realities through words and images, while expressing a critique of the philosophical, political, and social concepts at the heart of the Enlightenment. Michael Horswell discusses on the renewed interest in the Baroque:

The "return of the Baroque" in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is often explained, in part, as an artistic and ideological reaction to the unfinished and continuing production and performance of identity in Latin America. Others see the recurrent Baroque elements in culture as an "ethos" or "spirit" that inevitably disrupts cyclical pulls to orderly, classical aesthetics, while other critics resist both this approach and the identity models to ground their readings in socio-political analysis of the early modern period's Baroque and the later Neo-baroque as a challenge to, or crisis of, that unfinished modernity. (2014)

Most theorists of the Neo-baroque work with this problematic relationship between the Baroque and modernity, which in the late twentieth century evolved into a study of the relationship between the Neo-baroque and postmodernism and

late capitalism. Buci-Glucksmann traces how modern aesthetic theory emerged from the Baroque. Accordingly, there are some unusual parallels between postmodern themes and what she calls “baroque reason”. “In particular, both perspectives are held together by a fascination with artifice, especially montage and allegory, and both are inclined towards a profound melancholy mentality” (1994, 11). Thus, Buci-Glucksmann equated what she labelled a baroque *folie du voir* with the early-twenty-century modernist shift toward abstraction. Similarly, Martin Jay projected the baroque out of its historical confines, affirming, like Buci-Glucksmann, that the inherent “madness of vision” associated with the baroque was present in the nineteenth-century Romantic Movement and early-twenty-century surrealist art.

Brazilian critic Irlemar Chiampi calls the Latin American Neo-baroque an “aesthetic of counter-modernity” given that the region was, in her opinion, never assimilated into the Enlightenment project. She argues that Latin America could not be assimilated and that for this very reason the Baroque is re-appropriated by the region’s intellectuals in the early twentieth century in order to invert modernity in what she calls the Neo-baroque’s aesthetic of “dissonant modernity” (2000, 17). Particularly in literature, the seventeenth-century baroque’s obsessive concerns with illusionism and the questionable nature of reality was adapted to a new cultural context, becoming a formal strategy that could be used to contest dominant ideologies and issues of identity, gender, and reality itself. These characteristics have been traditionally associated with the Latin American neo-baroque fiction and the rise of the metafictional new-historicist novel.

Thus, Latin American writers such as José Luis Borges, Severo Sarduy, José Lezama Lima, Alejo Carpentier, and Carlos Fuentes embraced postmodern theoretical concerns and melded them with the aesthetics and stylistic strategies adapted from the seventeenth-century baroque tradition: “the instability and untrustworthiness of “reality” as a “truth”; the concern with simulacra; motifs like the labyrinth as emblem of multiple voices or layers of meaning; and an inherent self-reflexivity and sense for the virtuosic performance” (Ndalianis, 14). Consequently, this movement known as neo-baroque also drew from Bathkinian concern with the carnivalesque, intertextuality, dialogic discourse and multiple narrative voices and levels.

Severo Sarduy suggests that, whereas the Latin American baroque of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was simply a colonial extension of the European baroque – in particular, the Spanish – the neo-baroque widens the critical scope by returning to the Spanish origins. The aim was to reclaim history by appropriating a period usually considered to be the original baroque, which had been the narrative of the colonisers. In Spain, the baroque became associated with postmodernism and the periods both under and post Franco’s dictatorship as well as influenced by Latin American boom authors who had deliberately embraced the styles and concerns of Golden Age writers such as Cervantes, Calderón de la Barca, Luis de Góngora, and Francisco de Quevedo.

According to Ndalianis, for these Latin American and Spanish writers, “the neo-baroque became a potent weapon that could counteract the mainstream. [...] The contemporary neo-baroque, on the other hand, finds its voice within a

mainstream market and, like the seventeenth-century baroque, directs its seduction to a mass audience” (15). During the twentieth century, a baroque mentality has again become crystallised on a grand scale within the context of contemporary culture. The seriality and intertextual playfulness of *Don Quixote* and the exotic journeys of the *Persiles* seem to have metamorphosed and adjusted to a new historical and cultural context.

What distinguishes many works in the earliest phases of the twentieth-century baroque from the works written by Catholics with a Catholic sensibility and imagination, whether consciously or not, is the reflexive desire to revisit the perceptual systems that sensorially engage the reader/spectator in ways that suggest a more complete and complex parallel between our own era and the seventeenth-century baroque. Stylistic patterns and a Catholic aesthetic imagination are complexly interwoven thus giving rise to a set of signs and symbols that are the products of that cultural context.

Just as a language system as the Liturgy is staged in the splendour of a semiotic time-space (Holy Mass-Church) thus becoming a ritual, visual iconic texts or ordinary activities become sacramental through their own inverted sacred reflections. Consequently, the neo-baroque takes advantage of the Catholic aesthetics that inundate the original baroque sensibility in order to articulate the spatial, the visual, and the sensorial in ways that parallel the dynamism of seventeenth-century baroque form. Moreover, that dynamism is expressed in guises that are technologically different from those of the seventeenth-century original forms.

Indeed, the baroque arts aimed at overwhelming the audience on sensory levels in order to convey “meaning” beyond the mere contemplation or act of reading. That “meaning” was God and the grandeur of His creation by means of an introspection in the human soul. Thus, narrative purpose was overpowered by sensory purpose and reason was replaced by the senses. In perfect sacramental fashion, the goal was to feel, touch, and see, rather than to understand. We have discussed in the works of Spanish painters of the time, above all Velázquez and his masterpiece that encompasses this baroque sensibility, *Christ on the Cross*. Yet there is another great example of this sensibility worth commenting here that merges a variety of media – painting, sculpture and architecture – into a unified composition that synthesises the Catholic imagination and the baroque as has been analysed in this chapter: Bernini’s *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa de Ávila*.⁸¹

Bernini’s masterpiece definitely displays the relationship between spectacle and powerful patronage, thus showing the way his art is motivated by a mystical desire to thrust the spectator into the work by inducing states of transcendence through amazement, delight, and wonder. The theatricalisation of spectacle and of the church space together with the multiple layers of craft such as chromatic marble, architectural detail, gold, stucco complete the precise moment of the saint’s ecstasy. Teresa describes an angel carrying a fire-tipped spear with which he pierces her heart repeatedly, an act that leads her to a state of spiritual rapture. She writes, “The pain was so severe that it made me utter several moans.

⁸¹ Gian Lorenzo Bernini (Naples 1598 – Rome 1680) made the life-size marble sculpture *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa de Ávila* between 1647 and 1652. It is in the Cornaro Chapel, Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome. See Appendix 12.

The sweetness caused by this intense pain is so extreme that one cannot possibly wish it to cease, nor is one's soul then content with anything but God" (193).

Bernini's sculptural group shows a cupid-like angel holding an arrow. His delicate touch gives him an air of grace. Teresa, with her head thrown back and her eyes closed, faints overcome with God's love. Her physical body seems to have dematerialised beneath the heavy drapery of her robe. The twisting folds of her clothes gives movement to the scene while the bronze rays, coming from above, materialise divine love. The combined effect is one of intense drama thus turning the saint and the Angel, made of heavy marble, into ethereal figures that float weightlessly. Besides, a complete understanding of the aesthetic impact and spiritual significance of the sculpture can only be gained in the context of the larger space of the chapel.

Bernini made masterful use of the shallow transept available to him: instead of trying for an enclosed chapel, he presented the composition as a theatre, featuring the ecstasy of St Teresa. The work is, in fact, not an independent piece, but the centre of a more complex composition that brings together not only sculpture, but also painting and architecture – all designed by Bernini. The dark marble columns and convex niche in which *St. Teresa's Ecstasy* is framed, enhance the dynamism of the scene, while giving the sense that the wall has been opened up to reveal the Saint's vision as performed on a stage.

Consequently, we are, in a way, looking at a vision of a vision – taking part in the mystical experience – anticipating the ecstatic reverie that awaits her to the point of conveying an almost orgasmic pleasure. Saint Teresa's contorted

posture and the ambiguous angel smile give the scene a flavour of passion and voluptuousness, very surprising in a Catholic statue. “Erotic desire”, Greeley states, “has on occasion been portrayed in art with a Catholic perspective. Moreover, on occasion it has been considered sacramental in the Catholic heritage, so sacramental indeed that the union born of erotic desire has become an official sacrament of the Church” (55). Indeed, sexual imagery has already been used in Jewish and Christian scriptures as a metaphor of God’s love.⁸²

Although the celestial and earthly realms appear separate by the horizontal, decorative border that runs across the midpoint of the chapel wall, both worlds are finally united at the point where the vision takes place. The *composto* effects therefore produce powerful affects thus making possible the representation of an abstraction, since an ecstasy is unrepresentable by definition. What viewers of *St. Teresa’s Ecstasy* saw before them was not any material substance, but a vision existing in the Saint’s imagination through sensorial engagement and a Catholic imagination.

This is precisely how the sacramental imagination works and the spiritual qualities of the Catholic sensibility lie in its ability to transcend the material limitations of reality. The artist uses every technological development available to produce the aesthetic effect on the viewer or reader. The extraordinary experimentation with language that is the hallmark of much of Spanish baroque literature also implicates the reader in the work itself. As has been analysed, this

⁸² Andrew Greeley refers to the *Song of Songs* and the book of *Tobit*. (2000, 57). He also reminds us of St. Teresa’s own erotic language and of her confrere St. John of the Cross, especially in his poem “One Dark Night”. See St. John of the Cross (1991) pp. 353-395.

may also be seen in Cervantes's fiction where reading emerges as a demystifying activity, one that goes beyond the mere linguistic properties of discourse.

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault begins his "archaeology" of the Western idea of logos and the problem of language and representation that occurs in the seventeenth century: "in the sixteenth century, one asked oneself how it was possible to know that a sign did in fact designate what it signified; from the seventeenth century, one began to ask how a sign could be linked to what it signified" (Foucault, 1994, 97).

To Foucault, between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries language starts to be recognised as a system of signs not related to an intrinsic meaning or a specific object of reference. The culture of the baroque represents the moment in the history of aesthetics where for the first time the problem of representation arises and with it the question of a new poetic subjectivity. If language has no absolute meaning in itself, its meaning and function will depend on the different shapes and forms it assumes in individual works of art. Thus, the new baroque subject is able to adjust itself creatively to the multiple nature of the image and of its meaning, to interact unconsciously with the work, and to find aesthetic accomplishment in the complex and unsteady nature of the linguistic sign. The baroque art inscribes in itself the image of its own making, the story of its creation.

One of the few close readings performed by Foucault in his book *The Order of Things* was that on *Don Quixote*. Foucault sees Cervantes's character as the best example to diagnose the rupture between realities as perceived in

different mentalities. Don Quixote's idealism, his belief in chivalry, and his sense of ordinary entities and actions being transcendent – such as windmills being giants, inns being castles, or country lasses being courtly ladies – would have been more natural in the medieval *episteme* of similitude and resemblance, but the knight's acts and visions were out of synch with Cervantes's times, which had a less Platonic, more mundane view of things.

Consequently, Cervantes's protagonists transcend the text and its meaning and invite the reader to do so thus following the baroque aesthetics together with the Catholic imagination that pervaded almost every act giving the narratives their transcendent vision.

This transcendent feature may be the origin of what Buci-Glucksmann analyses as “virtual reality” in *The Madness of Vision*. For her, an entire aesthetic and philosophical voyage connects the baroque to the virtual via three historical moments: the seventeenth-century baroque aesthetic, Baudelaire's modern baroque, and the contemporary, technological neo-baroque of a global madness of vision. In this sense, the baroque of artifice, metamorphosis, anamorphosis, self-reflexive nature, spectacle and transcendence – an ability to see the unseeable, to explain the inexplicable – continues its lineage to the twentieth-century literature and art and into the present day.

Thus, in his 1928 *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Walter Benjamin's conception of Modernity did not depend only on Enlightenment reason; he recognised that factors such as instability, mutability, fragmentarity, and multiple dimensions were baroque traits which invaded all aspects of cultural

and social reality in Modernity. The image that Benjamin used to illustrate that process was that of the *ruins*. He tells of the baroque cult of the ruin, which had become an end in itself, so that the scenes of the Nativity of Jesus and Adoration of the Magi were no longer set in medieval stables, but in ruins of classical temples. The baroque tradition of the martyr drama has affinities with the Passion.

Bainar Cowan puts it this way: “In allegory, objects seem to reenact Christ’s path along the *via dolorosa*, suffering all natural dignity to be painfully stripped away from them, anticipating the conferring of an infinitely more glorious dignity from above” (2005, 62). As Cowan goes on to explain, appropriation of natural objects has been a Biblical way of showing God’s action in history: “the burning bush, the parting sea, the gushing rock are all natural objects trans-natured [which] are made into images for the collective memory, emblems of moments at which nature was interrupted and something truly historic happened” (62-63). Benjamin sees history as a paradoxical and troubling concept, for it is both the source of all pain and misunderstanding, and the medium through which meaning and salvation are attained. The baroque aesthetics display and convey this double, self-opposed movement in which history is figurally seen “as the Passion of the world” (1998, 166).

The image of the architectural ruin, sign of a vanished prominence works this way. According to Benjamin, “in the ruin, history has physically merged into the setting”. By its decay, the ruin becomes “the highly significant fragment, the remnant” (177-178). The most ruinous moment in human history takes place with Christ’s crucifixion. Benjamin explains, “The bleak confusion of Golgotha [...] is

not just a symbol of the desolation of human existence. In its transitoriness is not signified or allegorically represented, so much as, in its own significance, displayed as allegory. As the allegory of resurrection” (232). Death becoming the allegory of its opposite “means precisely the non-existence of what it represents” (233).

The same image representing the same anxieties have been used in the Romantic period and both in the twentieth century and in our days as well. Fernando Rodríguez de la Flor states that in the 1600s “decadence and disenchantment [...] took hold of the stage of representation (the symbolic space of Counter-Reformation), forecasting in three hundred years the same doubts and the same auto-destructive energy that is acting in our own symbolic production nowadays, a time which is thus living its baroque revival, the neo-baroque” (1999, 14). The twentieth century was a time in which the extreme side of baroque *horror vacui* seemed completely justified.

In some of the works of the great Spanish poet Luis de Góngora, for instance, there is a great density of images such as pompous processions, series of fruits, foods, beasts, which function as decorative elements thus contributing to the general plot. However, the exuberance of this baroque artefact may well respond to an urge to fill the void, the *horror vacui*, that haunted seventeenth-century imaginations. Ironically enough, the abuse of spectacular and sensual elements reminds us of the futility of earthly things.

As George Steiner notes, “there is in the most confident metaphysical construct, in the most affirmative work of art a *memento mori*, a labour, implicit

or explicit, to hold at bay the seepage of fatal time, of entropy into every living form” (2001, 2). Baroque texts, nonetheless, are not defined simply by concentration and excess. In this sense, a picture such as Velazquez’s *Christ Crucified* emerges as a minimalist representation of the baroque hyperbolic morphologies of nothingness and excess, the two extremes that converge in the common anxiety caused by the perceived closeness of non-existence and of an epistemic moral vacuum.

As Spadaccini states, “the re-appropriation of the concept Baroque is an ongoing one” (2005, xxxi). One must have in mind that baroque aesthetics was crucial, as this dissertation has analysed, in the origin and development of the modern novel. This fact implies that the Catholic imagination of the Counter-Reformation helped to shape the form of the emergent novel. Following this line of investigation, the modern novel emerged at a time of disenchantment and change, a time to recuperate moral and ethical values that those artists and authors considered that were lost.

This is precisely the reason why those Catholic elements inherent in the novel have appeared along the history of the modern novel. Classic Gothic fiction (1764 – 1820) is a clear example of how those Catholic elements are re-appropriated, but this time subversively through an inversion of those original symbols. Indeed Catholicism itself becomes a standard and flexible trope in gothic fiction, where the monastery, the convent, ruins, religious life, confessions and confessionals, nuns, monks, and friars are familiar features that gothic writers use

to motivate their tales in the context of anti-Catholic eighteenth-century England following an aesthetic pattern that one could label neo-baroque.

Following this line of argument, the Catholic novel is not a relevant concept in itself since the modern novel has its own origins in a Catholic vision of the world. The point here is the emergence of those primogenial elements again in the modern novel as a response to the moral vacuum which some (Catholic) writers and artists experienced during both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

As Theodore Fraser explains, criticism of the works of novelists, whether Catholic or not, “should be based on how they use their artistic vision [since] all novelists imbue their works with a moral vision from which we can discern some value statements on the human condition” (1994, xiv). Thus, Fraser concludes, the role of a critic should focus on the best way to assess the manner in which the writer’s ideology has been artfully presented.

In his preface to a 1987 translation of Mauriac’s *Viper’s Tangle*, David Lodge describes how this famous novel represents for him a classic example of the Catholic elements of fiction: “It has all the ingredients: the idea of the sinner “being at the heart of Christianity” (Péguy’s phrase), the idea of “mystical substitution” (Marie’s self-sacrifice), the implied criticism of materialism, the tireless pursuit of the erring soul by God” (Mauriac, 1987, 5).

As baroque artists and writers reacted against the threat of the Reformation fearing that their Catholic values could be in danger, modern Catholic writers – much resembling the “wasteland” point of view of T. S. Eliot – both regret the fallen state of their society and lash out against the perceived causes of this state

of affairs: the poor value systems of modernity's de-Christianised forms of political and social institutions.

Catholic authors, through different stages such as the French *nouveau roman* or the British Catholic revival, try to portray the divine presence in the world as reflected in the operations and actions of humans. In such a scenario, as Fraser states, "the plot is always God-centred, and the visible world is not seen as distinct from the spiritual, but as a sacramental manifestation of it" (xx). The modern novel written with a Catholic imagination reflects on the seventeenth-century art and fiction.

When Graham Greene complains about the fact that the religious sense, after the death of Henry James, has been lost to the English novel, he laments that the importance of the human act is also gone with the religious sense (*CE*, 91). Greene is not complaining about the evolution of the Catholic novel, not even about the idea of a Catholic writer, terms with which he did not feel comfortable. He is complaining about the loss of the original elements on which the novel was based, that transcendental imagination that helped humans shape their moral and ethical values by means of a direct contact with creation, with God.

As the artists and writers of the baroque did with seventeenth-century technical improvements and political and social changes, Greene also reflects the socio-political crises of his time and uses modern narrative techniques taken from new technological advances and other stylistic devices to recuperate those Catholic elements he considered so important for the novel. Consequently, we will analyse Graham Greene's work, with a close reading of his novels set in

Spain, in order to demonstrate the influence of the Spanish Catholic imagination and Baroque aesthetics inherent both in the modern novel as a genre and in his novels.

PART II

GRAHAM GREENE'S BAROQUE AESTHETICS AND THE INFLUENCE OF SPANISH CATHOLIC IMAGINATION

II.1 GRAHAM GREENE'S UNFINISHED CONVERSION

Father Leopoldo Durán, enumerating some books that Graham Greene had inscribed for him, revealed how *Faith and Fiction, Creative Process in Greene and Mauriac* by Philip Stratford is dedicated: "This book with your own, is the best on my work", whereas in *The Power and the Glory, Text, Background and Criticism*, edited by R. W. B. Lewis and Peter J. Conn, he wrote: "Save me from these American Academicians" (Durán, 1994, 305).⁸³

This attitude toward critics seems to have been linked with Greene's determination to avoid repetition in his work. As Hoskins puts it, "he feared that too keen an awareness of the 'patterns' in his work would stifle his own creativity and make patterns harder rather than easier to avoid" (1999, vii). In his second biography *Ways of Escape*, Greene explains how this fear became acute midway through his career, when his established reputation as a Catholic novelist threatened to limit his artistic expression:

Writing a novel does not become easier with practice. The slow discovery by a novelist of his individual method can be exciting, but a moment comes in middle age when he feels that he no longer controls his method;

⁸³ Greene is referring to Durán's 1974 *La Crisis del Sacerdote en Graham Greene*.

he has become its prisoner. Then a long period of ennui sets in: it seems to him he has done everything before. He is more afraid to read his favourable critics than his unfavourable, for with terrible patience they unroll before his eyes the unchanging pattern of the carpet. If he has depended a great deal on his unconscious, on his ability to forget even his own books when they are once on the public shelves, the critics remind him – this theme originated ten years ago, that simile which came so unthinkingly to his pen a few weeks back was used nearly twenty years ago in a passage where... (*WE*, 134)

In his famous book-length interview with Marie-Françoise Allain, Greene described the imaginative role that Catholicism played in his work: “There does exist a pattern in my carpet constituted by Catholicism, but one has to stand back in order to make it out” (1983, 159). Indeed, he was soon to be one of the most celebrated converts from Anglicanism to Catholicism once he was received into the Catholic Church in 1926.

Among the various reasons for his conversion, one of the most compelling was the influence of his wife-to-be, herself a convert, Vivien Dayrell-Browning. As he told Vivien shortly after starting his instruction, “I admit the idea came to me, because of you. I do all the same feel I want to be a Catholic now, even a little apart from you. One does want fearfully hard, something fine & hard & certain, however uncomfortable, to catch hold of in the general flux” (Sherry 1989, 256). Although Greene insisted that he converted for intellectual reasons rather than emotional ones, the circumstances of his conversion and the way in which he

described his baptism call these remarks into question and reveal the passionate artistic sensibility of the artist. In his first travel book, *Journey Without Maps* (1936), he writes:

In Nottingham I was instructed to Catholicism, travelling here and there by tram into new country with the fat priest who had once been an actor. (It was one of his greatest sacrifices to be unable to see a play). The tram clattered past the Post Office: “Now we come to the Immaculate Conception”; past the cinema: “Our Lady”; the theatre: a sad slanting look towards *The Private Secretary* (it was Christmas time). The Cathedral was a dark place full of inferior statues. I was baptised one foggy afternoon about four o’clock. I couldn’t think of any names I particularly wanted, so I kept my old name. I was alone with the fat priest; it was all very quickly and formally done, while someone at a children’s service muttered in another chapel. Then we shook hands and I went off to a salmon tea, and the dog which had been sick again on the mat. It was like a life photographed as it came to mind, without any order, full of gaps, giving at best a general impression. I couldn’t help feeling all the way to the newspaper office, past the Post Office, the Moroccan café, the ancient whore, that I had got somewhere new by way of memories I hadn’t known I possessed. I had taken up the thread of life from very far back, from so far back as innocence. (*JWM*, 101-102)

It is worth reproducing this long quotation to see how Greene combines daily routine with the ceremony of the sacrament of Baptism. The episode above alternates everyday work places with sacred cult places. The foggy weather represents his confusion, whereas the darkness of the Cathedral, in perfect baroque *chiaroscuro*, the mysterious God who looms over the sacramental scene. All of a sudden, the reader's attention is directed to the excessive corporeality of the priest and the image of food related to the sick dog, which immediately brings to mind the expression "sick as a dog", degrading the sacramental image into a Rabelaisian grotesque body. After the trauma, Baptism takes effect and Greene is able to pick up the pieces of his broken life thus facing it retrospectively, a sort of anamorphic perspective.

In his first autobiography, *A Sort of Life* (1971), Greene will recall the first day of instruction, which is unconsciously related to his first memory ever: "[T]he first thing I remember is sitting in a pram at the top of a hill with a dead dog lying at my feet". The dog, as he learned later, belonged to his elder sister and had been run over and killed. The nurse in charge of them "thought it convenient to bring the cadaver home that way" (*SL*, 13). He remembers the day that Greene decided to receive the sacrament of Baptism: "I took Paddy for a walk to the local sooty neo-Gothic Cathedral – it possessed for me a certain gloomy power because it represented the inconceivable and the incredible. It was a wooden box for inquiries and I dropped into it a note asking for instruction" (118). The ambiguous image of the dog, first dead, sick most of the days later – as the author tells repeatedly in his autobiography – finally alive, reflects his process of instruction

in the description of Father Trollope as well as his prejudiced view of Catholicism: “At the first sight he [Father Trollope] was all I detested most in my private image of the Church”. Soon, however, he was forced to modify his view, coming to realise that his initial impressions of the priest were not only erroneous but that he was “facing the challenge of an inexplicable goodness” (118-19). Consequently, religion seemed to repulse Greene emotionally as much as it attracted him.

Adam Schwartz rightly points out that Greene’s conversion to Roman Catholicism “was intimately connected to his life’s central trauma rather than being solely the process of cool reasoning he depicts. His Berkhamsted breakdown was a central non-rational element of his conversion” (2005, 142).⁸⁴ Thus, Greene asserted that one of conversion’s spiritual advantages was “being offered an insubstantial hope” (1980, 85). His previous inability to find any assistance concerning his school suffering had provoked his suicide attempts, which seemed the only honest reaction to society’s apparent indifference to evil’s existence and persistence.

He admitted that when he asked for instruction, “I was ready to believe in the existence of evil (...) the evil which surrounded me prepared me for the

⁸⁴ The “Berkhamsted trauma” refers to his childhood traumatic experiences of his tenure at Berkhamsted, where he was the headmaster’s son. His relationship with two other boys, Lionel Carter and A. H. Wheeler ended in what Greene considered as a conspiracy to betray his friendship, which brought about Greene’s final push into the abyss. Carter tortured the young Greene physically and mentally thus representing for the writer the genuine quality of evil. Schwartz calls attention to a point omitted by critics: since Carter was also nephew to one of Berkhamsted masters, he distracted attention from his own situation by humiliating Greene (122). If Carter was pure evil, Wheeler (Watson in *A Sort of Life*) was a demon in disguise. Only speculation is possible about what happened between the boys. See Sherry, *Life*, I: 82-83, and Shelden, 1994: 68-71, where he goes as far as to suggest maliciously that it could have been a homosexual affair.

paradoxes of Christianity” (Allain 1983, 148). He later told a friend that, “I had to find a religion (...) to measure my evil against” (Shelden 1994, 125).⁸⁵ For Greene, that religion was Roman Catholicism, since he considered that Catholicism put a unique emphasis on evil: “To be a Catholic is to believe in the Devil”.⁸⁶ Greene’s experiences in Berkhamsted symbolised evil and, as Judith Adamson explains, Greene became preoccupied with “the discrepancy between the old liberal myths that had ruled his childhood and what his keen eye had shown” to be their flaws in his school setting (1990, 5-6).

One of the enduring sources of Greene’s trauma was the epiphany he had when reading Marjorie Bowen’s 1906 *The Viper of Milan*. He read it when he was fourteen, as he was undergoing Carter’s abuse, and found a way to explain the terrible experience of the boarding school in a not so commonplace adventure story. In his essay “Lost Childhood”, young Greene established a relation between Carter and Bowen’s villain Visconti, thus deducing from this tale a common principle of his future thought:

Goodness has only once found a perfect incarnation in a human body and never will again, but evil can always find a home there. Human nature is not black and white but black and grey. I read all that in *The Viper of Milan* and I looked round and saw that it was so. (...) Anyway, she had given me my pattern – religion might later explain it to me in other terms,

⁸⁵ Greene to Guy Elmes as quoted in Shelden.

⁸⁶ Greene review of *After Strange Gods*, by T. S. Eliot, *Life and Letters* 10 (April 1934): 112. (The review is unsigned, but Stratford, in *Faith and Fiction*, 132, has identified Greene as its author).

but the pattern was already there – perfect evil walking the world where perfect good can never walk again. (*LC*, 16-17).

The “pattern” to which Greene constantly referred may have its origin here. He admits that from the moment he read Bowen’s book he knew he wanted to write and “all other possible futures slid away” (16). As a way to overcome his traumatic childhood experiences, the act of writing provided him with a “way of escape”: “Writing is a form of therapy; sometimes I wonder how all those who do not write, compose or paint can manage to escape the madness, the melancholia, the panic fear which is inherent in the human situation” (*WE*, 9 and 275). Together with the idea of getting over those traumas, Greene emphasises the aesthetic impulse of narrative and its healing effect both on the artist and on the beholder.

In his childhood memories, the adult Greene recalls his role as reader and observer from the point of view of the writer he has become years later. In baroque fashion, Greene comments not only on the narrative elements of the work of art, but also on the visual effects that enhance the intrinsic relation between the act of reading/writing and life:

On the surface *The Viper of Milan* is only the story of a war between Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan, and Mastino della Scala, Duke of Verona, told with zest and cunning and an amazing pictorial sense. Why did it creep in and colour and explain the terrible living world of stones, stairs and the never quiet dormitory? It was no good in that real world to dream that one would ever be a Sir Henry Curtis, but della Scala who at

last turned from an honesty that never paid and betrayed his friends and died dishonoured and a failure even at treachery – it was easier for a child to escape behind his mask. As for Visconti, with his beauty, his patience, and his genius for evil, I had watched him passed by many a time in his black Sunday suit smelling of mothballs. His name was Carter. (*LC*, 16)

Accordingly, Carter may be the key to understand many of Greene's future twisted and ambiguous plots. Carter seems to stand for evil, Hell on Earth, an anthropomorphic representation and incarnation of the devil. Greene held that the Catholic acceptance of a malevolent, but created, force opposed to Good is the best foundation of hope. In Greene's thought, this paradox of Christianity made sense of the universe by enabling one not only to accept, but also to resist, the multiple manifestations of evil rather than misunderstand or deny them, "as he believed his liberal Christian parents and modern culture generally had done" (Schwartz 2005, 142).

In "Henry James: The Religious Aspect", Greene believed that post-Christians and other Christian denominations such as Anglicanism had "almost relinquished Hell" in his era, and "not a day passed in a Catholic church without prayers for deliverance from evil spirits 'wandering through the world for the ruin of souls'" (*CE*, 40-41). In short, Roman Catholicism was "a strong antidote to mere apathetic pessimism in the presence of evil" thus offering a hopeful alternative to what seemed, as Stratford reminds us, the indifference or boredom of secularist and liberal Christian responses to it (55). Greene's interest in Hell during his instruction is evident from his remark to Vivien that his newly acquired

doctrine supplies “something hard, not sentimental and exciting”, some of the qualities he found attractive in Roman Catholicism generally and absent from his ancestral modernist Anglicanism, which had largely abjured this dogma (Sherry, 1989, 260).

Greene was attracted to the general authority exhibited by the Catholic Church. During his instruction, he criticised Anglicanism for substituting “sticky sentiment” for defined dogmas and the lack of doctrinal standards. Sherry reproduces Greene’s words to his then future wife, Vivien Dayrell-Browning:

I’ve often seen the absurdity, exemplified in the Anglican church, of a bishop remaining a bishop even though he doesn’t believe in the Resurrection, nor even in the historical existence of Christ. There are certain points of reference which cannot be abandoned, otherwise one might as well go and become a Buddhist or a Hindu. (...) So long as differences between the churches exist, those differences ought to be upheld, otherwise one becomes as foggy as the Anglicans. (Sherry, 260).

According to Schwartz, in Roman Catholicism Greene had found “not only lucidly expressed truths, but (...) also a truth-telling institution (148). Despite his intellectual deviations and doubts, Greene had compelling reasons to remain a Catholic for the rest of his life. Catholicism provided him with a valid path at the crossroads of his worldview after the traumas of Berkhamsted, his therapeutic vocation as a writer, and his rhetorical and cultural roles. His conversion shaped his opposition to literary modernism, since he maintained that, “I was in revolt against the Bloomsbury school” (Cornwell, 466). Indeed, he

accused those writers such as Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster of creating characters who “wandered like cardboard symbols through a world that was paper-thin”. He considered that their fiction had lost “the religious sense”, and “with the religious sense went the sense of the importance of the human act. It was as if the world of fiction had lost a dimension” (*CE*, 91).

Also in his essay on François Mauriac Greene compares Trollope’s Mr. Crawley to Mrs Woolf’s Mr. Ramsay and praises Trollope – “one of the most materialistic of our writers” – for the way his readers are aware of another world, another dimension, in which his characters may find relief for their actions:

The ungainly clergyman picking his black-booted way through the mud, handling so awkwardly his umbrella, speaking of his miserable income and stumbling through a proposal of marriage, exists in a way that Mrs. Woolf’s Mr. Ramsay never does, because we are aware that he exists not only to the woman he is addressing but also in a God’s eye. His unimportance in the world of the senses is only matched by his enormous importance in another world. (*CE*, 91)

Greene thinks that many writers “of the subjective novel”, by mining into layers of personality, had lost yet another dimension: “[T]he visible world for [those writers] ceased to exist as completely as the spiritual (*CE*, 91-92). Conversely, for Greene Mauriac was a writer “for whom the visible world has not ceased to exist, whose characters have the solidity and importance of men with souls to save or lose” (92). Greene emphasises the physical dimension of the characters as the best way to convey a sense of the spiritual thus completing the

final meaning of the novel. As he goes on to say, “Mauriac’s characters exist with extraordinary physical completeness, (...) but their particular acts are less important than the force, God or Devil, that compels him” (94).

Greene’s characteristic preoccupations along his novels accentuate his “counter-rebellion” against a time that appeared coldly indifferent about issues of Good and Evil, absolutes that have been substituted for the ones of Right and Wrong. Greene describes his novel *Brighton Rock*’s main theme as the contrast “between the ethical mind and the religious” (Sherry 1989, 639). Precisely, at the ending of that novel the priest tells Rose, “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” (*BR*, 246). The aesthetic pattern of Greene’s novels is seen in this paradoxical argument that Greene draws from T. S. Eliot’s essay on Baudelaire:

So far as we are human, what we do must be either good or evil; 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. (1975, 236)

These considerations were in Greene’s mind since the very beginning of his writing career. He argues that, as Modernist art is missing an essential dimension, so moderns have a “much thinner reality, they are not concerned with eternal damnation” (*CE*, 130). In a reference to Shaw, Greene goes further in his idea of difference between Catholics and post-Christians: “Only an essentially

innocent man, a man quite ignorant of the nature of evil, could write that: a worthy man, an ethical man, of course, but the ethical is much further from good than evil is" (*Yours Etc.* 66)⁸⁷. Such theological inflections have proved problematic for critics in their attempt to analyse and explain Greene's plots focusing excessively on content and being unable to discern the whole picture of his fiction.

What bothered Greene about his label as a Catholic writer was precisely the fear that readers could not separate doctrine from fiction. He did not want to prescribe any moral instruction. After assaulting his readers with aggressive and provocative depictions of sin, betrayal, murder or suicide, Greene wanted his readers and critics to step back and contemplate good and evil or grace and fall from grace not as a sort of epistemological enquiry, but as aesthetic categories in the context of fiction.

Many critics have insisted on Greene's alleged fascination with the creative potential of the Christian heresy of Manichaeism. Others have linked Greene to Jansenism, a doctrine born in the seventeenth century and almost immediately declared heretical, which minimises the role played by man's free will in affecting his actions, and exaggerates that played by divine grace, which God arbitrarily grants or withholds, in determining human behaviour. When asked by Gene Phillips to give his thoughts on this question of Jansenism, Greene answered, "[P]eople who think they are getting at Jansenism in my novels usually do not know what Jansenism really means. They probably mean Manichaeism,

⁸⁷ Originally these words appeared in Greene's review of the Catholic J. P. Hackett's book *Shaw: George versus Bernard*. London: Mercury, 1937. This reference in Greene's *Yours Etc.: Letters to the Press 1945-1986*.

because in the Catholic novels I seem to believe in supernatural evil” (1974, 101). There has been an excessive critical focus on Greene’s fiction as Catholic fiction, on the relationship between good and evil, or simply on the use of Catholic dogmas for melodramatic effects or for therapeutic use on the writer’s part. As Greene himself explained in his conversations with Allain:

My books only reflect faith or lack of faith, with every possible human in between. Cardinal Newman, whose books influenced me a great deal after my conversion, denied the existence of a “Catholic” literature. He recognised only the possibility of a religious dimension superior to the literary dimension, and he wrote that books ought to deal first with what he called in the vocabulary of the day, “the tragic destiny of man in his fallen state”. I agree with him. It is the “human factor” that interests me, not apologetics. (150)

And yet, as Mark Bosco indicates, “it was Greene’s Catholicism that gave him a specific point of view throughout his literary career and brought consistency to his art” (2005, 18). Therefore, his works constantly subvert and transgress Catholic issues not only in those novels where Catholicism and Catholic characters seem more overtly treated, but also in those works where Catholicism is not an important element of the plot or is just apparently limited to a few characters. This seems precisely one of the main critical flaws when dealing with Greene’s writings since those perspectives focus exclusively on content and not on the whole picture that content and form, telling and showing, create in Greene’s artistic pattern. Bosco approaches this idea when he points out that

without Catholicism, Greene “would not have developed the distinctive voice and style on which both his artistry and popularity flourished” (18).

Indeed, as Bosco goes on to say, Catholicism for Greene was not “a system of laws and dogmas or a body of belief demanding assent or dissent but rather a system of concepts, a reservoir of attitudes and values, and a source of situations with which he could order and dramatise his intuitions about human experience” (18). Of course, in Greene’s novels, characters are exposed to extreme moral choices managing hostile settings, divided loyalties and betrayals. However, for Greene, these situations would be no more than melodramatic stories if not for the risk of being surrounded by something greater that looms over the narrative. That element is, according to the author, the characters’ possibility of either saving or losing their souls.

That part of the plot is seldom shown in the story, it is not told – except in some of his overtly Catholic novels – but must be envisioned since it forms an invisible frame, which can only be perceived when content and form are observed from a distance as a whole. The numerous Catholic elements that flow throughout the narrative stimulate the Catholic imagination by pervading common and daily actions and things with a sense of the divine. This transcendental and sacramental sensibility negotiates the aesthetics of the narrative thus giving the story another dimension. In this regard, Greene’s works focus on the human actions because these actions hint at something beyond the frames of the novel.

If the reader fails to capture this dimension, he will fall into the trap of a melodramatic struggle between good and evil, a psychological or a moral debate.

In analysing Greene's novels, some have feared to create a wide theological gap, while some have questioned implicitly the veracity of Greene's Catholicism. On a different tone, some critics have shown a secularist prejudice by accusing Greene's Catholic novels of showing little originality and abusing religious dogmas as a device to heighten melodrama. As Bosco remarks, "[I]f Catholic critics were hesitant to accept Greene's Catholic imagination during this most 'Catholic' period of his career, secular critics took Greene to task for obscuring his humanism with religious tensions" (2005, 20).

From the idea of Original Sin, Newman accepted the existence of evil as a fact of life. Thus Greene's characters exist in this "aboriginal calamity", they are, in Bosco's words, "exiles on the extreme edges of society" (2005, 26). They are conscious of their failures and occupy the liminal space of those who feel guilty for being disloyal to others and, as is often the case, to God.

Terry Eagleton claims that failure is the legitimate form of victory in Greene's novels suggesting that the doctrine of Incarnation finds its textual embodiment not so much in human creativity but in human failure depicted as the radically fallen nature of humanity (1987, 114-5). Bosco accuses Eagleton of overstating the case, but accepts the idea that "the primary religious insight sustained through Greene's religious landscape is the Christian doctrine of the *felix culpa*, the happy effect of human sin as the cause of God's grace manifested in the Incarnation to an individual community" (2005, 26).

Indeed, the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is central to Greene's novels, and the aesthetics of his works is based on the bonds of the physical nature

of experience and the spiritual understanding of God. Greene writes of a God who not only exists, but acts as a living being within the plot to shape events, their participants, and the nature of the world in which He acts. Thus, Christ embodied as God in human form elevates the significance and potential holiness of normal bodily experience, heightening human actions and creating the potential for God to work His mercy and love within a world corrupted by sin.

For these ideas to be artistically conveyed, nevertheless, Greene reflected on his own life and his ambiguous relationship with his own faith, or rather, the process of his belief. Greene's doubt and guilt, his struggle to believe, can be seen in an incident recorded by his biographer Norman Sherry when he rejected an invitation to meet the famous Catholic priest, Padre Pío:

Pío invited Greene to meet him privately, but although he longed to do so, he refused: "I didn't want to change my life by meeting a saint, I felt that there was a good chance that he was one. He had a great peace about him". Greene was afraid of losing his lover; the vow of chastity was one he could not keep. But there was also the difficulty of what would happen to faith if doubt were removed. (Sherry, I.257)

Greene wanted to keep intact the symbol of his religion, the living saint, from a distance, but not get so close as to be too greatly influenced and motivated to give up sinning. Maintaining this contradiction, the struggle and the doubt, seemed to be essential to his faith, since Greene believed that this struggle would bind him closer to Catholicism than the complete certainty, which could push him away. On another occasion, Sherry quotes what Greene wrote to his mistress

Catherine after attending Mass with Vivien, his wife: “It’s odd how little I get out of Mass except when you’re around. I’m a much better Catholic in mortal sin! Or at least, I’m more aware of it” (Sherry, I.257).

While some critics such as Michael Shelden see Greene’s apparently shallow religious personal life as evidence against any theories about serious religious themes in his novels, thus ignoring this continuing struggle with God, and while others, the majority, insist on analysing the validity or the sense of Greene’s religiously ambiguous plots, I propose to change the perspective and focus more on the form, the aesthetics of his works, and not only on the content.

In doing so, we can avoid being tangled up in endless quasi-theological debates and take some distance to observe his novels and the ambiguity of his Catholicism as an aesthetic device with which to heighten the human acts in a world where God is constantly present, but apparently absent. Consequently, Greene turned to characters who are Catholics, or are aware of what it means to be a Catholic, because he wanted “to examine more closely the effect of faith on action” (*WE*, 79). As Bosco states, “Greene believed that for writing to have any depth, it had to be based on a view of the human person as supernatural being, brought to that moment when God confronts the person and grace encounters free will” (2005, 17). Greene’s writing, therefore, reveals what T. S. Eliot claimed when he stated that, “[T]he common ground between religion and fiction is behaviour” (1950, 347). Patrick Query agrees and expands upon this:

If behaviour is also belief, then surely *writing* is behaviour and betrays at least as much of the substance of a writer's belief as whatever he might publicly "formulate and subscribe to". Greene, it seems to me, has internalised Catholicism. He writes, in other words, like a Catholic – not only because he writes about priests, holy water, sin and confession, but because his artistic apparatus, his means of perceiving and rendering the world, is Catholic, or, more specifically, sacramental. (2008, 176-177)

In Greene's writing, therefore, there is a constant fusion of form and content conveyed by means of a sacramental imagination common to the Catholic sensibility. Incarnation is revealed to characters when they discover that their sufferings and their sins bring them into an analogical relationship with that suffering Christ.

Their very human condition, that is, their physicality, a body-focused narrative, even the secular insistence and the refusal to believe, all those images and their inseparable meanings work towards the same Catholic aesthetic, which has its origins and follows the principles, I hope to show, of the baroque art. As Bosco remarks, "[E]ven in Greene's least religious novels, his protagonists experience such a manifestation or Joycean 'epiphany'" (2005, 26). Thus, arguing that Greene has a Catholic imagination means that his religious imagination finds in Catholicism a perspective and a place to reflect on and critique the world. "As a convert imbued with a modern, Protestant ethos, Greene's well-developed dialectical imagination is constantly challenging the more analogical tendencies of his professed faith" (Bosco, 27).

Greene's texts often criticise the self-satisfied religiosity, those sanctimonious believers, "who seem to own their Roman Catholic image of God, who have ceased to look for Him because they consider they have found Him", as well as liberal Protestantism, lukewarm Anglicanism, and modernism and its artists' indifference towards moral and religious issues (*WE*, 257). Stripped of its religious sense, as Greene claimed, the novel fails to show the importance of the human act.

In his 1925 *La Deshumanización del Arte*, Ortega y Gasset criticises the modern artistic thought paving the way to dehumanisation of art. In his view, modern art keeps itself busy with pure ideas and concepts by focusing on merely observed reality instead of relating itself to the human condition as a lived experience. In other words, modern art focuses on instruments themselves by disregarding the goal, which is the human being in the world.

Accordingly, a modern work of art is a thing of no consequence. Since it gains its place and legitimacy in its isolation from daily forms of life, it is subject to pure pleasure. Moreover, modernist artists' insistence on the subjectivism of perception inevitably resulted in a constant questioning of the epistemological and ontological consistence of the world: "De pintar las cosas se ha pasado a pintar las ideas" (Ortega, 2007, 35). Instead of representations of reality, it turned to representations of itself.

Consequently, the phrase "art for art's sake" made sense for those artists who wanted to escape from a chaotic world, degraded and materialistic, through

beauty.⁸⁸ Thus, aesthetic modernism became pure art centred upon itself and its own form. As Ródenas puts it, the modernist artist “está persuadido de que no existe una dimensión trascendente a la que referir su quehacer (...). La segregación del arte respecto a la vida se da por irreversible; la vida cotidiana es caótica y voraginosa, esquivada a cualquier principio armonizador, mientras que el arte es el ámbito donde se diseña un cosmos (en sentido etimológico) para la realidad” (69).

In this sense, beauty will be the great passion among modernists. Juan Ramón Jiménez remarks: “Eso es el modernismo: un gran movimiento de entusiasmo y libertad hacia la belleza” (1962, 9). Beauty emanates from form rather than content. The modernist artist, therefore, seems more concerned with “how” than with “what”.

The sequence of modernism, then, is a series of different subversions of the realist impulse.⁸⁹ According to Bradbury and McFarlane, modernist works tend “to work towards a logic of metaphor or form. The symbol or image itself, whether romantic or classic, whether it be the translucent symbol with its epiphany beyond the veil, or the hard objective centre of energy, (...), helps to impose that synchronicity which is one of the staples of modernist style” (50). In a way, whenever beauty appears, man is released from the chaotic contingency

⁸⁸ The French phrase ‘l’art pour l’art’ was coined by the French philosopher Victor Cousin in a lecture at the Sorbonne in 1818. It became a bohemian slogan during the nineteenth century. However, credit for popularising and promoting it to encourage the creation of art that is not limited by realism or social usefulness is generally given to the French writer and art critic Théophile Gautier, who began using it in the mid-1830s. It became a philosophical basis of the so-called Aesthetic Movement in art and literature that developed in the 19th Century.

⁸⁹ Bradbury and McFarlane, commenting on the different movements of modernist art, mention Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Vorticism, Futurism, Expressionism, Dada, and Surrealism (1991, 49-50).

and nonsense of everyday existence. Bradbury and McFarlane go on to say that, “the task of the artist is to redeem, essentially or existentially, the formless universe of contingency. Reality is not a material given, and nor is it a positivistic historical sequence. The act of fictionality thus becomes the crucial art of imagining” (50). As David Lodge observes, the achievement of formal perfection is an epiphany:

James Joyce, apostate Catholic, for whom the writer’s vocation was a kind of profane priesthood, applied the word to the process by which a commonplace event or thought is transformed into a thing of timeless beauty by the exercise of the writer’s craft: “when the soul of the commonest object seems to us radiant”, as his fictional alter ego, Stephen Dedalus, says. (Lodge, 1992, 146)

Greene’s reluctant and degraded heroes, his polluted characters, are elevated by the way they confront God, with their failures and their triumphs. The novels’ themes, as we shall see, are anything but traditional and classical and reveal instead an author whose catastrophic worldview and pretensions of subversion and transgression point to Baroque aesthetics. Thus, the author’s insistent use of rhetorical devices as strategies of aesthetic performance becomes inseparable of the anxiety created by the visual violence as a primary means of collective expression. In doing so, the reader becomes essential to the aesthetic performance in which the proliferation of *form* forces the displacement of *content*. Bosco explains that Greene’s religious imagination depends on the tension between belief and unbelief, reflecting the epistemological and existential

dilemmas of his time. Bosco argues that Greene is a son of his time, “a product of the Enlightenment and liberal establishment, choosing doubt as the premier virtue of humanity” (2005, 26).

In a letter to *The Times* Greene wrote: “Doubt like the conscience is inherent in human nature (perhaps they are the same thing) (1989, 225). In this regard, Greene quotes Unamuno: “Those who believe that they believe in God, but without passion in their hearts, without anguish of mind, without uncertainty, without doubt, without an element of despair even in their consolation, believe only in the God Idea, not in God Himself” (*WE*, 257). When Greene’s secular virtue of doubt “violates” the space of Catholic belief, the narrative turns unstable and, in this instability, doubt negotiates a wider space for divine presence.

II.2 THE PATTERN IN THE CARPET

The essence of Baroque art is displayed throughout Greene's works. He depicts those dramatic moments to create a dynamic, theatrically energised work, which occupies our space. Greene's aesthetics, therefore, may well resemble the Baroque art of the Catholic Reformation with all its emphasis on the moment, an effect brought about by Greene's preoccupation with the unstable act of faith sustained paradoxically by doubt. The importance of being aware of one's disbelief, or rather, the struggle for belief. Wolfflin describes it in the following statement: "[T]he Baroque never offers us perfection or fulfilment, or the static calm of 'being', only the unrest of change and the tension of transience" (1966, 14).

Greene's first three published novels *The Man Within* (1929), *The Name of Action* (1930), and *Rumour at Nightfall* (1931) are generally considered to be poor literary specimens due to their implausible and melodramatic plots. Georg Gaston brands all three novels as "overwrought, schematic, repetitive, and romantically self-indulgent" (1984, 10). Brian Diemert adds that Greene's "clumsy attempts to construct fine prose mar his first three novels" (1996, 41). Even Evelyn Waugh, when reviewing *The Name of Action*, found some features of style "a little repugnant", because it was "all metaphor and simile" (Waugh 1984, 101). Greene

himself thought that his first novel was “embarrassingly romantic”, but he allowed it to be republished without amendments because “an author may be allowed one sentimental gesture towards his own past, the period of ambition and hope” (*MW*, 7). However, he notoriously disowned his second and third novels admitting that they were “of a badness beyond the power of criticism properly to evoke” (*WE*, 16).

A glance at recent criticism of Greene’s work reveals that many critics followed the writer’s example and ignored these early texts as well. In *Graham Greene’s Fictions: The Virtues of Extremity* (2000), Cates Baldridge does not even mention the three novels, and while Mark Bosco briefly alludes to *The Man Within*, he does not acknowledge Greene’s subsequent two novels. Brian Diemert devotes a chapter to *Rumour at Nightfall*, but he makes only passing allusions to the first and the second novels. Bernard Bergonzi exemplifies those who have decided against analysing Greene’s early fiction when he argues that he does not focus at all on *The Name of Action* or *Rumour at Nightfall* because “in practical terms these books are unavailable for critical discussion. So having acknowledged their existence, I shall say no more about them” (2006, 149).

Ian Ker maintains that Greene “only introduced Catholic themes incidentally and occasionally” in his early novels (2003, 118), and John Atkins argues that despite Greene’s conversion in 1926, “spiritually speaking, there is practically no evidence of it in his early writing” (1966, 22). I agree with Michael Brennan when he notes that, “the range and impact” of Greene’s Catholicism upon his writing in the nineteen twenties remains “very much underestimated”

(Brennan, 2006, 24). In his book *Graham Greene: Fictions, Faith and Authorship* (2010), Brennan analyses Greene's religious background before the author's conversion and discusses two allegedly anti-religious short stories published during his first year as undergraduate at Balliol College. Brennan observes in these narratives Greene's developed aversion to what he regarded as the tedium of Anglican worship as well as "a sense of youthful rebellion against the stifling conventionality of his upbringing at Berkhamsted" (Brennan, 2010, 1). As Norman Sherry points out, we are used to the Roman Catholic Greene, "but at University he was a convinced atheist, his psychoanalytical experience having reinforced his disillusionment with the Protestant church" (Sherry, I.126).

His first published story in the *Oxford Outlook* (February 1923), entitled "The Trial of Pan", was about a pagan who outwits God by playing an alluring song and takes over heaven. In his second story, "The Improbable Tale of the Archbishop of Canterbridge" (15 November 1924), published in another Oxford student magazine, *The Cherwell*, Satan arrives in Britain as a lunatic man to stir up insurrection so that poppies may make brighter colour scarlet by being dipped in the fresh blood of fallen soldiers. The Archbishop considers his duty to shoot Satan, even though he fears God's justice. However, as Satan dies, in a "bubble of bloodstained laughter" (Sherry, I.127), he tells the Archbishop that he will not find God since he is also God.

According to Brennan, this shocking denouement provides "the first published illustration of Greene's lifelong fascination with the concept of deistic dualism and how in his fictions the tangible forces of darkness often seem more

insistently present than the intangible powers of goodness” (2010, 1). Brennan paves his own way for his idea that Greene was fascinated by the creative potential of Manichaeism with its conflict between good, spirit and light versus evil, matter versus darkness. However, if we take a closer look at his aesthetics, those apparently opposing elements are, on the contrary, complementary thus working together in Greene’s novels to offer a whole picture, where the Catholic sacramental imagination negotiates issues of faith and morals.

As Baroque artists do, Greene offers a picture painted unevenly in broad strokes and indefinite contours, where darkness looms all round the extravagant settings and contorted figures – almost obsessive emphasis on the body – arousing dramatic and tragic feelings on the observer, who once shocked moves backwards and is able to discern those elements or meanings apparently absent from the scene. In that “present absence” is where the real pattern lies. It is not about words, figures or colours, not even meanings or lessons; it is really about experiencing that precise moment in communion with any other beholder of the work exposed.

Greene scandalises his readers so that they can take the necessary distance not only to discern that pattern in his art, but also to be the witnesses of that aesthetic experience. This aesthetic effect is emphasised by the use of Catholic elements, symbols and narratives, which add up a sense of truth to the drama of salvation and damnation. The accumulation of signifiers negotiate Catholic issues around an absent signified.

The Man Within and The Name of Action

From his very first published novel, *The Man Within* (1929), Greene's Catholicism flows through the narrative. Although the author himself admitted that this melodramatic story was the product of an inexperienced writer, he decided not to suppress it, as he did with his next two novels, due to nostalgic reasons. As Michael Brennan suggests, another reason would be that it was "the first major work in which his new-found allegiance to Catholicism (...) formed a central strand in his fictional writings" (2010, 11).

The Man Within is set in the late nineteenth century on the English coast. It is the story of Francis Andrews, who is tormented by the memory of his dead father, a smuggler. Andrews hates his father for the abuse of his mother, which eventually led to her death. The right hand man of Andrews' father, Carlyon, has now become captain of the smuggling ship and convinces Andrews to come along. Whereas the other smugglers are ruffians, Carlyon is a man of culture and learning and Andrews looks up to him as a big brother figure.

Andrews eventually tires of being a smuggler and resents the constant comparison of him to his father so he informs the customs authorities. All but three of the smugglers are arrested and charged with murder. Andrews flees to a rural cabin occupied by a young woman named Elizabeth. The man who Elizabeth lived with, who had taken care of her since the death of her mother, has just died. Andrews soon falls in love for Elizabeth. Andrews views himself as a coward and

wants to keep running from his pursuers. Elizabeth convinces Andrews to stop fleeing from the other smugglers and testify against them in Court. Andrews does this, but he is warned that the rest of smugglers intend to get revenge against Elizabeth for hiding Andrews out. Andrews then returns to Elizabeth's cottage where he tries to convince her to run away with him. Andrews returns too late as Elizabeth has been killed by the angry smugglers. When the police arrive, Andrews is alone with Elizabeth's body and takes the blame for killing her so that he can commit judicial suicide and join Elizabeth in death after his execution.

Illustrating the Catholic stylistic habit that soon became embedded in his fictions, Brennan explains, "*The Man Within* derives a wide range of its language and imagery from religious sources" (Brennan, 2010, 11). Francis Andrews, for example, appears as a self-divided hero, a double-dealing character who is repeatedly denoted as a "sort of Judas" (*MW*, 63, 69, 136, 150). Andrews's relationship with Elizabeth is compared to that of Greene and an idealised Vivien.

Anthony Mockler defines Andrews as "twisted, tormented and depraved, but basically decent (1994, 49). Among the numerous Biblical references thrust into the narrative, one of the most notable is Andrews's oblique reference to the parable about the swept room and the "devils which entered worse than the first" (*MW*, 193).⁹⁰ When Andrews first meets Elizabeth, she is under the sway of a grim, Bible-reading guardian called Jenkins who soon dies.

At his funeral on a cold and misty day, Andrews has the impression that the Anglican minister's mind is not on the words he utters or the actions he

⁹⁰ See Mt. 12.43-45 and Lk. 11.24-26.

performs. Andrews silently admires Elizabeth until he is brought back to the present moment by the words of Psalm 39.12: “For I am a stranger with thee; and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. O spare me a little that I may recover my strength: before I go hence and be no more seen” (*MW*, 35). These words anticipate Andrews’s hiding out at Elizabeth’s cottage. There she reads the parable of the unjust steward (Lk. 16.1-18). The priest also quotes from the Book of Job, “And though after my skin worms destroy this body, in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another” (*MW*, 34).

Greene continues the scene with the priest’s voice, which “droned on” through the solemn words of the Psalm and of a letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians, while some women at the graveside went on chattering. To Andrews it was just a lot of nonsense: “The shambling priest is reading the lesson in a meaningless drawl muffled by the mist and his increasing cold. The words meant no more to him than did to the dead man. It was a mechanic ritual less conscious than the act of brushing teeth” (*MW*, 38).

The episode at the graveyard roughly encapsulates some of the baroque aesthetic techniques that Greene will use throughout his career. The gloomy and misty place, the gate between life and death, the play between light and dark, are elements that negotiate a double narrative. On the one hand, the Anglican Church appears personified by the priest, who represents the deadening effect of routine thus drifting into that condition of spiritual lukewarmness that Greene attributed to both the Anglican Church and the English novel of his era.

On the other, Andrews's inability and subsequent refusal to try to understand the ritual of the words and the acts at the graveyard keep him in the mist of knowledge both of what is taking place round him and what is going to happen in his own story. The scene, however, brings Andrews back to his childhood. It is an eerie picture where he and Elizabeth are portrayed as ghosts as if anticipating the ending, while Andrews confronts his father, who is described as God:

Standing there in a misty graveyard beside the dark Elizabeth. Andrews felt his first flash of sympathy towards his father. (...) He had looked up and stared with amazement at the unexpected sight of his father, a tall, heavy man with a big beard clumsily dressed, crossing the gravel with the headmaster. The headmaster was small, quick and neat with birdlike motions. (*MW*, 37)

During his conversations with Elizabeth, Andrews reveals that he is literally haunted by his father: "I thought my father was dead (...) but soon I found out that he had followed me" (*MW*, 74). Greene also recalls his own past with an obvious reference to the headmaster in an attempt to evoke his own biological father, who helps establish a relationship with the hell he lived in Berkhamsted, and that strange and haunting father figure may represent the Catholic God haunting him.

In his second published novel, *The Name of Action* (1930), the protagonist Oliver Chant is persuaded by Kurtz, a German political exile, to go to Trier and help the forces of freedom in their struggle against the dictator Paul Demassener,

who has taken control after the revolution. Chant falls in love with the dictator's beautiful wife, Anne-Marie. He thinks that she will save him from the boredom and spiritual nullity of modern existence – “a life of which he had grown inexpressibly tired, a life without meaning, without risk and without beauty” (NA, 72). In fact, Chant is first seduced by a photograph of Anne-Marie (8) and idealises her. His devotion, however, is mistaken since Anne-Marie proves to be a coldly experienced woman. She refuses Chant's marriage proposal and points out that she casually slept with him to satisfy her pleasure in exerting power over men (297). She eventually schemes to become the mistress of Kapper, the revolutionary Jewish leader. Poet and rebel Kapper, called repeatedly “the Jew” in the novel, is constantly associated with darkness and sexual debauchery, with Hell – as in his Hades-like cellar where he prints his black propaganda (37-40) – and is described, when standing before a statue of the Virgin Mary, as viewing “the mother of his eternal enemy” (169).⁹¹

Kapper exists as an opposite reflection of the Catholic dictator Demassener, Anne-Marie's impotent husband, who is sketched as a fanatical puritan. Brennan points out that this sense of religious fanaticism spreads throughout the novel “in twisted parodies of devotional language” and in scenes which are “laced with disturbing religious imagery” (18).

⁹¹ The references to the Jewish character Joseph Kapper has been regarded as anti-Semitic by some critics. See Higdon, 182. In *The New York Review of Books* (June 22, 1995), David Lodge criticised Shelden's “virulent hatred” on Greene and the anti-Semitic traces in his novels. Shelden responded and Lodge replied (September 21, 1995) to Shelden by repeating verbatim his response to Shelden's attacks: “There is no doubt...that Greene's early novels betray a kind of prejudice against Jews that would be unacceptable today—but then so did the work of most English writers of his generation. It is perverse to judge this strain in his work from a post-Holocaust position in history.” Lodge added that social prejudices concerning Jews were common in England before WWII, “but to label it as anti-Semitic ridicule was crudely reductive”.

Indeed, early in the novel Chant is followed by a member of the secret police whom he finally spots as he passes between two lamps underneath a “Virgin and Child carved in a small alcove of wall” (NA, 110). As Chant tries to escape, the policeman is shot by Kapper and he slowly sinks to the ground as though “letting himself down stiffly in a church to pray”. Horrified, Chant kneels down beside the corpse and seemingly joins the murdered man in a “silent Communion” (106-8).

In one of the most climatic episodes in the novel, the scene takes place inside the gothic church of Our Lady, which is described as though experienced in a feverish nightmare or, as Cedric Watts proposes, “characteristic of expressionistic works, in which the vista seems the expression of an abnormal state of mind” (2014, 22). The scene is as follows:

Slender pillars disappeared in the shadows below the roof to reappear as they drooped to meet a new pillar across the aisle with the grace of a stem bent by the weight of a flower. The white feet and face of a gigantic hanging Christ glimmered through the dark from an invisible cross. It had none of the effect of a pitying God. It seemed to Chant, a little bowed beneath the weight of a darkness unbroken save for the flames of a few candles, to represent the God who, like an eagle, tears the hearts of men with doubt, terror, mystery and what is strangely called divine unrest. Two old women followed the Stations of the Cross, pushing their way slowly from pillar to pillar, against a night which, like a dark spirit, strove to delay their attempts at holiness. But for them and Chant the church was empty,

yet if the eyes were allowed to dwell for a time on a dim corner, the shadows, turning sharp and angular, would transform themselves into a shape, and in that darkness a wooden saint possessed as much life as the praying women. (...) Chant paused before a marble group in front of which two candles guttered to their end. The dead Christ was laid out for burial, the women and the apostles bending their faces over the fallen head. The smoky last flicker of the candles shifted the shadows continually, until the figures seemed in truth to move to their task. Even the dead Christ stirred as if a prescience of resurrection. Chant picked up a fresh candle from an iron bracket and lit it, so that the faces glowed with light and the limbs were stilled. He knelt and tried to pray, beaten at last by pervading holiness. It was impossible. He had no clear beliefs round which to form his words and he remembered no form of prayer. Thoughts alone shifted through his mind, no requests or invocations or expressions of gratitude. Faced in this place, where God was not a cloudy aspiration but a concrete hope or fear, Chant discovered how closely his own mind had been tethered to abstract words, which had now betrayed him. (NA, 289-91)

More than a “feverish nightmare” or, as Watts proposes, “the expression of an abnormal state of mind”, what Greene is showing here is a perfect example of Baroque aesthetics. The visual effects of light and darkness and flickering flames deceive the observer’s eyes thus making the statues seem alive and moving. The surrounding darkness in contrast with the hot flashes of the candles gets the

beholder into the scene. Chant becomes a participant, a witness of Christ's descent from the Cross, and His Resurrection. The darkness that "weighs" and frees Christ from the invisible Cross represents God, in His "present absence". In this regard, the reader also witnesses Chant's conversion, a divine attempt that makes it possible for the reader to see God's grace in action. The two old women praying the Stations of the Cross serve as a counterbalance for Chant's attempt to pray. He cannot recall the words, but that does not matter because he has been able to "read" the narrative of the scene. The sacred place and its Catholic aesthetics provide the narrative as a liturgy.

The episode quoted above at length may serve as a sketch of my thesis. Chant cannot see the narrative throughout the novel, because he only focuses on the superficial narrative of the facts described. When he enters that ritualistic place and turns his attention to the form rather than the content, he is able to read the complementary narrative. Not the mechanical and static narrative of those who just follow from one Station of the Cross to the next on dead stone pillars thus taking everything for granted, but that dynamic narrative which urges one to face and touch a living and active God by turning the "readers" of those narratives into "participants".

Greene makes use of those cultural and collective elements of Catholicism, through the example of his characters, and he attempts to share his difficult process of conversion thus inviting his readers to "experience" his process. Gregg Lambert explains how baroque aesthetics work:

The emotional body of the baroque spectator, animated by anxieties and the creative violence of the producer, becomes a central topic and even a primary ground, one which prepares for a distinctly modern conception of aesthetic experience. Hence, the question of legitimating the experience of culture, as well as the question of possessing culture as a primary means of collective expression, becomes inseparable from the technical and rhetorical strategies employed to possess and manipulate the emotional body of the spectator. (2004, 13)

Consequently, in Greene's fiction Catholic aesthetics follow the pattern of the modern novel, an innovative pattern that Cervantes, its precursor, labelled as *novelar*. For those excessively concerned with content, fiction is not about truth or imitation, but verisimilitude. Greene proposes in his fiction the same journey as that of the Baroque artists. Exemplified in Baroque churches, the pilgrims' way is represented by the aisle from the entrance to the altar with the statues of the Apostles on both sides of the nave, witnesses and examples of the way to conversion, to communion with God. Greene's troubled relationship with Catholicism may be caused, as can be seen in episodes like Chant's in the church, by his inability to interiorise his own conversion to Catholicism. In this regard, most of Greene's fiction, his first novels above all, may be a therapeutic means to help the author interiorise his unfinished process of conversion.

Churches function as ritualistic places where characters' unfinished business is negotiated, a trope that Greene uses several times in his fictions. These episodes inside churches function as moments of confession, spaces to confront

darkness, the mysterious, where the invisible and absent can be perceived and conversion may occur. Greene focuses on the Baroque elements of Catholic churches to highlight the ritualistic power of the place with its numerous elements such as statues, stained-glass windows, Stations of the Cross, candles and incense, which serve as a narrative of Catholic sacramentality and traditional, collective imagination. In his essay “Ritual Performance and the Politics of Identity” (2003), Jan Koster states that, “ritual acts belong to the socio-cultural repertoire of a community” (1), but he also pays “just much attention to the ubiquitous presence of ritual space as to the ritual themselves” since the performance of a ritual cannot be understood apart from its territorial aspect (4). This idea of ritual location, Koster adds, is what George Mosse calls “sacred space” (1975, 208).

Patrick Query, in his book *Ritual and the Idea of Europe in Interwar Writing* (2012), analyses verse drama, bullfighting, and Roman Catholic rite and argues that they also encourage the observer to pay attention to that ritual space, since the spaces of their representation are part of their meaning but different from everyday activities. In this regard, Query goes on to say that, “true ritual is differentiated from habit or obsessive practices as well as from play, in that ritual requires at least an implied connection to tradition, to the maintenance and adaptation of a collective action over time” (2012, 18).

This was one of the main traits of Baroque art, which has been extensively used in Catholic churches. For these traits to be effective artists relied on their observers’ shared knowledge of the Scriptures and, as soon as people stepped inside the temple, they became “actors” on that “sacred stage”. The Catholic

Reformation also made the most of that naturalistic and impressive use of art in order to avoid the Protestant impulse or even in the Vatican attempt to re-convert those who had gone astray.

Greene's heroes, like those of Cervantes, are pilgrims in the darkness of disbelief in search of a shrine to achieve their conversion. These protagonists often "run into" the church, as Don Quixote and Sancho did (II, 9), staging those ritualistic acts of confession and conversion, sublime moments where Greene is able to show the effect of faith in action.

Curiously enough, in Greene's first published novel *The Man Within*, the first time a character talks about the interior of a church is when Andrews runs into an inn at night: "With sudden resolve he dived down a side street, stumbling at his unexpected steepness, and came to rest with unerring instinct at the door of an inn" (MW, 99).

A relation is soon established between the inn and the church, as Cervantes repeatedly does in *Don Quixote*, as Andrews drinks brandy with a stranger he has just met and they start to talk about the smugglers: "If you searched the crypt of Southover Church you'd find barrels there, and the parson winks an eye. Do you think he wants to lose his whole congregation or perhaps be whipped at one of his own pillars?" (MW, 101).

The crypt full of alcohol barrels and the inn fuse together while Andrews, who is getting drunk, introduces himself as Absalom and start to talk about

women.⁹² The mixture of sacred and profane images is made clear from the very first view of the inn: “Two windows were cracked and stuffed with rags, the sign was long past the possibility of repair. Of the goat, which was the inn’s name, remained only the two horns, as though a mocking warning to husbands not to enter” (*MW*, 99). Dazed and confused, Andrews – now Absalom (Father is peace) – recalls the angelic Elizabeth and imagines her as the Virgin with white doves flying round her head.

A fat grotesque woman at the inn, who recalls Maritornes in *Don Quixote*, laughs at Andrews attempts at describing his beloved Elizabeth (an idealised image as Don Quixote’s Dulcinea) so she provides him with another drink and some paper for him to sketch saintly Elizabeth. Everybody in the raggedy inn laughs at him and in that madness he realises that he is not able to remember her. He starts to cry and the enchantment ends. Finally, being aware of his drunkenness, he manages to leave the inn while “a voice from the darkness” inside the inn shouts at him, “you are a very foolish young man (...) to drink with an empty stomach” (*MW*, 101). Food and drink, like bread and wine, prevent Andrews’ enchantment at The Goat, the inn/church where the black mass takes

⁹² Absalom, David’s third son (2 Samuel 3:2), is described as the most handsome man in the kingdom. After his full sister Tamar was raped by Amnon, their half-brother and David’s eldest son, Absalom waited two years and avenged her by sending his servants to murder Amnon at a feast after he was drunk. Three years later, he was reinstated in his father’s favour and finally returned to Jerusalem. While at Jerusalem, Absalom built support for himself by lying to those who came to King David for justice, saying, “See, your claims are good and right, but there is no man designated by the king to hear you.” He went on to say, “Oh that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice.” He also deceived them by showing feigned humility by kissing those who approached him rather than accepting supplication. Greene is establishing a relationship between Andrews story and Absalom’s. Andrews is labelled as a Judas, he betrays everyone in the novel, included Elizabeth, and eventually becomes a “judge” in the denouement of the novel.

place. An inversion of the Eucharist in Cervantes's fashion with a grotesque priestess who, through her laughter and her drinks, turns his idealised saintly images into contaminated devilish ones thus exposing Andrews's inability to achieve a complete "conversion" to Elizabeth's saintly ways.

England Made Me

Another brief example of this relationship of the church as sacred liturgical space and the Eucharistic elements that attach the body to the word can be found in *England Made Me* (1935). Ferdinand Minty, an Anglo-Catholic reporter plans to have lunch, but on his way to a place to eat, a church attracts his attention and claims him: "The darkness, the glow of the sanctuary lamp drew him more than food. It was Lutheran, of course, but it had the genuine air of plaster images, of ever-burning light, of sins forgiven. He looked this way and that, he bent his head and dived for the open door, with the caution and the dry-mouthed excitement of a secret debauchee" (*EMM*, 91).

The novel is an obscure look back at Greene's childhood and focus on three distinct marks of cultural disintegration of the English culture of the twenties and thirties: devoted loyalties (trust and betrayal), capitalism, and a damaging school system. These threaten to undermine the whole nation as is depicted in the main characters and the parodic interior monologues. According to Greene, the

novel's subject – “apart from the economic background of the thirties and that sense of capitalism staggering from crisis to crisis – was simple and unpolitical, a brother and a sister in the confusion of incestuous love” (*WE*, 38).

The novel focuses on twin brother and sister, Kate and Anthony Farrant who have an unnaturally close relationship. He is a posh loser who tags along with her sister to get a new job for the eminent financier Krogh in Sweden. Then, the character Minty, a seedy journalist whose first mission is to spy on them all – he will eventually make friends with Anthony – suddenly appears. Greene himself comments on his character: “He was entirely unexpected when he emerged from the pre-conscious (...) who would steal all the scenes in which he played a part and have the last word, robbing even Kate of her curtain at Anthony's funeral. Oh yes, I resented Minty, and yet I couldn't keep him down” (*WE*, 37-38). Minty's first scene, in the middle of the novel, reveals his grotesque nature and the sacramental impulse that his presence will give to the narrative: “My name's Minty. Have a cup of coffee” (*EMM*, 57).

From then on, he is constantly associated with food, drink and bodily functions, which offer a counterbalance for the lack of communication and self-awareness implicit throughout the whole novel. Although the narrative is full of interior monologue, this parodic stream of consciousness results in the twin siblings' being “continually on the edge of self-discovery, but some self-protective instinct warded off, with false or incomplete memories and irrelevancies, the moment of discovery” (*WE*, 39).

Thus, Minty, who appears to have been beaten up and ‘ragged’ at his school, seems to act as the agent of communion between both worlds, that of the author and that of the characters. Greene was well aware of this coincidence and added that, “the cowardly evasions were not mine; they belonged to the doomed pair” (*WE*, 39). These image-themes recur in the text, sometimes as paragraphs, sometimes sentences, sometimes just a few words, designed to evoke a mood, adding colour to the scene:

Up the long flight of stairs to the fourth floor, treading upwards from Purgatory (left behind on the other bank the public lavatories with the smutty jokes, envy, and the editor’s dislike, mistrust, the nudist magazines) to Paradise (the house groups, the familiar face flannel, the hard ascetic bed), mounted unscathed, I, Minty. (*EMM*, 111)

In this interior monologue, Minty reveals his nature. He represents those repressed memories that haunt an author’s mind and are scattered through the carpet. He occupies that “third space” between Purgatory and Paradise. Each time Minty appears, the literary trope of the grotesque body invades the scene, thus degrading the abstract, ideal and spiritual to the material level. This sacramental inversion highlights his linking role, the appeal to be in communion with the other/Other.

Mixing most of Greene’s ghosts from his past, the scene where Minty catches Gullie, the Military Attaché at the British Legation, looking at a German nudist magazine, evokes – apart from a lucid foreshadowing of the menace of World War II – the anti-Romantic sentiment of an incomplete process of

conversion to Catholicism and the beastliness of bullies at the ghastly boarding school:

Yes, it was ugly, the human figure. Man or woman, it made no difference to Minty. The body's shape, the running nose, excrement, the stupid postures of passion, these beat like a bird's heart in Minty's brain. Nothing could have more stirred his malice than the sight of Gullie poring over the photographs of naked breasts and thighs. A gang of schoolboys raced through Minty's mind, breaking up his pictures of Madonna and Child, jeering, belching, breaking wind. (*EMM*, 86)

Aesthetically, Greene approaches again the Baroque impulse of the “pathological, the result of an obsessive attraction to forms of monstrosity and to vulgar taste” (Lambert, 17). It is for this sensuality, the Baroque's attraction to movement and emotionalism that its appeal was supposedly directed toward a larger public than either the Renaissance, or Classicism that followed. As Lambert goes on to say, “[i]t is this ‘populism’ as inspiration that has resulted in its [Baroque's] frequent comparison to the emergence of modern popular cinema” (2004, 17-18). Although Lambert refers to the new interest in analysing contemporary narratives, both in fiction and in film, in the light of a return to Baroque aesthetics, I hope to show how this aesthetics functions in a similar way to cinematic ones. Baroque art might be involved in the very origin of filmic narrative and technique, but this would be beyond the scope of my dissertation.

However, Greene's fictions include good examples of the close relationship of Baroque aesthetics and cinema techniques and effects.

Indeed, Greene's writing has often been discussed as employing cinema-like techniques because of his dynamic scenes, agile dialogues, and narrative focal points. According to Carlos Villar Flor, Greene learned many devices from his interest in film. This can be observed in Greene's "ability to make his readers see things in terms of screen images, and to control the audience's distance from the action through descriptions resembling long shots, close-ups, tracking and pan shots, that is, the various types of camera angle and camera movement" (2005, 379). The complexities of camera-eye technique, focalisation and a marked change in the pace of his narratives, Villar Flor goes on to explain, were used by Greene especially from *Stamboul Train* (1932) onwards:

Greene's multi-faceted and lifelong relationship with film resulted, among other things, in his adoption of cinematic techniques in his fiction, which made him a pioneer among his contemporaries of a new film-minded literary sensibility. Montage, cross-cutting, translation of thought into images, varied pace and varied camera angle, shifting point of view, movable camera-eye, fast movement, lighting effects ("use of shadow and reflection"), filmic intertextuality, creation of atmosphere, and the awareness of a popular audience are some of the most noticeable examples. (Villar Flor, 2005, 383)

In *England Made Me*, the use of these devices is clear from the very first lines. The scene set in a pub in London shows Kate Farrant drinking gin while she waits for her brother Anthony:

She might have been waiting for her lover. For three quarters of an hour she had sat on the same high stool, half turned from the counter, watching the swing door. Behind her the ham sandwiches were piled under a glass dome, the urns gently steamed. As the door swung open, the smoke of engines silted in, grit on the skin and like copper on the tongue.

“Another gin”. It was her third. (...) She swallowed it at a draught, as she was used to drinking schnaps: *Skål, skål*, but there was no one to *skål*. The man on the bowler hat put his foot on the brass rail, leant his elbow on the counter, drank his bitter, talked, drank his bitter, wiped his moustache, talked, kept his eye on her.

She stared out past the dusty door pane into the noisy dark. Sparks leapt in the thick enclosed air and went out, sparks from engines, sparks from cigarettes, sparks from the trolley wheels beating on the asphalt. An old tired woman swung the door and peered in; she was looking for someone who was not there.

She moved from her stool; the man in the bowler hat watched her, the waitresses paused in their drying and watched her. (...) She watched the blue empty rails in front of her, looked up the platform to the light and the bookstalls, then she turned and went back to her stool. (...) “Another gin”. But she left the glass on the counter, after barely touching it this time with

her lips, and began hurriedly to make-up, as if it had been a duty she had been too excited to remember. Now in the firm conviction that he would not come, she had one lonely hour to remember in all the things she had neglected: mouth, nose, cheeks, eyebrows. “Oh, damn”, she said. The pencil snapped, and she ground the charcoal end into the floor with her toe; “Oh, damn”, she said, caring not a hang that she was surrounded again by curiosity, alien and unfriendly. It was as if she had broken a mirror; it was unlucky; it was inefficient. (*EMM*, 6-7)

Villar Flor identifies the use of camera-eye that Greene frequently employed to “make his readers see things in terms of screen images, and to control the audience’s distance from the action through descriptions resembling long shots, close-ups, tracking and pan shots, that is, the various types of camera angle and camera movement” (2005, 380). It can also be observed the change in focalisation, as if the spectator could see the scene from various angles and points of view. Sometimes we see through Kate’s eyes, sometimes from the readers’ position as beholders from out of the scene. However, using quick changes of perspective, internal thoughts and glimpses of descriptions, the readers have the impression of being part of the scene, of taking the role of characters inside the pub. In the last part of the scene, rhythm changes, and this varying pace gives intensity to the plot.

These devices negotiate concepts of space and rhythm that interspersed with familiar scenes, actions, and reactions, invite the reader to focus both on the

human actions and on the human body and not on the multiple elements that build the background of the scene and which, ultimately, point to that emphasis on the characters' motivations. Greene, influenced by his viewing of German expressionistic films, declared that, "the object of the film should be the translation of thought back into images" ("The Province of the Film: Past Mistakes and Future Hopes", 1928, in Parkinson 1993, 388). This is precisely what Baroque aesthetics, as I have argued elsewhere in this research, attempts to do.

Whereas art-historical and historical research on the seventeenth-century baroque came into its own only in the latter part of the twentieth century, the impact of the baroque on early-twentieth-century culture made itself felt in even more immediate ways within the public sphere. While the Western world was experiencing a modernist revolution in art through postimpressionism, cubism, surrealism, constructivism, and German expressionism, the baroque also experienced a stylistic resurgence. In *Baroque Baroque: The Culture of Excess*, Stephen Calloway traces the direct impact of seventeenth-century baroque design, art, and architecture on twentieth-century culture. Labelling the self-conscious fascination with the baroque in the twentieth century the "baroque baroque" (1994, 15), Calloway traces its influences in the worlds of theatre, cinema, architecture, interior design, and haute couture fashion. The 1920's and 1930's in particular can be characterised as stabilising a new baroque style.

The Baroque is often regarded as the visible decomposition and decay of the classical style of Renaissance. In Baroque art, the continuing fascination with

classical antiquity influenced artists to renew their approach to the nude, but with more naturalistic, less idealised depictions. In so doing, Baroque aesthetics unconsciously helped the Catholic Reform to create a new vital concept of the body and, at the same time, rhetorically reviving tradition.

During the earlier stages of modernity this corporeal language, spurred by the nineteenth-century biologicism or philosophies of life characterised as “vitalism”, often used a language that addressed cultural production within the metaphors of the body (health, welfare, purity, disease, degeneration, decadence, pollution). According to Lambert, this version or impulse from the nineteenth century has continued to have influence up to today and can often be detected in themes of much cultural criticism, such as: “parasitism, excremental themes or figurations of otherness, common tropes that describe language in terms of the body, or the body in terms of a poetics of language, prosthetic metaphors of technology, capital, machine assemblages” (2004, 59-60). In *England Made Me* Greene insists in exposing the way in which literary modernism failed to be modern.

According to Paul de Man in his well-known essay “Literary History and Literary Modernity,” the “authentic spirit of modernity” attempted a Nietzschean forgetting of the past in order to blast its way into novelty, only to break out of history. De Man, much like T. S. Eliot, thought that the past could never be entirely avoided and that our bond with it could not be severed. Modernity could never make a total break from the past, and, paradoxically, it is the

epistemological awareness of this condition that any actual modernity would most silently emerge.

At the very moment where modernism rejects all continuity with the past, it itself unconsciously invokes a narrative of continuity with the generation who will reconstruct its own actuality (the 'now') as the veritable 'sign' of history. The grotesque description of bodies is literally masked and covered up in make-up in the next scene, bodies representing a past impossible to hide, which repeats and reproduces itself. These images that haunt the present are part of Greene's "pattern in the carpet", showing clearly his baroque aesthetics:

The Minister sat writing among his bric-à-brac at the other end of the deep carpet; Minty closed the door very softly. His eyes were a little dilated. The Minister's sedate white hair, the pink cheeks lightly powdered after their shave, the grey expensive suit, Minty took them in. He was a little afraid of the force of hatred that Gullie had released. To use powder, to take such care with one's clothes, to be so carefully brushed, the hypocrisy of it sickened Minty. The body still remained, its functions were not hidden by Savile Row. To think that God Himself had become a man. Minty could not enter a church without the thought, which sickened him, which was more to him than the agony in the garden, the despair upon the cross. Pain was an easy thing to bear beside the humiliation which rose with one in the morning and lay down with one at night. He stood and dripped at the carpet's edge and thought that at least one need not be so coarse as to love the body like Gullie or hide it under powder and pin-striped elegant suits

like the Minister. Hating the hypocrites he waited for the Minister to look up, exposing his shabbiness with a mournful malicious pride. (*EMM*, 86)

Minty's Anglo-Catholicism is also exposed in the episodes above as an anti-Romantic nightmare, Greene's attempt to subvert the Baudelarian version of the modern. Its figures of moral offence and politics of transgression, its feminine eroticism, its glorification of evil and aesthetisation of the grotesque represent the spiritual world of the dead. In this sense, the bodies are described as if they were wrapped in a shroud and conveniently made up. This is reinforced in the novel by its constant interior monologues and stream of consciousness, which function as invocations through the mimesis of the "voice of the dead", or rather memory.

However, Greene understands that this is not Joyce's *The Dead* and this parodic move on the author's part is precisely what gives the novel its ambiguity. Greene exerts his disconformity with Modernity, as an empty set of values, and his traumatic past through the relationship between Anthony and Minty. The former stands for England and its school system whereas the later represents the negative side of religiousness, the one that has accommodated in an indifferent attitude. Again, the inn and the church will fuse together in the following episodes between Anthony and Minty. Anthony is thinking to himself at a pub while he waits for the waiter.

There had always been the club (as long as he retained his membership), bridge-parties, the neo-Gothic Anglican church. He stared out through the foreign glass, at the foreign rain and thought: Krogh won't give a job. I'll go back tomorrow. Then he smiled and forgot his resolution because he

saw England staring back at him through the glass with coat-collar turned up and dripping hat. (*EMM*, 75)

Minty turns up and Anthony offers him a beer-bottle. Minty declines and says he would rather have a cup of coffee:

“I don’t like any form of strong drink. No moral objection, but my stomach won’t stand it. It was the operation I had ten years ago. August the twenty-first. The feast-day of St. Jane Frances Fremiot de Chantal, widow. I hung between life and death,” Minty said, “for exactly five days. I always put my recovery down to St Zephyrinus. But I’m boring you.”

“No,” Anthony said, “no. It’s very interesting. I had an operation in August ten years ago”.

“Your eye?”

“No. That was a wound. An explosion. I had appendicitis.”

“Mine was in that neighbourhood,” Minty said. “But they didn’t remove the appendix. It was far too dangerous. They made an incision and drained me. (...) You would never believe the amount of pus they removed. It would have filled a milk-jug, a large milk-jug.” He blew on the coffee the waiter had brought him. “It’s good to have a fellow countryman to talk to. And what a coincidence that you were at the old place, too.”

“The old place?”

“The old school,” Minty said, stirring his coffee, squinting upwards with sudden malicious amusement. “Kicking a fug about, eh. What a life. Were you a fez?” (*EMM*, 75-76)

The fragment forces the reader to form associations between the cup of coffee that Minty is having and the image of the milk attached to the drained pus. The disgusting conversation about body parts, incisions, and body fluids constructs a grotesque image of human corporeality, abject and appalling in its own physicality. Minty's twisted mind mirrors on any baroque painting where a saint is martyred thus highlighting his own victimised reflection of that boy persecuted and tortured in the boarding school. Consequently, Minty is usually tormented throughout the novel by memories of bullies vandalising his school study and smashing his images of the "Madonna and Child". Minty appears as a damaged schoolchild whose thoughts constantly create inversions of the Incarnation.

These inversions are so extreme as to transform the Incarnation into a nightmare image encapsulated in his loathing of all forms of human physicality. The scene has also the structure of a confession. Both characters tell each other their "operations", their wounds that remind them of the persistence of a troubled past they are not able to forget. The associations with food, as always happens when Minty and Anthony meet, close the episode in communion. Penance and Eucharist are inverted and subverted in one of Greene's darkest novels, carefully crafted with a baroque aesthetics.

At Anthony's funeral, the Chanel scent of a fellow mourner, a blonde woman whom Anthony had casually seduced, makes Minty feel sick with nausea. He then longs for incense to purge her odour and candles to light before the saints in memory of Anthony, whom he now hopes is "in some place of no pain, no

failure, no sex” (*EMM*, 202). Michael Brennan reminds us that, “Greene based this scene upon his mother-in-law’s cremation which he attended on 24th May 1933 because Vivien was pregnant with their first child. Greene also took the opportunity to visit afterwards “O”, one of his favourite London prostitutes” (2010, 33).⁹³ Brennan points out that this blonde woman smelling of Chanel who causes nausea to Minty may well be based on “O”. This idea would only reinforce Greene’s act of writing as a therapeutic way of digesting his incomplete conversion. Unconsciously, the aesthetics of his novels may seem to attempt to “re-write” different satisfactory endings for that unfinished process.

By means of the relationship between Minty and Anthony, Greene is presenting a pathological determination of the culture of the thirties. Both characters, moreover, might encompass what Walter Benjamin called the *Angelus Novus*, a representation that modern society had made of itself. The metaphor is powerfully suggestive of the progressive secularisation of the era. On the one hand, the angel seems to prevail over reason; on the other, it simultaneously flies away appalled at the sight of the ruins and dismembered bodies, a world drained of any vital fluid and moral value. Bodily fluids and parts function as a kind of medium thus carrying either holiness or sin.

The body is approached as experience and as symbol. Minty’s inability to transcend these limitations traps him between the Purgatory of ordinary life, with all its emphasis on the physical human body and his pathetic Paradise, the grave-like isolation of his sparse room, which is exemplified by the dying spider he

⁹³ Brennan takes the fact from Sherry, I.472.

sadistically keeps trapped in a tooth-glass. Apart from his monastic lodgings, the only places that offer some kind of sanctuary for Minty are churches. He can never pass a church, even a Lutheran one, as has been explained, without missing the opportunity of losing inside for a moment.

The last scene describing Minty's room immediately recalls an altar, but with all its elements inverted – elements that have appeared throughout the novel repeatedly – thus giving a grotesque feeling to it. It is not the active and lively altar where the mystery of Incarnation is performed. On the contrary, it evokes a baroque and obscure still life, yet this time stripped of any real religious and transcendent sense: “the incense cones, the condensed milk, the cup (I've forgotten the cup). (...) the missal in the cupboard, the Madonna, the spider withering under the glass, a home from home” (*EMM*, 207). In *England Made Me*, Greene displays his Catholic aesthetics negatively. In other words, he depicts Catholicism by describing what it is different from it. In so doing, he also criticises the extreme secularity of both his time and his country.

To a certain degree, the critique on Modernism that Greene aesthetically elaborates in this novel evokes Octavio Paz's formulation of “the modern” when he defined it as a tradition against itself. According to Paz, the relationship between the modern and the baroque has been founded upon this love of novelty and otherness. It is here, Paz notes, that one discovers a special distinction that belongs to the modern alone. “Neither Góngora nor Gracián was revolutionary in the sense that we use the word today; they did not set out to change the ideas of beauty of their time – although Góngora actually did” (1990, 3). Consequently,

what distinguishes our notions of modernity from other ages is that the “new” of modernism is determined by forces of rejection and negation.

This modern difference is thus founded upon a rejection or negation of the past; otherness, which expresses the new image of time that results from what Paz calls the acceleration of history and the proliferation of co-existent pasts: “The meaning of the ‘modern tradition’ emerges more clearly: it is the expression of our historic consciousness. It is a criticism of the past, and it is an attempt, repeated several times throughout the last two centuries, to find a tradition on the only principle immune to criticism: change, history” (1990, 9).

Paz’s metaphor of “acceleration of history” may be related to the recurrences of a distinctly modern baroque representation full of images of dizziness or vertigo, resulting from a loss of any orientation in space and the intermingling of perspectives. As Lambert explains, these aspects “bear an architectural significance for the resurgence of many modern baroque constructions, particularly those that occur in the field of ‘textuality’, in philosophy and literary criticism” (2004, 54). Graham Greene, as has been explained, combines content and form fusing together those textual aspects with images that reflect baroque aesthetics often in terms of spatial, architectural literariness.

As Lambert goes on to say, “the baroque construction schematises this dizziness and vertigo, spatialises time within a structure, and arranges the multiple schisms or conflicts between different ‘moments’ (or points of view that could also correspond to the perspective occupied by actual subjects of history) which

comprise the surfaces of time's quantitative volume" (54). Paz retains a static image of space that seems to remain an empty frame where points of view are created. Therefore, for Paz modernity, in its absolute rejection of the past, retains a present that, although never ceasing to be past, never quite becomes wholly present either.

This is the way Greene's aesthetics seems to function in a constant attempt to represent and explain the traumas of his past and his unfinished conversion exacerbated by his acts of unfaithfulness in his own life. When reading his novels from this baroque perspective, we have a concrete image of the reproduction of aborted "pasts" for which each repetition signifies a multiplication of conflicting pasts that co-exist alongside incomplete partial presents.

For Paz, as well as for Baudelaire before him, the poetic project of modernity opposes the "ancient present" of myth; consequently, as Lambert deduces, "the future must no longer resemble the present nor redeem the past. (...) On the contrary, the future must appear as Other, that is, as the radical abolition of prospective memory provided by myth, a dizziness or vertigo of a present that, because it is not "oriented" towards the past, spins on itself as a point of confusion" (2004, 53).

Indeed, within the period of English literary modernity, the constellation of aesthetic practices ranging from the psychological explorations of character to time-shifting departures from chronologically linear narratives – spiral in Paz's terms – to stream-of-consciousness and avant-garde experimentations, are

contrasted in Greene's novels by a Catholic artistic position. According to Paul Testa:

A contrasting and Catholic artistic position contends that such developments are signs of progress as much as they are symptomatic of the darker undercurrents that were conditioning Western civilization following the death of Queen Victoria and, to be even more precise, the tragedy of the Great War, which compelled the English in particular to re-examine their cherished ideals of faith, nationalism, the values of material progress and scientific innovation. (2008, 13)

In this regard, Greene's fiction addresses the response to anxieties resulting from modernist theories of the death of God, the loss of objective truths, and a consequent alienating subjectivity. Greene's aesthetics at first plays with those ideas of absence and loss infusing his fiction with the performance of a God who is paradoxically rendered as an absent presence. The darkness perceived around the frames of Greene's narrative action has nothing to do, however, with what Virginia Woolf saw as the task of the modernist writer: to depict the truth about human nature, which necessarily entails entering into the "dark places of psychology" (1984, 156).

To Woolf, the dark regions of the psyche created appropriate grounds for artistic investigation. To Greene, conversely, these darker unexplored regions of the soul were symptomatic of an age of discontent from which the artist should escape from an imprisoning subjectivity. In Greene's fictions, art re-designates a passage back to God, in which case this form of art can be perceived as

functionally sacramental. However, the anxiety that permeates Greene's work – and by extension most modern English discourses – represents a sign of life, an opportunity of the reclamation of the self as a spiritual being capable of virtue, creativity, and transformation, but also exposed to eternal isolation and capable of evil. Greene's lost childhood represents those dark passages back to a past and tradition that he wants to leave behind but, at the same time, he needs to recuperate in order to find those ways of escape.

A Gun for Sale

His own conversion starts a process of constant therapy through the writing of his novels, a constant attempt to both overcome his traumatic childhood and accomplish his conversion. Consequently, Catholic elements are mingled with images of childhood by means of an aesthetic impulse which recalls the ritualistic narrative of Catholicism through the figures of the Mass, as the perfect act of remembrance: the invocation of Christ, the performance and rehearsal of memory, the fostering of community, and Biblical mimesis. Greene shows these ideas deeply in *A Gun for Sale* (1936), a novel largely dismissed by critics as “a kind of secular rehearsal for *Brighton Rock*” (Lodge 1971, 95).⁹⁴

⁹⁴ See also Neil McEwen's *Graham Greene*, 114. Greene defined Raven as “a first sketch for Pinkie in *Brighton Rock*” (WE, 72).

Raven, the protagonist, is a paid assassin who was propelled into a life of violence largely as a result of what David Lodge terms “traumatic childhood experience” (15). He was the son of a father incarcerated when Raven was born, and later hanged, and of a mother who slit her throat with a kitchen knife, her bloodstained body discovered by the six-year-old boy. Subsequent years spent as an orphan in a harsh “industrial school” bred in Raven a deep distrust of others and hatred of all forms of authority and of the Christian (presumably Anglican) faith he had been taught at the school. Asked his Christian name, he replies, “Christian. That's a good joke, that one. Do you think anyone turns the other cheek these days?” (GS, 115).

Steel magnate Sir Marcus orders Davis to hire Raven to assassinate the Czech socialist Minister of war, sparking an international crisis as nations blame each other. Raven does not care; back in England, he is paid for the job by Davis in stolen notes. When Raven discovers that the police are after him because of the stolen money, he sets out to find Davis and Marcus to get proper payment and revenge himself upon those who betrayed him. Like in other Greene’s thrillers, Raven is hunter and hunted, but in this novel the murderer becomes detective, the sinner becomes redeemer in order to gain revenge against the whole of life. The resentful feelings Raven harbours because of his harsh upbringing are clearly manifested when, pursued by the police during a heavy rainstorm, he takes refuge in the garage of a house from which he can hear the radio broadcast of a poetry recitation. The poem is Tennyson's *Maud*:

A shadow flits before me,

Not thou, but like to thee;
Ah Christ, that it were possible
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be. (*GS*, 62-63)

The poem's persona mourns the death of his loved one, Maud, and others who meant much to him. To Raven, however, the lines elicit no such Christian longing, but rather the opposite: anger at his mother and father and “all the long parade of those who had done him down” (63). Determined on revenge, Raven finds and follows Davis onto a train heading north to Nottwich (presumably Nottingham).

Raven meets fortuitously with Ann Crowder, a showgirl who has been engaged with detective Mather, on the train. His encounter with Anne offers Raven a slight possibility of redemption from “a hate-filled world consumed by his overpowering sense of original sin” (Brennan, 43). Ann embodies a non-doctrinal approach to life, which is shown in her indecision to help or betray Raven. She finally decides not to intervene:

She believed in Fate and God and Vice and Virtue, Christ in the stable, all the Christmas stuff; she believed in unseen powers that arranged meetings, drove people along ways they didn't mean to go; but she was quite determined she wouldn't help. She wouldn't play God's or the Devil's game. (*GS*, 50)

Raven's return to Nottwich can be seen as a subversive memory of Greene's return to Nottingham, where he lived from November 1925 until March 1926 and, in that city he converted to Catholicism prepared by father Trollope. The allusions to Nottingham in the novel are clear as the author himself explains in his first autobiography *A Sort of Life* (123). In his letters to his fiancée Vivien, he frequently complained about the weather and the behaviour of his landlady, two events that appear in the novel. The novel thus invites a return, even a regression to the past, to childhood, this time, however, an inverted regression in psychoanalytic terms since this coming back to the past does not end in pleasant memories. Childhood is brought back through Christmas time, when the action takes place.

Wherever Raven goes, he runs into some sort of Christmas motif. In a religious shop close to the Catholic cathedral, he gazes in fury upon a plaster Virgin Mary and Child in the stable, along with relics of saints and devotional pictures of the Holy Family. These images bring bitter memories of his childhood and the way he was treated at a brutal children's home. He recalls how he waited on a bench for Christmas dinner, knowing that he would not be beaten since "all punishments were saved for Boxing Day (...) They twisted everything; even the story in there, it was historical, it had happened, but they twisted it to their own purposes. They made him a God because they could feel fine about it all, they didn't have to consider themselves responsible for the raw deal they'd given him (GS, 85). When Raven kills Davis and satisfies his vengeance, he feels as if he

had shot the whole world; he thinks to himself that there was no other way: “he had tried the way of confession, and it had failed him for the usual reason.

There was no one outside your own brain whom you could trust: not a doctor, not a priest, not a woman” (*GS*, 164). Hiding in the dark as a monstrous animal – with his hare-lip, watching the sleet falling, bitter memories come to his mind: “the girl in the café saying, ‘He’s bad and ugly...’, the little plaster child lying in his mother’s arms waiting the double-cross, the whips, the nails” (*GS*, 164-165). The image of the child Jesus is opposed to that of Christ thus forcing a parallelism with Raven’s story. Raven “performs” an inverted kind of confession and explains his motives.

This perversion of the sacrament of Penance offers Raven a “justification” and an inversion of responsibility. He feels reconciled believing that he has done penance before his sins. His self-pity even projects the image of Christ in his twisted mind. Raven thinks to himself while escaping from the police. “A siren blew over the town its message that the sham raid was over, and immediately the church bells broke into a noisy Christmas carol: the foxes have their holes, but the son of man... (*GS*, 164).

Greene wanted Raven to be both a hero and a villain, always hidden in the dark and sheltering from snow: “He had been made by hatred; it had constructed him into this thin smoky murderous figure in the rain, hunted and ugly...He had never felt the least tenderness for anyone; he was made in this image and he had his own odd pride in the result; he didn’t want to be unmade (*GS*, 62). The worst

thing of all is not whether Raven is evil or not, the most frightening issue is his indifference.

Darkness and cold constantly loom over Raven who represents the worst-case scenario of a lost childhood and a traumatic orphaned life. Rather than a broken toy, Raven is a physically and mentally broken child. He is innocence turned into evil in a world that is not prepared to turn the other cheek. Ugly and broken are two recurring adjectives throughout the novel usually associated with the image of the Nativity Scene, especially the “plaster Child”, which evokes both ideas of fragility and grotesque.

As usual in the novel, Raven is “in the rain and dark with the dreadful sense of desolation” trying to find Anne still alive, “He said bitterly to the tiny scrap of plaster in the plaster cradle: ‘If you were a God, you’d know I wouldn’t harm her: you’d give a break, you’d let me turn and see her on the pavement’, and he turned with half a hope, but of course there was nothing there” (*GS*, 86).

Greene frequently alludes to the interior of Catholic churches emphasising either their fabulous artfulness or their grandiosity and even tawdry decoration. The use and abuse of plaster statues and other ornamental elements is twofold: on the one hand, these elements work as a parallel sacramental narrative/liturgy in the scene within the Catholic aesthetic imagination thus highlighting the Catholic “difference” from the Anglican and Protestant sensibilities. On the other, the tawdry style of those plaster figures and the associations with the grotesque cause the inversion of the Catholic practices, images and sacraments. In so doing, the author can also depart from “more comfortable” Catholic positions adding

ambiguity and drama to his plots. The pursuit of Raven precipitates towards its inevitable conclusion, as Brennan puts it, “with the hectic pace of a thriller and the digressive structure of a dramatic tragedy” (45).

Raven must play his role as scapegoat for the sins provoked by his tawdry world. He builds his self-image as a brutalised victim constantly betrayed by the numerous Judas figures in his life and is excluded by his physical deformity from society. He spends a night sleeping in the Roman Catholic Cathedral of St. Mark’s (*GS*, 69), but this sanctuary provides him with only a momentary sense of peace.⁹⁵ Ironically enough, St. Mark’s church does exist in Nottingham, but it belongs to the Church of England. Greene converted to Catholicism in Nottingham in the Catholic Cathedral of St. Barnabas where he was baptised by Father Trollope.

These coincidences might have served Greene to criticise the Anglican Church for its lukewarm role in maintaining the religious sense in modern England. Once again, Greene’s twofold narrative implies the Anglican indifference as well as Raven’s impossible “conversion” in his failure to find longer comfort in the novel’s Catholic Cathedral.

We learn of his stay in the Cathedral as detective Mather does, that is, through the testimony of an accidental witness. This movement on the part of the author forces the reader to definitely take the side of the detective, the real detective, that “eye in the sky” hounding Raven. However, the apparently incidental (we do know it is not so) fact of taking refuge in God’s house turns

⁹⁵ St. Mark’s Cathedral in Nottingham was actually an Anglican Cathedral from 1856 (consecration) to 1958. In 1927 its vicar James Lewis resigned. Canon Holbrook of Holy Trinity parish took charge of St. Mark’s in that same year and, a year later, the two parishes united. The cathedral was demolished in 1958.

Raven into a man pursued by the Law of men, worthy of being among those blessed by Jesus in the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-12).

A Gun for Sale may well be Greene's first serious attempt to revisit his own conversion to Catholicism. The novel, therefore, negotiates the traumatic process of conversion and revises it in search of spiritual reassurance. Both Greene and Raven descended into Hell in Nottingham. Greene only stayed in Nottingham for four months and wrote to Vivien from London: "Thank God, Nottingham is over. It's like coming back into real life again, being here" (Sherry I.281). Although he later talked about the city affectionately, the author had a hard time there. "This town makes one want a mental and physical bath every quarter of an hour" (Sherry I.265).

The obvious difference is that Raven did not manage to come back from Hell, or perhaps, he was not allowed to get out of it. The ambiguous aesthetics of the novel forces a double narrative mixing Christian elements such as the Nativity Scene and all the Christmas paraphernalia with Raven's lost childhood and impossible conversion and Greene's own traumatic childhood and bittersweet memories of his conversion to Catholicism. Greene depicts this mixture when he recalls his first impressions in Nottingham:

I arrived one wet night in Nottingham and woke next morning in the unknown city to an equally dark day. This was not like a London smog; the streets were free of vapour, the electric lights shone clearly; the fog lay somewhere out of sight far above the lamps. When I read Dickens on Victorian London I think of Nottingham in the twenties. There was an

elderly “boots” still employed at the Black Dog Inn, there were girls suffering from unemployment in the lace trade, who would, so it was said, sleep with you in return for a high tea with muffins, and a haggard blue-haired prostitute, ruined by amateur competition, haunted the corner by W. H. Smith’s bookshop. Trams rattled downhill through the goose-market and on to the blackened castle. (...) I had found a town as haunting as Berkhamsted, where years later I would lay the scene of a novel and of a play. Like the bar of the City Hotel in Freetown, which I was to know years later it was the focal point of failure, a place undisturbed by ambition, a place to be resigned to, a home from home. (*SL*, 114-115)

Greene seems to make his own *Christmas Carol*, but this time the ghosts are real human beings, the past will not be redeemed, the future means death – there are throughout the novel numerous allusions foreshadowing an imminent war – and the present, therefore, is haunted by both ends. Greene tries to offer a Christian tragedy, which has a great deal to do with how the author shapes experience. In *The Great Code*, Northrop Frye visualises the comic narrative of the Bible as a diagram that he calls “a U-shaped curve”. Thus, the Bible moves from Creation to the Fall, followed by Christ’s deliverance of humankind from the Original Sin – from perfection down to alienation and back up to perfection again. The plot of a tragedy, therefore, closes at the bottom of the curve, in the depths of alienation, whereas the plot of the Bible rises to a restorative ending.

According to Frye, the narrative of the Bible, which is a divine comedy, is a story in which humanity “loses the tree and water of life at the beginning of

Genesis and gets them back at the end of Revelation” (2006, 164). However Frye’s U-shaped curve seems too simple for the purposes of exploring the complexities of despair that, despite the example and promise of resurrection, have always been part of Christian experience. Frye’s paradigm might suggest that the narrative of Christianity is cyclical, but the Christian story does not return to a previous state.

The Gospels portray Christ walking through the same path toward death as everyone, but triumphing over death in the end. It is precisely the pattern of experience depicted in the Incarnation, the divine Word descending into the abyss of fleshy existence before it rises, what makes tragedy essential to Christianity. The centrality of a *felix culpa* in the Christian experience suggests the contiguous nature of comedy and tragedy. Adam’s transgression and his expulsion from the Garden provoke the tragedy that makes possible Christ’s forgiveness and resurrection. Without the Fall, the Incarnation would be meaningless.

The *felix culpa* suggests that the same moment the human falls into the deepest despair he is also aware of achieving the greatest good. The aesthetic picture of *A Gun for Sale* forces an ambiguous interpretation of this tragedy. John Boyd, for instance, argues that Christianity and tragedy are incompatible because Christ turns death into victory. He defines the Paschal mystery as one action, the “Paschal Action”:

In it the death and resurrection comprise a single action, not mere human death with a reward attached. The Risen Lord is not merely the term of the death but also a sum of all and its crown, the goal that set the pattern of the

entire Paschal Action and toward which it moved from the very beginning.

His wounds were glorious in His rising, because victory burned in them as

He died. (1998, 74)

In this sense, the Paschal Action is paradoxical because the Passion narrative shows that life is born from death in a single instant upon the cross. As Boyd goes on to say, “Christ’s triumphant death absorbed all the bitterness of the tragic human condition” (78). Baroque aesthetics, however, manages to display both the tragedy and the triumph of the Christ image. It depicts the paradoxical nature of the Paschal mystery since the Passion story shows that life is born from death in a single instant upon the cross.

There is a compatibility of Christianity and tragedy because life and death coexist in both the Passion story and in tragic literature. Consequently, Michael Edwards argues that the Gospels convey two paradoxes of literary tragedy derived from the Passion story: the experience of both the greatness and wretchedness among Christian heroes, and the contradictory dynamic between free will and determinism:

Christ on the cross suffers because He chooses to, but also by the “determinate counsel” of God. At the exact centre of paradox, he is perfectly innocent and totally undeserving of death and yet, having willingly assumed the sins of the whole race, he is at the same time perfectly guilty – more guilty than anyone else, and the most guilty that it is possible to be. (1984, 21)

The forces of free will and determinism in the Gospels approximate tragedy. Therefore, Edwards adds that, “[t]he fact that the Crucifixion was necessary in no way removes, or even lessens the guilt of the human agent whose action occasioned it” (19). For Karl Jaspers, in *Tragedy is Not Enough*, tragedy experience occurs when the protagonist succumbs to despair in his confrontations with limit situations. If the protagonist suffers beyond any ability to act, the experience becomes tragic.

According to Jaspers, the tragic hero saves himself when he accepts suffering and death, even if he does not completely comprehend what he accepts. “He is guilty already through Original Sin, and he is to be saved through grace. Now, however, he takes the cross upon himself. He no longer merely endures the sorrows of existence, its discrepancies and tearing conflicts – he deliberately chooses them. This is tragedy no longer” (1952, 11). Therefore, Jaspers rejects the possibility of Christian tragedy because the tragic hero’s ability to freely choose salvation eliminates the determinism that tragedy requires: “The chance of being saved destroys the tragic sense of being trapped without a chance of escape. Therefore no genuinely Christian tragedy can exist” (13). However, tragic literature can offer insight into the nature of the evolution of sin.

Tragedy elicits admiration as well as pity for the tragic hero when he exposes his own soul’s integrity in defiance of a hostile universe. Raven, the tragic anti-hero, represents entranced patterns of guilt and blame in a world that reflect the inability of humanity to escape the fallen state for which it is responsible. Raven, therefore, becomes guilty by the very fact of his existence. In

Beyond Tragedy, Reinhold Niebuhr argues that, although tragic literature offers us insights into Christianity, Christianity transcends tragedy because faith denies “the tragic assumption that evil is *necessarily* entailed in all free acts” (1979, 8, author’s emphasis).

Although evil is inevitable, it is not necessary, and therefore it is not a determining force. There is nothing noble or uplifting in acts of murder. Moreover, most deaths are unheroic. We are apt to react with a mixture of pity and compassion and say that such events are tragic. The tragic hero undergoes suffering and death in order to uphold the good. “He suffers because he is strong and not because he is weak. He involves himself in guilt not by his vice but by his virtue” (Niebuhr, 7).

It is difficult for the reader to label Raven as an anti-hero, as has traditionally been done, or as a tragic hero. Except Anne, every character in the novel acts wrongly, even her fiancé Mather, the detective who is trying to hunt Raven. Roles are interchanged and Raven becomes detective and “takes” the girl, only out of pity on Anne’s part. When she disappears and is seen with Raven, Mather is not sure anymore he wants her to be his wife. Moreover, he is not happy when he finds Anne unharmed, because he feels betrayed by her. The story is told through different characters’ points of view, a technique Greene uses in order to focus our attention on Raven, not as an anti-hero, but as the tragic hero. His death reflects the hero’s death in tragedy, a final picture where the elements of his life close the circle of childhood thus mirroring the inevitable narrative of fate.

In the scene where Raven is killed, he hesitates before shooting Mather, a name that resembles “mother”, while memories from his past come to his mind. Birth and death, mother and child, a sacramental Christ image exhaling His last breath:

Raven watched him with bemused eyes, trying to take aim. It wasn't a difficult shot, but it was almost as if he had lost interest in killing. He was only aware of a pain and despair which was more like a complete weariness than anything else. He couldn't work up any sourness, any bitterness, at his betrayal. The dark Weevil under the storm of frozen rain flowed between him and any human enemy. Ah, Christ! That it were possible, but he had been marked from his birth for this end, to be betrayed in turn by everyone until every avenue into life was safely closed: by his mother bleeding in the basement, by the chaplain at the home, by the shady doctor off Charlotte Street. (...) The only problem when you were once born was to get out of life more neatly and expeditiously than you had entered it. For the first time the idea of his mother's suicide came to him without bitterness, as he reluctantly fixed his aim and Saunders shot him in the back through the opening door. Death came to him in the form of unbearable pain. It was as if he had to deliver this pain as a woman delivers a child, and he sobbed and moaned in the effort. At last it came out of him and he followed his only child into a vast desolation. (*GS*, 165-166)

The scene follows the aesthetic pattern of baroque impulse that Greene uses throughout his oeuvre. While Mather tries to capture Raven by dangling from

a painter's platform outside Sir Marcus's offices, Saunders, a police officer doggedly loyal to Mather, kills Raven. James Raven and James Mather, looking at each other, seem a mirrored reflection, hunter and hunted, killer and detective, painter and picture. Greene makes the reader/observer an active participant of the picture by means of his masterful selection of detail and his use of realistic dialogue in a fast-paced narrative. Throughout his career, Greene was fascinated by film, and he often emulated cinematic techniques in his writing. Consequently, the author leaves the reader caught in a *mise en abyme* that resonates with the complex real world in which people are caught between detection and duplicity.

In this regard, Greene uses detection as a narrative technique where the detective reconstructs the past from fragments of evidence, in Mather's case, and of facts, in Raven's case. As Raven and Mather swap roles mirroring each other, Greene, the author, does the same with his readers. While the author reflects on fragments from his actual past life, the reader is left to chase Raven chasing Sir Marcus while being chased by Mather. This train of consequences embodies the reader's anxiety for closure. The detective figure embodies the terror and the experience of nothingness that are the result of the search for meaning thus trying to avoid falling into that "vast desolation". After killing Raven, the police try to close the case. "Saunders asked a clerk in Midland Steel the way to a lavatory. He washed his hands and thought, 'That job's over'. It hadn't been a satisfactory job; what had begun as a plain robbery had ended with two murders and the death of the murderer. There was a mystery about the whole affair; everything hadn't come out" (GS, 170).

Greene's novel forces the reader to look for that which lies in between: a series of mirrors that first appear duplicitous, but through detection, become clues. Saunders, mirroring Pilate (Matt. 27: 24), washes his hands in front of the readers to show that he is not responsible for the death of "innocent" Raven. And it is precisely in the mirror of that lavatory where Greene forces us to look at ourselves occupying the place of Saunders.

The model of Jesus willingly dying on the cross resembles tragedy, where death is taken on for a greater good. But that is not the whole story, as Saunders wonders. In Luke 23: 27-29, Jesus says to the daughters of Jerusalem, who are aware of His fate: "Weep not for me; but weep for yourselves and for your children". Whereas the chorus in Greek tragedies encourages us to weep for the tragic hero, Jesus tells his followers to weep for themselves.

The difference, Niebuhr argues, is that in Christianity the reaction is not one of spectators only, but of participants who are freely involved in the sin and guilt that kills the hero. Raven is depicted as an anti-hero and, at the same time, as the scapegoat victim. The aesthetic of the narrative acts as a liturgy in a ritual, which arises from the dialogue between Raven and what have become sacramental figures – the Holy Family, the Nativity Scene, and Christ betrayed – sacramental figures that are constantly invoked by Raven's memory. In this sense, art is inherently sacramental because, like ritual, art involves representation. This process establishes a parallel with Catholic rites.

This idea may provide a broader understanding of Greene's authorship, which always involves, as has been shown, the implicitly ritualistic recourse of

memory and mimesis, thus evoking confessional discourse. According to Catholic artist and poet David Jones in his essay “Art and Sacrament”, such aesthetic performances implicate the gestures of narrative in a parallel design to the Catholic Mass. Both rituals and the arts share a common denominator; both are activities that try to create signs. Jones observed that, “[M]an is unavoidably sacramentalist and his works are sacramental in character” (1959, 155). Jones goes on to note:

The terms ‘sacrament’ and ‘sacramental’ are apt to give overtones and undertones that for a number of disparate reasons have a kind of narrowing effect. Thus, for Christians and especially for the Catholic Christian, those terms carry a specialised meaning and a special aura surrounds them. On the other hand, for secularised man in general, and especially for post-Christians or anti-Christians such terms are suspect or uncongenial. So that in various opposing ways the wide significance and primary meaning is obscured”. (Jones, 155)

That ‘primary meaning’ is, according to Jones, sign-making. Not only the arts are characterised by the activity of sign-making, but ultimately, the very work of the sign implies the sacred. The sacred is not “out there”, remote or disconnected from us; it is instead linked to us through thought, feeling, behaviour, and motivations.

In his essay, Jones takes Hogarth’s painting *The Shrimp Girl* (1740-1745) as an example and explains how a reality corresponding to the painter’s conception is, in the painting, really present under the form of paint – a

formulation meant to recall transubstantiation, that is, the way in which the body of Christ is really present under the forms of consecrated bread and wine.⁹⁶ In *A Gun for Sale*, however, the sacramental forms are bread and water (8, 38, 117, 121, 122, 123), but wine is never mentioned. As early as the fourth century, catechists explained that the water represented humanity and the wine, divinity. Once you put the water into the wine, it is impossible to take it out again. Because of Jesus Christ, humanity can never again be separated permanently from God. So the custom continues.⁹⁷

When Raven is in Anne's company, he confesses to her. For the first time in his life, he has found someone he can trust. "He brooded over his memories with a low passionate urge towards confession. (...) His happiness was incomplete till she knew everything, till he had shown his trust completely. He didn't want to shock or pain her; he led slowly towards the central revelation" (*GS*, 122). Anne plays the role of the confessor while Raven recalls how he "got beaten a lot at the start, solitary confinement, bread and water, all the rest of the homey stuff" (123). However, Anne is appalled at Raven's sins and she cannot "absolve" him. There is no communion between them.

That is the reason why there is no wine in their incomplete sacramental ritual. We must remember here that Anne's surname is Crowder, which may

⁹⁶ There is a story that Hogarth's widow used to say to visitors at the Golden Head, showing *The Shrimp Girl*, "They say he could not paint flesh. There's flesh and blood for you; them!" (Undated clipping in the Forster Collection (V & A, F.10E.3.no. 174) Quoted from Ronald Paulson 1992, 196.

⁹⁷ In the ancient world, the Greeks added water to wine because it was often thick, gritty, and too strong. It was simply good taste to add water to wine before drinking it. The Romans adopted Greek manners and spread them to the lands they conquered. And even though it was not originally a Jewish custom to add water to wine, it soon became part of the Passover meal itself and, hence, part of the Mass.

signify her relationship with the crowd, with the general society, specifically, with each one of us. In this regard, Raven's sins are caused by people's attitude as members of society towards the world they inhabit. Everyone has their share in this process of corruption.

An example of this corrosive process is shown at the beginning of *Journey Without Maps*, where Greene admitted that in the interior of Liberia he hoped to experience the "heart of darkness", which he defined as "one's place in time, based on a knowledge not only of one's present but of the past from which one has emerged" (*JWM*, 7). In Greene's view, the uncivilized regions of Africa represented "an older more natural culture" (*JWM*, 289), in which the instincts worked "below the cerebral" (*JWM*,9). Because of this, he believed that Africa held the key to understanding how far Western civilization had progressed away from its basic instincts, and how 'centuries of cerebration' had led to its current state of 'unhappiness' and the "peril of extinction" (*JWM*,9). Indeed, when Greene alluded to the "religious fascination" of Liberia, he conceived it as the Paradise which Adam lost, a place that having been touched by civilisation, had "learned to steal and lie and kill" (*JWM*, 265).

However, Greene's respect for Catholic values is evident in his description of the work undertaken by the Order of the Holy Cross, which had established a mission and a monastic order within the Liberian interior. According to Greene, the mission was "gentle, devout, childlike and unselfish, it didn't even know it was courageous", and he admitted that "for the first time" he was "unashamed by the comparison between white and black" (*JWM*,86).As he later explained, this

was his first contact with the effects of “Faith on action” (*WE*, 59). Furthermore, Greene considered religious belief to be a crucial aspect of the creative mind. In “Some Notes on Somerset Maugham” (1935-38), Greene suggested that secular authors were unable fully to depict humankind because their perspective on life was rendered less significant and less complex due to the absence of a Christian framework.

He argued that the agnostic writer was “forced to minimize – pain, vice, the importance of his fellow-men. He cannot believe in a God who punishes and he cannot therefore believe in the importance of a human action” (*CE*, 154). Consequently, characterisation itself, according to Greene, may be affected by the author’s faith: “Rob human beings of their heavenly and their infernal importance, and you rob your characters of individuality” (*CE*, 154). Instead of writing political or religious propaganda, Greene maintained that a writer’s duty was to “act as the devil’s advocate, to elicit sympathy and a measure of understanding for those wholly outside the boundaries of State approval” (Bowen, 46). By focusing on marginalised individuals, Greene believed that writers could act as “a piece of grit in the State machinery” and could make “the work of the State a degree more difficult” (48). In this sense, Greene’s characterisation of his thrillers of the thirties becomes a political act without being political propaganda.

James Raven is an outcast from mainstream society who needs to be removed since, as steel magnate Sir Marcus states, he is “a waste product” (*GS*, 106). Indeed, there is no sense of beauty in England’s wasteland, where Greene wants to evoke the feeling of constant uneasiness for an upcoming war through

the representation of the hostile industrial environment. The old industries of coal were slowly decaying while the Thirties merely continued and intensified the tragic failure of the Twenties.

Greene's focus on his characters' social backgrounds indicates his concern with the intersection between distressed social environments and spiritual impoverishment. This is depicted, for instance, when detective Mather watches his girlfriend Anne being led away by Raven: "[h]e stared across a dark desolate waste of cinders and points, a tangle of lines and sheds and piles of coal and coke. It was like a No Man's Land full of torn iron across which one soldier picked his way with a wounded companion in his arms" (*GS*, 99).

We as readers/observers of the scene, as it happens with Saunders washing his hands, take Anne's place and listen to Raven's confession. Anne acts as society and, unlike a forgiving priestly figure or a father figure looking for the prodigal son, she responds to his confession feeling repulsion. She thinks, "He was just a wild animal who had to be dealt with carefully and then destroyed" (*GS*, 128). Greene invites us to take part in the scene and leaves us to decide whether to absolve Raven's sins or not. From the perspective of the Catholic imagination, we are reminded of Jesus Christ's words in John 20: 23, "If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven". Jesus Christ pronounced these words on Pentecost. Greene's next novel *Brighton Rock* begins precisely on Whitsun. Consequently, it might be argued that *Brighton Rock* starts when *A Gun for Sale* left off.

Brighton Rock

In *Brighton Rock*, Greene introduces another type of social outcast in the character of Pinkie, a teenager who lives in the seedy underworld of Brighton. Main characters Pinkie and Rose grew up in neighbouring housing estates in the slums, and Pinkie joined a race-course gang in order to escape from his life there.

The most striking feature of *Brighton Rock* is the fact that both Pinkie and Rose were brought up in the Catholic faith, have a sense of good and evil, and are aware of the notion and existence of Heaven and Hell. But Pinkie is consumed with pride and selfishness, and nothing can stop him from obtaining vengeance and power as leader of his gang.

The Baroque Catholic aesthetics in the novel is present from the first page. Like in his previous novel, Greene uses again warfare imagery to denote themes of social decay. Accordingly, images of bombardment and destruction are used to describe Pinkie's return to his birthplace halfway through the novel: "there he was, on the top of the hill, in the thick of the bombardment – a flapping gutter, glassless windows, an iron bedstead in a front garden the size of a table top. Pinkie's neighbourhood Half Paradise Piece had been torn up as if by bomb bursts; the children played about the steep slope of rubble" (*BR*, 95). The references to hardened materials such as iron and rubble as well as the allusions to breakage like torn, bombardment, and glassless evoke the image of a hostile and ruined wasteland.

Thus, each episode is surrounded by darkness forcing us to look for some luminosity coming out of Pinkie's character. In a sense, he might be labelled a failed gangster, but his own awareness of Hell and damnation makes Pinkie, called "the Boy", boast, "It's not what you do", the Boy said, "it's what you think". (...) "It's in the blood. Perhaps when they christened me, the holy water didn't take. I never howled the devil out" (*BR*, 136).

He is loveless, revengeful, cruel, murderous, a liar, and a blasphemer. In the middle of the novel, Pinkie seems to sum up his faith when he parodies the words from the Creed: "Credo in unum Satanum" (182).⁹⁸ Pinkie has some sort of belief in God and in Hell, probably even in Heaven, and this shadowy belief looms tragically over his life. There is a scene where Pinkie meets Rose to warn her against "knowing too much" and, after she is terrified, he marches Rose to Sherry's restaurant. Ordering Rose an ice, he finds the crooner's love song disturbing. Pinching Rose's wrist venomously, Pinkie drags her away when something clinked in her bag. She showed him the end of a string of pearls.

"You a Catholic?", the Boy said.

"Yes", Rose said.

"I'm one too", the Boy said. (...) "Why, I was in a choir once", the Boy confided, and suddenly he began to sing softly in his spoilt boy's voice: "Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem". In his voice a whole lost world moved – the lighted corner below the organ, the smell of incense and laundered surplices, and the music. (...)

⁹⁸ The correct form would be *satanan*. Early in the novel Pinkie confesses that he does not know Latin. He just keeps memories of his childhood, when he used to attend Mass.

“Credo in unum Dominum”, any music moved him, speaking of thing he didn’t understand. (*BR*, 54)

Pinkie then asks her if she goes to Mass. She says she goes sometimes because work prevents her from going more often. Pinkie interrupts her abruptly to declare that he does not go. Rose then asks him:

“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”, he said with his eyes on the dark shifting water and the lightning and the lamps going out above the black struts of the Palace Pier, “torments”.

“And Heaven too”, Rose said with anxiety, while the rain fell interminably on.

“Oh, maybe”, the Boy said, “maybe”. (*BR*, 54-55)

The scene has the structure of a confession. In fact, Pinkie confesses all throughout the novel. He even admits in front of his fellow gangsters that he had vowed to become a priest when he was a child (181). Pinkie’s obsession with Hell and damnation often urges him to think “of making peace, of going home, and his heart weakened with a faint nostalgia for the tiny dark confessional box, the priest’s voice, and the people waiting under the statue, before the bright lights burning down in the pink glasses, to be made safe from eternal pain” (*BR*, 116). His life is a recurrent attempt at confession, but this absolution is never achieved.

Moreover, it is annulled by another mortal sin. He reckons, nonetheless, there will be time enough later for repentance. The whole picture that Greene proposes shows Pinkie isolated and surrounded by darkness. However, that surrounding darkness, like Baroque paintings show, is precisely where God's absence appears present. In this novel, that presence discloses itself as the Holy Spirit.

The novel's action is set during Whitsun, Pentecost, which commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. To reinforce the use of Baroque aesthetics, it is initially implied that the Holy Spirit passively observes Pinkie from outside a window, "tenderness came up to the very window and looked in" (*BR*, 263). Greene suggests, however, that Pinkie further isolates himself from spiritual goodness when he spurns this Spirit: "An eye for an eye. If you believed in God, you might leave vengeance to Him, but you couldn't trust the One, the universal spirit" (*BR*, 36). Pinkie's narrative balances between Rose, the innocent Catholic who loves him and Ida, the good atheist who hates him. On the one hand, Pinkie resists the Holy Spirit's attempts to "descend" upon him represented by its affiliations with confession and forgiveness.

On the other, Ida wants to take revenge on Pinkie for Hale's murder thus hounding Pinkie like a bird of prey. The image of the old man looking for stuff washed up on the beach shows the desperate quest for something worthy of salvation in Pinkie. Only a boot, another recurrent image throughout the novel, is found thus anticipating Pinkie's death.

An old man went stooping down the shore, very slowly, turning the stones, picking among the dry seaweed for cigarette ends, scraps of food. The gulls which had stood like candles down the beach rose and cried under the promenade. The old man found a boot and stowed it in his sack, and a gull dropped from the parade and swept through the iron nave of the Palace Pier, white and purposeful in the obscurity: half vulture and half dove. In the end one always had to learn. (*BR*, 143)

The bird image of the Biblical conceptualisation of the Holy Spirit as a dove is subverted in the novel by a sort of Janus-faced bird, which represents either absolution or damnation. At the end of the novel, events precipitate and the bird forcibly strikes against Pinkie's windscreen: "An enormous emotion beat on him; it was like something trying to get in, the pressure of gigantic wings against the glass. *Dona nobis pacem* (*BR*, 261). Pinkie imagines what would happen if the glass broke and the Holy Spirit was able to reach him: "He had a sense of a huge havoc – the confession, the penance, and the sacrament – an awful distraction" (261). Pinkie tries to avoid getting "caught" by the Holy Spirit since "Heaven was a word" for him, but "Hell was something he could trust" (248). Pinkie's Catholicism is shaped by the horrible things he had experienced to the extent that Hell and damnation have become natural for him, because "he knew what the end might be – it didn't horrify him: it was easier than life" (225). In his essay on Henry James, Greene reflected on the nature of evil in a way that is applicable to Pinkie's story: "[James's] religion was always a mirror of his experience.

Experience taught him to believe in supernatural evil, but not in supernatural good” (*CE*, 43).

Therefore, Pinkie can only imagine “a grey darkness going on and on without end” (*BR*, 164). There are times when Pinkie suffers from his inability to experience the religious peace that he longs for. At one point, he even becomes so overwhelmed by the terrible circumstances that he breaks down in tears. While weeping, he imagines “a limitless freedom: no fear, no hatred, no envy. It was as if he were dead and were remembering the effect of a good confession, the words of absolution” (196). Pinkie is anxious to stop all that madness and rest in peace, literally, but he “could hardly believe in the freedom at the end of it, and even that freedom was to be in a strange place” (260).

The references to confession emphasise this desire to acquire religious peace through the forgiveness of his sins, but this only will happen if he repents before he dies, and the most terrible thing of all is that Pinkie is aware of it. “But being dead it was a memory only – he couldn’t experience contrition – the ribs of his body were like steel bands which held him down to eternal unrepentance” (196).

Eventually, Pinkie is confronted by secular justice in the form of Ida Arnold and the police. While running away from them, Pinkie accidentally smashes a bottle of vitriol over himself. Rose watches in horror as his face steams with acid. Burnt and scarred, Pinkie turns and he either falls from or jumps off a nearby cliff. Most critics point out to Pinkie’s damnation, probably because

Greene himself in an interview noted that he had written “a book about a man who goes to Hell – Brighton Rock” (Donaghy 1992, 79).

Following the same idea, Robert Hoskins notes that Pinkie ends the novel “not with the leap of Faith but with the terrible, fatal leap into the sea” (1999, 24). Faith, for Greene, was understood as troubled commitment since the day his process of conversion to Roman Catholicism began. Greene the Doubter continued to model a faith marked by scepticism and distrust. He disliked the concept of sin, moreover, and found it hard to believe traditional Christian eschatology. Commenting on *Brighton Rock*’s controversial ending, Greene explains:

I wanted to make people believe he [Pinkie] was sufficiently evil person almost to justify the notion of Hell. I wanted to introduce a doubt of Pinkie’s future in the words of the priest, who speaks of the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God, a doubt whether even a man like that could possibly merit eternal punishment. It is appalling, the strangeness. Because the mercy of God is operating in some inexplicable fashion even with the gas oven of Auschwitz. In fact, I wanted to throw doubt on Hell altogether. (Donaghy, 57)

In the final pages of the novel, Rose visits an elderly priest for confession, at which point she admits to fearing for Pinkie’s soul. The priest confirms the religious view that Catholics are different when he explains that they are “more capable of evil than anyone” due to their awareness of God (*BR*, 268). This fact is the main difference between *Brighton Rock* and *A Gun for Sale*. Ida, with her

secularity, opposes Pinkie's tragic sense of the sacred thus reducing his tone from sinfulness to badness. The real abyss where Pinkie is heading to is that religious sense, that dimension to which Greene alluded in his famous essay on Henry James.

That dark abyss surrounding our lives, however, should not signify exclusively the risk of damnation, but also the grace of God, the possibility of salvation. Following this line of argument, the aesthetic as opposed to the moral emphasis of the novel is reflected in the contrast between Pinkie's sacredness and Ida's secularity. For Ida, the picture is unidimensional because hers is a game of justice, since death and life do not belong to same category. "Death shocked her, life was so important" (*BR*, 34), whereas Pinkie is "touched with the annihilating eternity from which he had come and to which he went" (*BR*, 20).

Greene creates suspense by gambling with the possibility of last minute grace. Until the very last moment when we see Pinkie falling down the cliff, we observe the scene and see the hand of God trying to save Pinkie, the claws of the Holy Spirit descending from the dark to grab his body.

In his thrillers of the thirties, Greene uses Baroque aesthetics in which the reader is constantly invited, if not urged as in the case of Catholics, to act as witness thus taking part in the scene and even feeling some sort of responsibility in the fulfilment of the narrative. Another strong Baroque element is the surrounding darkness, which highlights the presence of the spiritual, but also has a twofold meaning since it implies either salvation or damnation. This presence is not represented in the novel, but Greene constantly reminds us of it through his

Catholic aesthetics. Harold Segel, in his 1974 *The Baroque Poem*, focuses our attention on an extreme schism and ongoing tension within the concept of the Baroque itself, between two spatial organising principles that Segel calls two conflicting “hegemonies of form”.

One principle, which has come to be expressed by Mannerism, is an organization of space *partes extra partes*, or “expansion through fragmentation”, the expression of novelty through the heterogeneity of the composition, an excessive and deliberate distortion of the centrality of the foreground (*figura serpentine*), or figure of monstrosity and hybridism; as well as style which can be recognised by its excessive “reflexivity”, and “artificialisation of Nature”.⁹⁹

The second principle, which has come to characterize the “High Baroque” still exhibits variety or multiplicity in textures and forms, but incorporates the ornamental attributes of surface and design as corporeal predicates that unfold to express the presence of an underlying *unity* – a presence that is not represented by the work, but implied, or embodied as an emotional effect produced in the spectator or witness. As Segel shows, the operation of the second principle can be interpreted as a reaction and recuperation of the first principle, as in a well-known canvas by Caravaggio which treats a theme common to mannerist art as well, *The Conversion of St Paul* (1600)¹⁰⁰:

A Mannerist treatment of a religious theme may at first glance occasionally appear to exhibit involvement in the spiritual. The usual Mannerist treatment of the subject (...) manages to include some spiritual apparition

⁹⁹ As in Góngora, Calderón, Velázquez or Borromini.

¹⁰⁰ See appendix 13.

in the heavens or beside the stunned, unhorsed figure of St Paul. Now there is no such apparition or vision in Caravaggio's *Conversion of St Paul*. The figures of Paul and the horse dominate the canvas and are so grouped to heighten the dramatic impact of the scene. Where heavenly figures appeared in Mannerist paintings, Caravaggio has only the darkness of night; yet in this darkness, the presence of the spiritual and the mystery of unknowable beings and forces are made to be felt. (Segel, 30-31)

What Segel wants to highlight is that a Mannerist treatment of the subject appears to represent the spiritual element of St. Paul's conversion. If the work had been exclusively treated with Mannerist style, it would have displayed, as Lambert notes, "a somewhat distant and flat tableau with an "artificial" heaven filled with apparitions that distract the spectator's immediate involvement" (Lambert, 2004, 21). Caravaggio, however, by emptying that "false heaven" and filling it with darkness that overcomes all surface, produces its presence by the very absence that embodies, from the position of the spectator, the feelings of anxiety and foreboding. As Lambert adds, "[t]his is the element of a pure movement that directly involves "or throws" the spectator before the painting – both by the proximity and dominance of the two figures in the foreground – propelling him or her into the drama of the conversion itself (Lambert, 22).

The reference to the *Conversion of St. Paul*, then is not accidental, since the very "emotion" and tragic effect that the Baroque aesthetics constructs is usually described by critics in terms of the drama of "conversion". From the Greek term *metanoia*, the concept has undergone dramatic semantic alteration

with Christianity when its meaning of change and alteration is also situated in the flesh, and in the emotional participation of the subject. In Caravaggio, for example, this “absent presence” is revealed in the anxiety produced by the dark and mysterious force of night, almost implicating height that strikes the spectator by its emptiness, or blankness.

According to Lambert, “we can see this narrative, the centrality of the spiritual or symbolic element in the Baroque artwork” (Lambert, 2004, 22). The body’s agitated convulsion and the apparent absence of perception emphasise this rhetoric of visibility and the body that explains the psychology effects on the spectator and the rhetoric of power attached to the authoritarian aesthetic programs of the Catholic Reformation. This “Baroque effect” produced in the spectator a feeling of dizziness, swooning, wonder and amazement, or rapture and delirium – all of which lie at the basis of a general Baroque aesthetic.

Greene negotiates these elements in his novels and *Brighton Rock* is a perfect example of how the author uses these traits to focus the readers’ attention on the action, but leaving them to transcend the “visible” margins of the novel in search of that absent presence. Pinkie’s “conversion” also appears obstructed by his “blindness”. However, the narrative of the novel from its Baroque aesthetics also points out to a successful “conversion”, in this case, Pinkie’s last minute repentance and God’s mercy, like St. Paul on his way to Damascus. Greene also empties his novels of a “false Heaven”, which, in *Brighton Rock*, is represented by the character of Ida. Indeed, Ida represents a cheerful, bright world and her

familiar terms are “exciting”, “happy”, “fun”, “right and wrong”, “an eye for an eye”, and “fair play”.

It is only for fun that she chases Pinkie to avenge the murder of Hale whom she met briefly in the taxi. “Vengeance was Ida’s; just as much as reward was Ida’s, the soft gluey mouth affixed in taxis, the warm handclasp in cinemas, the only reward there was. And vengeance and reward – they both were fun” (*BR*, 36). Seeking after enjoyment, her mind works with “simplicity and regularity of a sky sign” (35). Consequently, Ida represents that “false Heaven” that *proper* Baroque art wanted to avoid.

Ida, through her romantic imagination and her abstract, superficial “right or wrong”, is excluded from the experience of evil and seems to distance herself from the harsh realities of the world. “She didn’t believe in heaven or hell, only in ghosts, ouija boards, tables that rapped and little inept voices speaking plaintively of flowers. 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” (35). Greene portrays Ida negatively and intentionally harms her image throughout the novel. Ida and her coteries inhabit a “sinless graceless chromium world” (*LR*, 184). They indulge themselves in pleasure and have a common conviction that they are right according to the law; they are spiritually dead. In his insistence on portraying Ida so negatively, Greene disparages “right and wrong” which are Ida’s moral standard, thus drawing a distinction between “being good” and “behaving lawfully”. From a Catholic imagination, Ida both represents Christ’s condemnation of the hypocrisy and complacency of the Pharisees as well as her

lukewarm attitude reminds us of Revelations 3: 16, “neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth”.

This bodily discomfort emphasises the opposition between Ida and Pinkie. Pinkie fastidious revulsion from bodily functions is constantly shown throughout the novel. Greene himself had been brought close to nervous breakdown simply by having to live with other boys. He found their “continual farting” and coarseness intolerable. In *Brighton Rock*, the disgusting aspects of human physicality that haunted the young Greene receive vivid emphasis, especially those that relate to people's mouths and digestive organs – belching, wind, sour breath, the lavatory smells in Rose's home, the air “poisoned with human breath” in the tunnel by the rock shop, Prewitt's indigestion, Spicer's upset bowels, the taste of stout coming back up Ida's throat, the taste of whisky coming back up Cubitt's.

The image, however, that causes most disgust is the mouth. The human mouth is repeated and described in detail through the novel. A lump of toffee stirs on Molly's tongue. The cheap music coming out of the wireless at Snow's is “the world's wet mouth lamenting over life” (24); a wedge of cream on Ida's throat; Ida relishes “the soft gluey mouth affixed in taxis” (36). The sea slides “like a wet mouth round the piles” (98). Phil's mouth, half-open as he sleeps, discloses “one yellow tooth and a gob of metal filling” (164). Judy fastens on Rose “a mouth wet and prehensile like a sea- anemone” (210); darkness presses “a wet mouth against the panes” (252). This disgust, so deeply embedded in the novel, has the effect of aligning us with Pinkie and apprehending life as he does.

The book's obsession with mouths reflects Greene's sensitivity to such images, which was another inheritance of his schooldays at Berkhamsted. As he notes in his autobiography, he was exposed to constant "scatology" and he even "disliked the lavatory joke from that age on" (*SL*, 59). The mouth takes in Greene's work a sacramental significance as the orifice through which God incarnated enters the body. Following the visual imagery of the novel, these mouths are like Holy Ghost Holes in churches.

The communion encounters between characters are resolved by means of a Catholic understanding of the sacrament. Hale's murder precipitates all the action in the novel. We do not know much about the details of the murder, but the sticks of rock sold in Brighton are associated with it. Cubitt, recalling his part on the murder, hints to Ida about the killing: "I can't see a piece of Brighton rock without..." (*BR*, 178). The mystery is resolved in the following chapter, where Pinkie sees a kind of diabolical leading of Rose, as she inadvertently retraces his steps on the day of Hale's death.

When she reaches the kiosk where the killing took place, Pinkie asks Rose whether she wants winkles or rock "as if something important really depended on the answer". When she replies, "I'd like a stick of Brighton rock" he believes that "only the devil...could have made her answer like that. 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" (*BR*, 194). Rose desperately expects Pinkie to leave his evil ways, because she believes people can change. In response to Rose later in the novel, Ida retorts, "Oh, no they don't...I've never changed.

It's like those sticks of rock: bite it all the way down. That's human nature (216). Ida's lack of Catholic imagination denies any choice of eternal context, which prevents her from believing in God's mercy. Rose could have chosen winks, easy to take out with a pin, but she takes the rock. The saint must always choose the hardest way, the narrow path.

As for Pinkie, he tries to keep away from drinking and sex. For him, who struggles to escape poverty and danger, life is not fun, but suffering, agony, and terror. Life is some sort of Hell for Pinkie, who rejects any kind of bodily function and contact, because they represent the inverted image of sacramental damnation. Conversely, Ida stands for that earthly damnation and even her own physical description reminds the ancient cult of Mother Earth and fertility.

Indeed, her "big breasts pushing at her dress" are her most remarkable feature. "She smelt of soap and wine, comfort and peace and a slow sleepy physical enjoyment, a touch of the nursery and the mother stole from the big tipsy mouth, the magnificent breasts and legs, and reached Hale's withered and frightened brain" (13). In fact, when Pinkie watches Ida singing at the pub, he feels "furious distaste" and says, "Christ, won't anybody stop that buer's mouth?" (6). The first time Pinkie meets Ida he is literally attacked on his senses thus anticipating their mutual antagonism. The sacramental image of the scene is another feature of Baroque aesthetics, which represents the human body in a distorted way and actual contours, with its imperfections and its grotesque realism.

Ida's excessive and grotesque corporeality contrasts with her lack of religiosity and shallow dimension. She represents the inversion of the sacrament of Eucharist, since her enormous breasts are not used to feed children, but only to satisfy men. "Her big breasts, which had never suckled a child of her own, felt a merciless compassion" (129). In another scene, "he saw a mouth which wanted the sexual contact, the shape of breasts demanding a child. (...) A light lit his face and left it; a frown, a thought, a child's face; she felt responsibility move in her breasts; she wouldn't let him go into that darkness alone" (248-249).

Consequently, Ida's exuberance is only portrayed as sexual in the sense of temporary, ephemeral, but not in the sense of perdurable or productive. "The grotesque body", Bakhtin argues, "is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world" (1984, 317). Ida represents an aggressively sacramental vision, a sort of medieval grotesque, a celebration of the beautiful and the ugly in both human corporeality and spirituality. However, this excessive image shows negatively what she lacks.

She thinks that doing good is the domain of people like her, that *buenismo*, or do-goodism, that not always creates the positive outcomes intended. She believes in ghosts, star signs, spirits, almost in everything. However, she is unable to believe in God, the Holy Spirit, or the afterlife. Greene tries to highlight her lack of religious sense and her excessive attachment to the physical and material

world. Writing is certainly a kind of therapy in this novel, since Greene himself experienced problems derived from his vision of sex.

When he was a teenager, Greene visited an analyst, Kenneth Richmond, for treatment. Greene was unhappy at school, depressed, even suicidal. Greene went to stay with Richmond and his wife Zoe at their home. Some of the therapeutic value of Greene's stay was simple: it removed him from school, where he was being bullied mercilessly. In addition, the environment of the Richmonds' home was a rich one, providing plenty of intellectual conversation and openness. Sherry enumerates the ways in which the Richmond household was both different and beneficial to Greene:

[Richmond] was not on the side of respectability and social correctness (...) While the Greene household was highly literate there were limitations on what could be discussed. In the Richmond household there were no such limitations and for sound psychological reasons. Inhibition only succeeds, Richmond felt, in driving things underground. How refreshing it must have been for Graham to discover an adult who held the view that faults of character become magnified and ingrained by perpetual "don'ts". Also, Richmond was utterly opposed to boarding schools, seeing them as artificial orphanages. Finally, he did not equate sex with sin. (Sherry, I.98)

Sherry holds that the therapy Greene received from Richmond was "a form of confession through dreams (...) releasing him from his inhibitions and habits of suppression" (Sherry, I.99). It is certainly true that Greene revealed himself freely to Richmond. Greene developed a sexual interest in Zoe Richmond, his analyst's

wife (which Greene credits to normal transference). Greene relates that one day during their daily session:

I found the only dream I had to communicate was an erotic one of Zoe Richmond. For the first time I dreaded the hour of eleven. I could, of course, say that I remembered nothing, and Richmond would tell me to invent, and I could trot out the habitual pig, but I was caught sufficiently by the passion for analysis to be repelled at the thought of cheating. To cheat was to behave like a detective who deliberately destroys a clue to murder. I steeled myself and left the Gardens and went in.

“And now”, Richmond said, after a little talk on general theory, “we’ll get down to last night’s dream”.

I cleared my dry throat. “I can only remember one”.

“Let’s have it”.

“I was in bed”, I said.

“Where?”

“Here”.

He made a note on his pad. I took a breath and plunged.

“There was a knock on the door and Zoe came in. She was naked. She leant over me. One of her breasts nearly touched my mouth. I woke up”.

“What’s your association to breasts?” Richmond asked, setting his stopwatch.

“Tube train”. I said after a long pause.

“Five seconds”. Richmond said. (*SL*, 103-4)

Greene's diction, referring to destroying a clue, demonstrates his engagement with this investigative process. Later, when Greene became a Catholic, this passion made him continue to go to reconciliation, that is, confession. Part of the process of Reconciliation is self-examination: the penitent must consider his own sins before going to the confessional. The moral imperative to confess is accompanied by the opportunity to discuss the sins that one confesses: it offers a liberating experience similar to psychoanalysis. In addition, Greene's term, "plunged", emphasises the active sexuality of this conversation – he is not merely describing a sexual experience, he is recreating it, experiencing it as he lets another person hear about it.

In that dream, Greene experiences a regression to psychoanalytic oral phase, trying to get over his traumatic childhood and, at the same time, establishes a relationship between the breast and the mouth beyond the mere sexual desire. Greene depicts a sacramental image of communion once the "sin" has been confessed and absolved. However, Ida represents what Pinkie hates: her mouth always smells like wine while her big breasts highlight Pinkie's revulsion of sex. Ida, the atheist, becomes almost objectified in the novel in order to turn precisely into a sacramental image of Incarnation. Pinkie's impossibility to "take her in communion" is reflected in his rejection of salvation. Ida's merciless persecution never becomes transcendental or effective for Pinkie, but precipitates his exit from the world thus falling into the dark, "appalling, strangeness of the mercy of God" (*BR*, 268).

After Pinkie's violent death, Rose goes to the confessional where she is comforted by an unnamed priest: "The Church does not demand that we believe any soul is cut off from mercy" (*BR*, 268). With the tragic vision of Pinkie falling down into the dark abyss and the hope of his salvation by God's infinite mercy, we turn to Rose who walks off "towards the worst horror of all" (*BR*, 269). One day as they were walking along the promenade, Rose asked Pinkie to record his voice with a gramophone in a booth. He spoke not of love, but "shaken by an appalling resentment": "God damn you, you little bitch, why can't you go home and let me be?"; he heard the needle scratch and the record whir, then a click and silence" (*BR*, 193). Even after his death, Pinkie has another confession to make. If that "worst horror" means truth, as it seems for Rose, we are left beyond the last page of the novel to reflect on the nature of God's mercy.

As Caravaggio has reduced the sacred passage of the Conversion of St. Paul to human drama, Greene introduces a gangster capable of the worst evil and a superficial and atheist server to reflect on the nature of divine grace and salvation. In Caravaggio's picture, the figures are no longer as grand and dignified as in the ideal beauty of the Renaissance figures, and in Greene's case, his characters are not heroes with high moral values. They are ordinary people, murderers, or just characters lacking any sense of spirituality. Sinners, losers and anti-heroes who roam across a disenchanted land, an image that immediately recalls Cervantes's novels.

The elements used by the painter are a horse, whose backside occupies the most prominent position of the work, and a non-idealised body of Paul falling to the ground in a pathetic position. Greene inverts the sacramental elements putting great emphasis on the human body and its grotesque bodily functions through the representation and description of the mouth and its interior, with references to the guts and digestion as well as Ida's big breasts and its associations with the mouth both as baby food and as sexual fuel.

Baroque aesthetics made extensive use of stark contrast of light and dark, *tenebrism*, and the figures emerged out of the background into the foreground and towards the viewer. Caravaggio, therefore, chose to illustrate the moment after Saul came in contact with the light of God, and, in shock, fell from his horse, blinded. Strong diagonal lines intensify the drama. Thus, Baroque artists illusionistically made his characters violate the viewers' space, inviting the spectators to take part in the scenes, which creates a great theatrical drama.

Moreover, the viewer is involved in the narrative and meaning of the work through illusionary techniques that negotiate space, focalisation, and movement. Greene, like the artists of the Baroque, negotiates these devices in order to point to a deeper dimension beyond the narrative, that spiritual underlying plot. The aim is to show that moment where the absent becomes present, where his characters touch the God. The moment when the readers with a Catholic imagination feel that the space turns eternal.

The Heart of the Matter

In his novels before the Second World War, Greene engages with space and light by means of dangerous places in dark industrial settings, with war looming over the characters, who seem to move in and out of the diegetic levels. Catholic elements populate the narrative and begin to be infused with sacramental meanings giving the novels a deeper dimension reflected on the drama of salvation. Sacred places and liturgy create an aesthetic pattern that is staged in churches, inns, pubs, or other regions both physical and mental, which serve Greene to build his settings in which the drama of salvation or damnation gives his works that transcendental dimension. Another Catholicised form of transcendence is the allegiance to, and ritual-like invocation of the past, as a means of stabilising or ordering the present.

Catholic sensibility and imagination functions in Greene's fictions as a ritualistic force that puts the aesthetic into action. Greene's "pattern in the carpet", therefore, seems to work as a kind of ritual. Catherine Bell offers a notable definition of ritual:

Theoretical descriptions of ritual generally regard it as action and thus automatically distinguish it from the conceptual aspects of religion, such as beliefs, symbols, and myths. In some cases, added qualifications may soften the distinction, but rarely do such descriptions question this immediate differentiation or the usefulness of distinguishing what is

thought from what is done. Likewise, beliefs, creeds, symbols, and myths emerge as forms of mental content or conceptual blueprints: they direct, inspire, or promote activity, but they themselves are not activities. Ritual, like action, will act out, express, or perform these conceptual orientations. (1992, 19)

In 1948 Greene writes *The Heart of the Matter*, the first novel where he includes all the elements that he had been using in his previous novels both at the level of content and of form. This idea can be clearly seen in the aesthetics of the novel. Evelyn Waugh's review on the novel highlighted the cinematic qualities of the novel:

The writer has become director and producer. Indeed the affinity to the film is everywhere apparent. It is the camera's eye which moves from the hotel balcony to the street below, picks out the policeman, follows him to his office, moves about the room from the handcuffs on the wall to the broken rosary in the drawer, recording significant detail. (Gallagher 1983, 362)

Villar Flor explains that, "Waugh elsewhere identified this peculiar narratorial objectivity drawn from film as the distinguishing feature of his own literary generation (...), but in doing so Waugh was perhaps oversimplifying" (2005, 378-79). As Villar Flor goes on to say, "Greene felt an early attraction for German expressionism, a kind of cinema that frequently employed the so-called 'subjective camera'" (Villar Flor, 379). Indeed, expressionism was a movement that developed in the early twentieth-century in Germany mainly in reaction to the

dehumanising effect of industrialisation and the growth of cities. Richard Murphy explains that, “one of the central means by which expressionism identifies itself as an avant-garde movement, and by which it marks its distance to traditions and the cultural institution as a whole is through its relationship to realism and the dominant conventions of representation” (Murphy, 1999, 43). In this regard, Murphy argues that the expressionists rejected the ideology of realism.¹⁰¹

Villar Flor rightly argues that in light of such approaches, “it is little wonder that even in the initial passage of *The Heart of the Matter*, quoted by Waugh as an example of filmic objectivity, the ‘objective’ perceptions of the various focalisers (first Wilson and then Scobie) become tainted with unequivocal subjectivism. Nevertheless, several critics such as art historian Michel Ragon and German philosopher Walter Benjamin have linked expressionism to Baroque.”¹⁰² Italian writer and essayist Alberto Arbasino, however, sees some differences when he states that, “L’espressionismo non rifugge dall’effetto violentemente sgradevole, mentre invece il barocco lo fa. L’espressionismo tira dei tremendi ‘vaffanculo’, il barocco no. Il barocco è beneducato” (Arbasino, 2003, 157).

Expressionism, especially the German cinema of the twenties, made a more dramatic use of light and, influenced by Romanticism, those films were not so much concerned about realistically motivated source of light, than they were about revealing the shadows in human nature through the use of light. In German expressionist films, therefore, light and shadow are a projection of good and evil forces and, consequently, reveal moral and psychological depth and turmoil. For

¹⁰¹ See Murphy 1999, 43-48.

¹⁰² See Ragon’s *Expressionism* (1968) and Benjamin’s *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1998).

Angela Ndalianis, “the Baroque spectacle is not concerned with similitude and the reproduction of a parallel reality: a window that looks onto another world that is like our own” (2004, 159). Following Rosemond Tuve, for the seventeenth century artist, ‘imitation’ was not about the relationship between art and reality; the issue of representation was not significant in the sense of art’s capacity to reproduce material reality (Tuve, 1947, 13).

Consequently, Ndalianis concludes, the Baroque did not seek similitude: “[r]ather, imitation and representation evoked alternate ‘realities’ that reflected the ability of the image to capture a ‘sense impression’ or to ‘reproduce emotions’” (Ndalianis, 2004, 159). The Baroque displaces narrative and “instead invokes the experience of transcendence or heightened emotions” (Ndalianis, 159).

In the light of these reflections, in the novels written after the Second World War, Greene’s aesthetics uses more a Baroque mode of representation than expressionist cinematic techniques. Even those devices consciously taken from film by Greene become part of a Baroque aesthetics. The cause for this might be the move from subjective modes of representation characterised by heightened emotions towards a reorientation from emotion to perception itself, which Ndalianis describes as “an open rapport that exists between spectator and spectacle” (160).

In Greene’s *The Heart of the Matter*, the third-person narrator leaves apparently no space for that ‘rapport’ between reader and narrative. However, Greene solves that problem from the very first lines depicting a kind of living Hell, a wasteland, which seems to affect the senses with its emphasis on physical

descriptions that foreshadow the moral dilemmas to come. Greene's Hell is damp and subtropical. Ugliness and evil are the very first things that the reader confronts with in the novel. Realistic and dramatic details in the opening pages of *The Heart of the Matter* immediately set the depressing mood that foreshadows the coming tragic events: "the corrugated iron (...) clanged and clattered, a vulture flapped and shifted on the iron roof" (*HM*, 13).

The West Coast of Africa becomes the landscape of loneliness, hopelessness, despair, and lies. Graham Greene's Freetown is filled with human debris: the afflicted, the pettily pretentious, and the failed, with schemers, thieves, liars and murderers, and with those whose daily task is to convince themselves they matter for anything. Greene surrounds them with the stifling air, torturous heat, endless rains and all kinds of symbolic death – fevers, diseases, suicides, vultures, cockroaches, lizards, ants, and mongrels. Even the streets of the town are "stretched out on either side like the arms of a skeleton" (*HM*, 94).

It might seem that even God has forgotten about the place and its inhabitants: "Nobody here could ever talk about a heaven on earth. Heaven remained rigidly in its proper place on the other side of death, on this side flourished the injustices, the cruelties, the meanness that elsewhere people so cleverly hushed up" (*HM*, 36). Into this oppressive climate of humidity and decay, he locates his protagonist. The hell-like description of Africa heightens Scobie's moral conflict and the physical danger characteristic of such a place provides a convincing setting for the spiritual dangers. However, the oppressive setting and the protagonist's moral dilemmas are gradually acquiring a Catholic background

that gives the narrative a deeper dimension; a truth that the readers must look for through the brush and feverish heat that mirror a kind of distrust in human nature. The space between reader and narrative is thus neutralised and the image of Hell-on-Earth draws the readers' attention to the real heart of the matter: the importance of human actions in the light of the drama of salvation or damnation.

Two years before Greene wrote *The Heart of the Matter*, his adulterous relationship with Catherine Walston exercised an incredibly potent effect over his interests in religious belief. She first contacted him as an admiring reader, explaining that his novels had played a major role in her decision to convert to Catholicism. The irony of the story is that Catherine telephoned Vivien to ask if her husband would agree to stand as her godfather. As Brennan explains, "Greene could not attend the ceremony himself and, instead, Vivien acted as a godparent when in September 1946 Catherine was received into the Catholic Church" (2010, 82). Norman Sherry comments: "No one touched Greene as deeply as Catherine Walston, even at a religious level. Although Greene had become a convert to win Vivien, he felt a truer Catholic with Catherine" (Sherry, II.257).

Like his characters, Greene feels that effect of faith when he becomes a sinner in the literal sense of the word. The self-reflexive nature of the relationship between his own life and his narrative produces a kind of new sentiment in his fiction: pity. The problematic nature of pity had already formed a major element dilemma of Arthur Rowe in his previous novel *The Ministry of Fear* (1943). In *The Heart of the Matter*, Greene's treatment of Scobie's marital dilemma focuses

on the “sin” of pity and its inversion in the Catholic sin of suicide. The sense of an unfinished conversion begins to exhaust the real Greene. The war has passed and the horrors of the human soul have been exposed. In the light of that horrible event, Greene cannot conceive his adulterous affair a mortal sin since it has to be “committed in defiance of God. I doubt whether a man making love to a woman ever does so with the intention of defying God” (Allain 1983, 158). Adultery, therefore, is endowed with a kind of spiritual significance.

During World War II, the book details a life-changing moral crisis for major Scobie, responsible for local security in a colony in West Coast of Africa. His wife Louise, an unhappy, solitary woman who loves literature and poetry, cannot make friends. Scobie feels responsible for her misery, but does not love her. Louise is a devout Catholic. Scobie, a convert, is has also become a devout Catholic, although he has serious problems to interiorise his faith properly. When Louise accuses him of lacking faith, Scobie unconvincingly replies that she has “enough for both of us, dear” (*HM*, 25). Their marriage have also been strained by the death of their nine-year-old daughter back in England and Scobie’s memory is haunted by a photograph kept on Louise’s bedside cabinet of a “little pious nine-year-old girl’s face in the white muslin of first communion (*HM*, 22).

Scobie is passed over for promotion to Commissioner, which upsets Louise both for her personal ambition and hope that the local British community will begin to accept her. Louise is miserable with colony life and begs Scobie to send her to South Africa. Scobie promises to find a way to get the money to secure her passage. Scobie tries to borrow money from the bank but his loan

application is rejected. Finally, Scobie turns to a disreputable Syrian trader called Yusef.

During Louise's absence, Scobie meets and commits adultery with a young widow, Helen, whose husband has just died in a shipwreck. A love-letter from the two lovers falls in Yusef's hands and the trader blackmails Scobie. Louise hears rumours and returns unexpectedly. To confirm or dispel the rumours, she asks her husband to accompany her to Mass and receive Communion. Scobie is caught between his passionate attachment to Helen and his fear of receiving Holy Communion in a state of mortal sin. Out of pity for both women, Scobie repeatedly sins sinking gradually into a condition of despair. He finally commits suicide. He confuses Louise with Helen and Helen with Louise to the point that he feels equally responsible for both. Scobie's downfall is caused by his inability to distinguish love from pity.

Since *The Heart of the Matter* was published, the nature of Scobie's pity has been an issue of controversy among Greene critics and scholars. Greene himself shed some light on the argument in the introduction of the 1971 Heinemann edition: "The character of Scobie was intended to show that pity can be the expression of an almost monstrous pride. But I found the effect on the reader was quite different. To them Scobie was exonerated. Scobie was a good man" (*HM*, xiv).

The novel may evoke the image of Christ who sacrificed Himself for the wretched and reprehend the Pharisees for their hypocritical attitude towards the law. In an interview, Greene told Kermode that his wish was to create a mythical

figure and added that in *The Power and the Glory* he was closer than ever. However, Scobie is far from imitating the sacrificial love of Christ. His great failure is to separate pity from Divine Love.¹⁰³ It has been said that pity is the ethic of those who want to substitute themselves for God, and this seems to be Scobie's plight. He calls into question the Fatherhood of God when he dismisses almost with contempt the Church's grave warning about the existence of Hell. Pity stems from pride instead of love.

The whole novel can be considered as a confession, or rather, a failed confession. The tropical humid setting of the West Coast of Africa causes the irritating sweat that accompanies both Scobie and the reader throughout the novel in what seems the author's attempt to make us feel the same uneasiness. Greene's unfinished conversion reaches here extreme consequences. Scobie's sacrilegious communion – he leaves the confessional without absolution – is compared to a “Black Mass, the man who steals the sacrament to desecrate it. It's striking God when he's down – in my power” (*HM*, 253).

At the beginning of the novel his Catholic faith, to which he had converted to please his wife, foreshadows his inability to complete that conversion, as symbolised by the “broken rosary” (*HM*, 16), a motive that is repeated throughout the novel reminding us of Scobie's inability to fix it: “Only the broken rosary caught his eye – something which should have been mended a long while ago. He took it out and put it in his pocket” (*HM*, 184). In another scene, when Scobie and Louise go to a séance session, Scobie recalls Louise's rosary: “Her rosary lay on

¹⁰³ See Frank Kermode, “The House of Fiction”, *Partisan Review*, 30. 1963, 66.

the dressing-table, and he thought of the broken one in his pocket. He had always meant to get it mended: now it hardly seemed worth the trouble” (*HM*, 206).

Later, Scobie enters Yusef’s home and awakens him in the ugly room where they consummate their loan. Yusef spreads out his palm to receive the ring and their hands touch. The touch of their hands recalls the image of creation. Here it may represent the destruction of their souls. The scene continues, “it was like a pledge between conspirators” (*HM*, 243). Immediately, the broken rosary appears as it does every time Scobie feels that he is damned: “Scobie felt in his pockets: the broken rosary grated on his nails. He said, ‘Let him take this, but it’s not necessary...’ and felt silent, staring back at those blank eyes” (*HM*, 243). His pact with Yussef turns out to be a deal with the devil. Scobie, therefore, becomes a Faust-like character. When he finds Ali’s corpse, Scobie realises that he is in Hell, he is damned. Staring at the corpse, he sees the devil’s face. For an instant, he looks for the responsible, for the man guilty of Ali’s murder. At first, he thinks of Yusef.

The body lay coiled and unimportant like a broken watch-spring under a pile of empty petrol drums: it looked as though it had been shovelled there to wait for morning and the scavenger birds. Scobie had a moment of hope before he turned the shoulder over, for after all two boys had been together on the road. The seal grey neck had been slashed and slashed again. Yes, he thought, I can trust him now. The yellow eyeballs stared up at him like a stranger’s, flecked with red. It was as if this body had cast him off, disowned him – ‘I know you not’. He swore aloud, hysterically. ‘By God,

I'll get the man who did this,' but under that anonymous stare insincerity withered. He thought: I am the man. Didn't I know all the time in Yusef's room that something was planned? Couldn't I have pressed for an answer? A voice said, 'Sah?'

'Who's that?'

'Corporal Laminah, sah.'

'Can you see a broken rosary anywhere around? Look carefully.'

'I can see nothing, sah.'

Scobie thought: if only I could weep, if only I could feel pain; have I really become so evil? Unwillingly he looked down at the body. The fumes of petrol lay all around in the heavy night and for a moment he saw the body as something very small and dark and a long way away – like a broken piece of the rosary he looked for: a couple of black beads and the image of God coiled at the end of it Oh God, he thought, I've killed you: you've served me all these years and I've killed you at the end of them. God lay there under the petrol drums and Scobie felt the tears in his mouth, salt in the cracks of his lips. You served me and I did this to you. You were faithful to me, and I wouldn't trust you.

'What is it, sah?' the corporal whispered, kneeling by the body.

'I loved him,' Scobie said. (*HM*, 247-8)

In his attempt to pity Louise and Helen, Scobie ends up feeling compassion for himself. That self-pity is a kind of sin in the novel, a sin whose

origin, as usual, is pride. Most critics see Scobie's attitude as an act of "substituting oneself for the sake of the other, a participation in Christ's mystical substitution on the cross, whereby Christ willingly takes the place of sinful humanity" (Bosco 2005, 42). At the time of receiving communion he mutters: "O God, I offer up my damnation to you. Take it. Use it for them" (*HM*, 272). The inversion of the Sacrament is evident and disables Scobie as a "valid image of Christ". In fact, he seems to be the only character in the novel who lacks self-awareness. Louise knows Scobie's feelings and understands how alleviate her suffering. Helen understands the truth about her relationship with Scobie, but she endures it.

Greene, however, takes the trouble of explaining in detail Scobie's ineffectiveness in his duties as a police officer. His limited perspective causes him to miss the whole picture. Nevertheless, he gets closer to it in the only moment he seems completely content. At the beginning of part two, the sirens wail for a total black-out. In the dark, Scobie walks in the pouring rain through the Nissen huts:

Except for the sound of the rain, on the road, on the roofs, on the umbrella, there was absolute silence: only the dying moan of sirens continued for a moment or two to vibrate within the ear. It seemed to Scobie later that this was the ultimate border he had reached in happiness: being in darkness, alone, with the rain falling, without love or pity. (*HM*, 135).

The darkness and the rain engulf his surroundings and mute the thoughts in his head. In a kind of mystic consciousness, the total black-out and the heavy rain "cleans" the background from its oppressive and threatening features – the brush,

insects, heat – and turns darkness into the brightest and revelatory image. In perfect Baroque style, the darkness represents God, his absent presence, which Scobie will fail to grasp. This moment represents a turning point for Scobie because he will never feel this inner peace again over the course of the novel.

The novel abounds on physical relationships, but all of them fail on an emotional level. There is a total communication breakdown. Isolation proves to be a better way for all the characters in which appears to be a metaphor for their isolation from God, especially in Scobie's case. Scobie fails at everything he attempts to do, husband, employee, lover, Catholic, and even sinner. As Father Rank suggests, Scobie may even fail at being damned for all his sins.

In the novel, Greene divides his exploration of religion into two separate planes. There are the rituals and teachings of the Catholic Church and then, there is the private relationship that exists between God and man. The Church provides rules, structure, and order, but Greene suggests that organised religion cannot account for all the complexities of the human condition. Scobie's relationship with God defines him and leads him to choose suicide in order to avoid a life in which he flouts the principles of the Church.

Scobie never succeeds in accepting the sacraments as the best way to achieve atonement. Father Rank makes his best to help Scobie in the confessional, but the Major feels pride and self-pity at the same time:

‘Is that everything?’

‘I don’t know how to put it, Father, but I feel – tired of my religion. It seems to mean nothing to me. I’ve tried to love God, but – ’ (...)

The climate gets you down. It’s easy to mistake tiredness for – well, disbelief’.

‘I don’t want to keep you, Father. There are other people waiting. I know these are just fancies. But I feel – empty. Empty’.

‘That’s sometimes the moment God chooses’, the priest said. ‘Now go along with you and say a decade of your rosary’.

‘I haven’t a rosary. At least...’. (*HM*, 153)

Father Rank lets Scobie out with an insignificant penance of five Our Father’s and five Hail Marys. When the priest begins to speak the words of absolution, Scobie considers that there is nothing to absolve:

They were a formula: the Latin words hustled together - hocus pocus. He went out of the box and knelt down again, and this too was part of a routine. It seemed to him for a moment that God was too accessible. There was no difficulty in approaching Him. Like a popular demagogue He was open to the least of His followers at any hour. Looking up at the cross he thought. He even suffers in public. (*HM*, 154)

Scobie’s failed confession points to an inversion of the sacraments that his imagination is carrying out. The rosary is the element that unifies the Catholic imagination of the novel and Scobie touches or thinks of his broken rosary. Legend has it that, during a vision, the beads were given to Saint Dominic (d.

1221), founder of the Dominican Order, by the Virgin Mary.¹⁰⁴ The rosary began to gain popularity in Italy and Spain in the sixteenth century and, for Church reformers, the rosary was seen as a way to homogenise religious doctrine within the masses.¹⁰⁵ Father Rank does not want to refuse Scobie absolution after another failed confession. The priest tells Scobie that he will pray for him:

When he came out of the box it seemed to Scobie that for the first time his footsteps had taken him out of sight of hope. There was no hope anywhere he turned his eyes: the dead figure of God upon the cross, the plaster Virgin, the hideous stations representing a series of events that had happened a long time ago. It seemed to him that he had only left for his exploration the territory of despair. (*HM*, 222)

The rosary is the sign of unity in the Catholic Church. As Caravaggio's painting *Madonna of the Rosary* depicts, praying the rosary brings together the rich and the poor and establishes a gateway to the divine. The first thing the viewers notice whenever they look at this painting is the central placement of poor men's dirty feet. Equally striking are the sheer number of hands that reach up, almost desperately, for one of the rosaries Saint Dominic holds. Framed by a red curtain, the Madonna and Child sit enthroned above the crowd. Mary gestures to Saint Dominic and the adorable, chubby Christ Child looks toward Dominican

¹⁰⁴ A genre of paintings called the *rosenkranzbilder* show this legend, with the Madonna and Child in glory presenting Dominic with a wreath of roses (and, later in time, with the rosary). See Mitchell 2008, 23-26.

¹⁰⁵ During the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, the Church was fighting the Ottoman navy. Back in Rome, the local rosary confraternity had gathered in Santa Maria sopra Minerva to pray for victory. The Church was victorious, and Pope Pius V attributed the victory to the Virgin, who, not only the gentle Mother of Christ, but now also as the militant protector of the Church. In 1573, to commemorate the Lepanto victory, Pope Gregory VIII instituted the Feast of the Rosary and entrusted its observance to the Dominicans.

friar Saint Peter Martyr, whose bleeding head recalls his violent death (he was hit in the head with an axe by assassins). A hooded Dominican friar stands next to him. Below the Madonna and Child are several of the faithful poor, who, with dirty feet and desperate gestures, reach up for the rosaries. To their left, a wealthy, kneeling man (possibly a member of the powerful Colonna family, Caravaggio's protectors) looks out to the viewer while his hands lift up Dominic's outer robe, invoking Dominic's protection.

Caravaggio's painting highlights, not the celebratory victorious quality of the rosary motifs after Lepanto, but a humble scene where love and fraternity are linked by the rosary. Scobie's attitude when he gets out of the confessional is completely the opposite. The human and humble image of Christ on the cross, the plaster Virgin, and the 'hideous' stations Christ's passion, are seen by Scobie with pride and contempt. Scobie cannot link the historical event of Christ Passion, God in human form, with the present, with a sacramental sensibility. His rosary is broken. He pretends to substitute Christ, not to 'imitate' Him. The great sin of his despair is materialised in his suicide. Greene depicts a complete inversion and perversion of the sacramental imitation of Christ.

He offers his "sacrifice" to God and commits suicide. After Scobie's death, his widow, Wilson and Father Rank discuss about the reasons and the ways they could have known the major's intentions. Father Rank, a main "suspect" responds:

'Of course I don't, Mrs Scobie. You've been his wife, haven't you, for fifteen years. A priest only knows the unimportant things.'

‘Unimportant?’

‘Oh, I mean the sins,’ he said impatiently. ‘A man doesn’t come to us and confess his virtues’. (*HM*, 271)

Louise reproaches the inability of Father Rank and the Church to offer some responses to Scobie. Father Rank tries to console her: “The Church knows all the rules. But it doesn’t know what goes on in a single human heart” (*HM*, 272). God does, indeed, but the controversial issue of God’s infinite mercy and the existence of Hell was served. Louise says that his husband was “a bad Catholic”. Father Rank answers that that is “the silliest phrase in common use” (*HM*, 271). The answer might be that Scobie fails as a Catholic as much as a sinner.

Once again, Greene leaves his readers on the edge of the cliff – where Pinky fell... or jumped. Beyond the aesthetics of the paradoxical novel, we are invited to see and touch that presence we call God, the eternal hope of salvation in the drama of life. The denouement of the novel ironically anticipates Greene’s exasperation with the reputation of “Catholic writer”. He admits that in the years between *The Heart of the Matter* and *The End of the Affair* he felt used and overwhelmed by people who looked in him some kind of religious comfort he obviously was not able to offer (*WE*, 253).

A Burnt-Out Case

In *The Lawless Roads*, Greene recalls the words that Mexican President Cárdenas pronounced in a public speech: “I am tired of closing churches and finding them full. Now I am going to open the churches and educate the people and in ten years I shall find them empty” (*LR*, 39). Twenty years after Cárdenas’s words, Greene wrote *A Burnt-Out Case* (1960), a novel about a man who seems to have fallen into the anti-Catholic president’s prophecy. Frank Kermode, commenting on the novel, analyses a revelatory conversation between atheist Doctor Collin and the protagonist Querry, an architect famous for his Catholic cathedrals, which he himself believes have been defiled by the religious occupants.

When asked by the doctor about two of his churches, Querry complains that people hated them since they considered the churches were not designed for prayer and “in a year they had cluttered them up with their cheap plaster saints; they took out my plain windows and put in stained glass dedicated to dead pork-packers (...), and when they had destroyed my space and my light, they were able to pray again.” (*BC*, 45). Fed up with his celebrity and having lost meaning in art or pleasure in life, Querry had left everything behind and had gone to a Congo leper colony:

Your vocation is quite a different one, doctor. You are concerned with people. I wasn’t concerned with the people who occupied my space – only

with the space. (...) A writer doesn't write for his readers, does he? Yet he has to take elementary precautions all the same to make them comfortable. My interest was in space, light, proportion. New materials interested me only in the effect they might have on those three. Wood, brick, steel, concrete, glass – space seems to alter what you use to enclose it. Materials are the architect's plot. They are not his motive for work. Only the space and the light and the proportion. The subject of a novel is not the plot. Who remembers what happened to Lucien de Rubempré in the end? (*BC*, 44-5).

Kermode deciphers the meaning for the average reader and critic, we might suppose, and explains that Querry “makes buildings (books) in which people can be comfortable, but he is not interested in their use, and hardly minds when they are clogged with cheap ornaments (the irrelevant personal rubbish a reader might bring to a book to make it seem lived-in). The real object of writing (building) is selfish” (1973, 130).

Apart from shedding some light for us on the obvious parallelism, Kermode, like other critics both before and after him, fails to see the whole picture of the scene and ends up focusing exclusively on the content thus giving a plain and obvious interpretation. He goes on to say that Greene “is a novelist of the Decadence, writing not as a Catholic but as a neo-Romantic” (131). The more Kermode laments Greene's neo-Romantic emphasis on Catholicism, the less he seems to comprehend the dimension of the scene.

Content and form are not only necessary in this fragment, but also they are part of Querry's speech. In a metafictional turn on the part of the author, we are

revealed the scaffolding of the picture. Greene is inviting the readers to become observers of the aesthetics of his work. Writing is an art and, as such, it shares many characteristics with the visual arts. Kermode misinterprets the way Greene uses what the critic labels as “the irrelevant personal rubbish”. The popular religious details that people add to the impeccably crafted church, but too empty and aseptic for the cult of the people, are precisely those Catholic elements that the author considers of paramount importance in order to heighten the human acts thus making them participants of another dimension, a religious dimension where those acts have a greater part to play than the mere earthly subjective role. Query utters the right reasons, but he is not able to understand his own words: Materials are the architect’s plot, but they are not his motive for work. Only the light, space, and proportion. Indeed, the work of art, either literary works or plastic and visual ones, are designed to create meanings, to establish a narrative, a dialogue with the observer.

In Greene’s case, he is interested in the religious sense of that narrative. However, that sense which is not palpable physically on the work of art can only be conveyed through a complete communion between the work and the observer. At this point, the author who created the “light, the space, and the proportion” has finished his task. From then on, the observer, helped by the recognisable elements in the work and the tradition behind, completes the meaning and, in the best-case scenario, experiments the sublime instant in perfect communion with the author.

Greene’s idea in Query’s words when he says that, “the subject of the novel is not the plot” are in relation with his critique on some modernist writers

whose characters and their actions had lost the religious sense and, therefore, the importance of human action. He mentions Lucien de Rubempré, the protagonist of Honoré de Balzac's *Lost Illusions* (1837-43), who might serve to remind us that the goal of the quest may or may not be achieved, but the protagonist of the novel, like ourselves, is likely to discover that he himself is born Lucien Chardon, a perfectly ordinary man. It does not matter whether he dies in bed like Don Quixote, shot like Querry, or hanged in prison like Lucien.

The important part for Greene is the human act which, in turn, is only important if it is confronted with that religious imagination. In the epigraph to his travel book on Mexico, *The Lawless Roads* (1939), Greene quotes from Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, where the Cardinal and theologian reflects on his gradual process of conversion to Catholicism:

The defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions, the dreary hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race, so fearfully yet exactly described in the Apostle's words, "having no hope and without God in the world," – all this is a vision to dizzy and appal; inflicts upon the mind the sense of the profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond the human situation, (...) *if there be a God, since there is a God*, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity. (*LR*, 7)

In *Ways of Escape*, Greene thinks of his character Querry as one of those in whom reason is stronger than will (...) and [they] fall into despair, and because

of their despair they deny, and God reveals Himself in them, affirming Himself by their very denial of Him” (*WE*, 257). David Lodge commented on the quote above saying that Joyce thought that, “the writer’s vocation was a kind of profane priesthood”. However, in Greene’s case, these epiphanies of formal perfection have been constantly confused with theological tensions.

Greene complained about the fact that he felt himself “used and exhausted by the victims of religion” and considering faith a troubled sea, a tempest, he added that he “had no apostolic mission” and no spiritual assistance for those in need. He wonders, “What was the Church for but to aid these sufferers? What was the priesthood for? I was like a man without medical knowledge in a village struck with plague. It was in those years, I think, that Querry was born, and Father Thomas too (*WE*, 253-254). Although Greene tried to detach himself from his character Querry, the novel might be seen as a stop on Greene’s part as though he needed to take a rest in order to reflect on his own career. Thus, the novel deals with issues of writing, the artist’s craft, ironically related to vocation.

However, the critic and, by extension, the reader, should not focus too seriously on the content, but on the form. The novel received multiple critical mixed responses, which Greene himself dedicated several pages of his second autobiography *Ways of Escape*. The author writes that “the critic who saw in it nothing but the old crosses on the Easter eggs (he was referring to Querry’s fable) was more at sea than the Marxist critic in Poland who welcomed the novel as a renunciation of the Catholic Church” (*WE*, 254). Indeed, Frank Kermode in his critical essay “Mr. Greene’s Eggs and Crosses” points out that Querry’s fable of

the misunderstood jeweller not only fits Querry, the architect and character, but also Greene, the writer and author. Kermode, therefore, claims that much of Greene's work has been criticised precisely for being "sometimes flawed by the author's inability to stand clear of his hero or victim" (Kermode, 1973, 180).

The critic's essay may be seen as a good example of the risk of focusing excessively on the content thus falling into the trap of deep theological debates. Consequently, Kermode is able to write this reflection on "Querry's fight with God" and all that seems to represent Him by claiming that the pain of accepting God is a "dominant, but not fully embodied theme; and behind it is something less easy to extract, the persistent notion of God as the enemy, whose disastrous invasion of human life is called by theologians, love" (Kermode, 1973, 132).

Indeed, labelling the Catholic sacramental presence and action of God in our world as "disastrous invasion of human life" not only could have offended Greene as a Catholic, but also as a writer who tried so hard to depict God's presence, his Grace, in our daily lives. Moreover, Greene aimed to offer the aesthetics of God's action precisely in territories where theology dares not to enter or is simply not interested in. Additionally, Greene was careful enough to prevent dogma and orthodoxy from interfering with his writing.

Robert Hoskins also observes a parallelism between Querry's fable to entertain Marie Rycker and the reader's awareness of its resemblance to the author's life. He supports his idea on these lines: "were you the boy?" Marie asks as Querry begins the tale. "No", he replies, "you mustn't draw close parallels. They always say a novelist chooses from his general experience of life, not from

special facts” (*BC*, 152). Although Hoskins concludes that the plausible argument does not convince, mainly because of Querry’s identification with a novelist, Greene is not identifying Querry with him. The author is dealing with the craft of an artist. Greene is trying to show how the act of narrating works, not only at the level of content, but also at the level of form.

By establishing a parallelism between the way Querry conceives his art of building Catholic cathedrals and the fable of the boy who believes himself an artist, but lack of success shrinks his ambition and becomes a jeweller instead (whose merit and fame rest upon gold and enamel eggs with crosses on top), Greene seems to be really interested in the form of narrative, the aesthetics of his art. Evelyn Waugh also identified character with author when he admitted, “how mischievous it is to identify fictional characters with their authors, but ... this novel makes it plain that you are exasperated by the reputation which has come to you unsought of a “Catholic” writer” (*WE*, 254).

Greene responded that it was inevitable to show some reactions of the author in his characters, but the point is that these reactions are mere “materials” in the architect’s plot. Consequently, according to Querry’s words, “they are not his motive for work. Only the space and the light and the proportion. The subject of a novel is not the plot” (*BC*, 45). Greene is turning our attention to the form of the novel, not because this form is really the subject, but because without it readers cannot understand what the author attempts to tell, rather, because observers cannot discern what the artist wants to disclose. “Self-expression is a hard and selfish thing”, Querry remarks. “It eats everything, even the self. At the

end you find you haven't even got a self to express" (*BC*, 46). Mere self-expression, therefore, eventually turns out to be self-destructive.

Tired of his reputation as a Catholic author with some kind of theological truths to tell, Greene parallels this ennui to Querry's. However, this failure seems caused by the insistent focus on the content, with all its ambiguities about belief, disbelief, faith and lack thereof, and ignoring the form, the way Catholic imagination and aesthetic work within Greene's novels. In short, as Greene constantly implies, the point is to show the effects of faith on action, so action in art can only be expressed by the complementary and synchronic effect of content fused with form.

Thus, Querry's churches were perfect buildings with every technical, material and spatial detail available. However, people add their Catholic elements: their narrative and liturgy in the form of plaster statues, stained glass windows, and other elements that Querry thinks that have ruined his artwork. Those popular elements complete the church because they signify the human factor, the effect of faith in action. Those apparently worthless materials possess a sacramental meaning and harmonise content and form, the telling with the showing. The plot is not the goal. It does not matter what happens with Querry at the end, Greene is trying to tell us, but his process of becoming, those epiphanic moments that cannot be written nor read. They can only be hinted and experienced.

In order to be able to achieve a consistent aesthetic development while presenting a constant introduction to Catholic ethics, Greene's authorship depends on the cumulative, evolving developments of his body of work. Such

developments make Greene's oeuvre fluid, borrowing aesthetically from different genres and arts. Consistently manifesting a Catholic worldview – probably forced by the confusion between his traumatic childhood experiences and ambiguous conversion to Catholicism – the writer unconsciously manifests himself as a kind of priest, two visions that might form the “perfect creator”, artistically speaking.

For Greene the religious sense heightened the human actions in fiction. It was a sort of vocation that an artist should maintain to keep desire alive and to continue writing. In *A Burnt-Out Case*, the word vocation appears more than thirty times. Querry thinks he has “come to an end, [since] neither the road nor the river go any further” (BC, 110). However, in clear parallel to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the more he distances himself from belief, the nearer he gets to it.

This paradox summarises the novel. Indeed, he supposes that, “belief is a kind of vocation and most men haven't room in their brains or hearts for two vocations”. Therefore, his running away from his job, fame, and all the mundane values, only brings him closer to belief: “If we really believe in something we have no choice, have we, but to go further. Otherwise life slowly whittles the belief away. My architecture stood still. One can't be a half-believer or a half-architect” (193). The sight of commitment and dedication shown in characters like the Superior, Doctor Colin, and the priests and nuns at the colony – in contrast with Father Thomas's and Ricker's pharisaic attitudes – adds a dimension that Querry separates from a common job: “Men with vocations are different from the others. They have more to lose. Behind all of us in various ways lies a spoilt priest” (110).

Ironically enough, Father Thomas serves as an inversion of Doubting Thomas. He confesses to Query that if he remains at the leproserie much longer, he may lose his faith. He is the real spoilt priest who has the suffering Christ in front of his eyes, but he is not able to see anything. The image of Father Thomas's fear of the darkness evokes the tenebrism of baroque paintings and helps complete the narrative. In this sense, darkness, which envelopes everything except the actions we read/see, is really the place where God's Grace dwells. Unlike Father Thomas, Query looks at darkness face to face from his distorted viewpoint and his contorted position.

Greene's novel uses the baroque resources of visual arts thus causing the same effect on the observer. Francisco Ribalta's *Christ Embracing St. Bernard*,¹⁰⁶ for instance, may serve as an example of my argument. In this masterpiece painted in the mid-1620s, Ribalta achieves, perhaps for the first time in Spain, a synthesis of naturalism and religiosity that defined the art of the Catholic Reformation. Setting rapturous limpness against divine strength, and the human against the transcendent, the painting shows both a scene of devout piety and of distinctly human interaction. The corporality of Christ's body – who has just descended from the Cross – as well as the contrast between the draping of St. Bernard's habit and the almost nude and suspended body of Christ, give a sense of intimacy and weighty presence to a mystical vision.

Through this introspective depiction of deep human and religious experience, the work proposes a redemptive vision of humankind. The dramatic

¹⁰⁶ See appendix 14.

chiaroscuro that defines the two figures against a stark background in which two others are barely visible, heightens the moment of St. Bernard's rapturous vision. The saint is represented as an emaciated, almost skeletal figure, with prominent cheekbones and deep-set eyes who, while embracing Christ, his mouth forms a half smile thus reminding us of Querry's last moment: "There was a laugh that resembled a distorted laugh. "Absurd", Querry said, "this is absurd or else but what..." (196). Querry's distorted laugh, as if communicating St. Bernard's holy rapture, suffuses body and soul. Thus, Greene, like Ribalta, succeeds in externalising this powerful religious experience, making it seem real, but not commonplace.

A Burnt-Out Case serves as a pivotal work in Greene's career for two reasons mainly, which will be analysed below in this dissertation. Firstly, this work seems to close, according to most critics a long period of novels that treated Catholic issues exhaustively and, as the author himself confessed, it had been "the blackest book I have written". However, as Greene goes on to say, echoing that distorted laugh of a dying Querry, "I had discovered comedy" (*WE*, 259). Indeed, Greene had pushed his narrative to the limit, showing an extreme aesthetics based on a proliferation of dark and ugly images, infusing the spectator with a style that could be regarded as pathological, the result of an obsessive attraction to forms of monstrosity and desperation. These traits, paradoxically, offer an attraction to movement through the aesthetically rich ornamentation – the liminal setting, the parodic use of Conrad's novel, the inversion of values and roles – thus producing

dizziness in the spectator, as well as a sense of unity, through the cumulative unfolding of surfaces.

This emphasis on emotions causes wonder and admiration, producing both tension and release in the reader. This novel has the ability to offer a richer and more sensual use of contrasts such as heat and cold, light and dark (*chiaroscuro*) and other dramatic oppositions that heighten a sense of emotional drama within a narrative driven by lack of feelings, emotional indifference, and both physical and moral numbness. In the face of this extreme anguish, Greene also used up all the resources of tragedy. However, even in that desolate territory, he still had hope. That thin ray of light came to him in the form of tragicomedy.

Secondly, this novel is his last work before the Second Vatican Council, an important turn in Greene's career if we take into account his interest in the proceedings and documents of the Council and his avid reading of Vatican II theology.¹⁰⁷ In *Ways of Escape* there is an episode that fuses both periods, that of tragedy with that of comedy. It is precisely when he recalls his respected friend and writer Evelyn Waugh's death in 1966:

It was a curious and in a way macabre death, which almost symbolised his work and his problems. It was Easter Sunday; he had been to Communion, he was lunching with his family, a priest was in the house – this can all represent the Catholicism to which he was so deeply attached – and he died in the lavatory: which represents his satire and the comic savagery with

¹⁰⁷ Mark Bosco's *Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination*, already cited in this work, offers an exhaustive study of Greene's novels written after Vatican II.

which he sometimes describes the deaths of his characters, and brings to mind Apthorpe's thunderbox in *Men at Arms*. (WE, 259)

As in a picture, Greene depicts the scene that most of Waugh's readers could have imagined. Having been a close friend, Greene is so bold as to point out the irony implied in Waugh's death as if this final event would have also been taken from one of his works. This passage, and his focus on the "comic savagery" with which Waugh described his characters' deaths, foreshadows Greene's subsequent novels, especially *Monsignor Quixote*, in turn parodying Cervantes's treatment of his heroes.

Greene then continues praising Waugh's novels and his conflict between the satirist and the romantic. According to Greene, Waugh had great expectations of his fellow creatures and of his Church, which ended in disillusionment with the Army and, above all, with the changes in the liturgy of the Catholic Church. In this respect, Greene agreed with Waugh since "his Catholic identity was much tested by his personal distaste for the vernacular liturgy" (Bosco, 2005, 93).

Greene was one of the intellectuals who signed the appeal in defence of the traditional form of the Mass in 1971. The letter to Rome protested that the vernacular Mass surrenders to "the materialist and technocratic civilization that is increasingly threatening the life of the mind and the spirit".¹⁰⁸ Bosco observes that these liturgical changes affected Greene as may be seen in *The Honorary Consul* (1973) and *Monsignor Quixote* (1982), and argues that when "Greene noted his

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.institute-christ-king.org/uploads/main/pdf/england-statement.pdf> (Accessed on 1st May 2015. From the 1971 Statement by Scholars, Intellectuals, and Artists living in England.

dissatisfaction with the vernacular rite, his Catholic literary imagination actually becomes more “liturgical” in these texts” (Author’s emphasis) (Bosco, 94). By focusing more on form or on his Catholic aesthetics, this liturgical narrative, I hope to show, has been present throughout his entire writing career.

I skipped from Greene’s first works to *A Burnt-Out Case* to exemplify the main lines of his aesthetic pattern because this novel represented a crisis in his career, as the author himself admits in his autobiography: “the reasons go far back to the period which followed *The Heart of the Matter*” (WE, 252). Indeed, after writing that novel, the label of Catholic author turned him into a sort of spiritual guide in the eyes of the general audience.

From *The Heart of the Matter* to *A Burnt-Out Case*, at the threshold of Vatican Council II, the aesthetics of his works seemed to change as well as the tone of his narrative. It seems as if he would be designing alternative itineraries in order to find satisfactory answers to that process began in his youth, an open or unfinished process of conversion to Catholicism. As his work progresses, nevertheless, he seems to feel more and more comfortable with the very idea of progress, as opposed to fulfilment, since this *struggle* to achieve a proper conversion, and not the achievement itself, will become precisely his idea of Faith.

II.3 SPAIN IN GREENE

In his second autobiography, Greene seems determined to counteract the effect of some Catholic criticism of his work, which has caused confusion between “the functions of a novelist and the functions of a moral teacher or theologian” (*WE*, 256). On the other side of criticism, as he wrote to an unknown Communist critic, a Catholic should be allowed to paint the portrait of a lapsed Catholic. This association of his aesthetics with painting is also evident when Greene, during an exchange of letters with Evelyn Waugh, used a quotation from a favourite Browning poem (he returned to it in several interviews), “Bishop Blougram’s Apology”:

All we have gained then by our unbelief

Is a life of doubt diversified by faith,

For one of faith diversified by doubt:

We called the chessboard white, - we call it black. (*WE*, 256)

In the same argument of Baroque aesthetics, Greene tries to show that the ambiguity of his novels should not be taken exclusively at the level of content, but also at the level of form. In a similar vein, Julio Baena and David Castillo started an important discussion on the subject of the aesthetic value of Cervantes’s *Los Trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*. The *Persiles*, Baena had argued in his *El círculo y la Flecha*, “fracasa como novela donde pretende triunfar como utopía”

(1996, 30). In his review of Baena's book, Castillo countered this claim at the level of its content with an equally agile reversal, arguing rather that it "triunfa como novela donde pretende fracasar como utopía" (1997, 146). It does not, in other words, claim or intend to be a utopia, but is rather a full-blown critique of utopia, and therein lies its literary value.

Literary value, therefore, is associated with irony, self-awareness, and distance from the model it imitates, in this case the Byzantine novel. The difference between Baena's and Castillo's positions comes down to whether that distance is there or not, the presence or absence of which they both implicitly equate with whether Cervantes intends, *pretende*, it to be there: Castillo says he does, Baena says he does not. According to this parallelism, Greene calls our attention to the difference between intention and effect. The *Persiles* subverts the genres it appears to be imitating rather than merely imitating them.

I agree with William Egginton when he asserts that, "unlike the new critical, objectivist notion of irony, (...) the objective subversion of Cervantes's text relies entirely on its immersion in historical context" (2010, 29). *Persiles* exhibits the necessary eccentricity of the desired centrality, or an anamorphic mirror that inverts or distorts the symbols of Catholic Reformation culture thus inviting the reader to reflect on the meaning of his work.

Thus, Greene's novels also rely on their historical and political context, which is negotiated through the use of Catholic elements, characters, and imagination. In other words, Greene's texts, like those of Cervantes, are

subversive in that they consistently deploy the popular and ordinary in a structural relation to the Baroque's major strategies.

Greene paints human scenes in realistic terms, but forces the reader to take part in the transformed perception of such scenes. He mirrors Baroque aesthetics because, for him, reality and the human factor have not changed; rather, our acts of indifference and lack of spirituality have changed reality through the grotesque and violent dramas that blur our perspective. Whether in the chiaroscuro paintings of Caravaggio or in Greene's dramas of salvation and damnation, Catholic Baroque modes of expression force one to recognise and respond to it.

The ideology of the Baroque is based on a process of conversion, an interior pilgrimage that is not merely a psychological act but a dramatic search for spiritual otherness, which for Caravaggio and Greene means God. Conversion is thus a reformulation of the promise of salvation that gives a deeper dimension to the tragic sense of life. Conversion, therefore, is a simulacrum of death that can only be overcome through Faith in order to reach God. This reformulation of the promise of salvation, distant or absent by our disordered sensibility and lack of faith, is made accessible to our senses by means of this Baroque aesthetics of *chiaroscuro*, where the chessboard is white into black, black into white.

Jae-Suck Choi reminds us that Unamuno, in his 1921 *El Sentido Trágico de la Vida*, quotes three lines from Browning's poem. "Doing so Greene claims an affinity with Unamuno, saying that he finds himself in the region of La Mancha which Unamuno describes in *The Life of Don Quixote and Sancho* (1927), a region of uncertainty, doubt, and the distrust of theology" (1990, 3). Greene

always kept a link with Spain and its culture mainly because Spain represented for him one of those dangerous places where he could see the “effects of Faith in action”. As he wrote in 1980:

Thirty years before I had read Unamuno’s *Life and Death of Don Quixote* with no particular interest – it left no memories. But perhaps the book which I so quickly forgot had continued to work its way through the cellars of the unconscious; (...) [A]nd at the end of a long journey, without knowing myself the course which I had been taking, I found myself, in “A Visit to Morin” and *A Burnt-Out Case*, in that tragicomic region of La Mancha where I expect to stay. (*WE*, 258-259)

In 1988, Greene wrote a letter to Father Leopoldo Durán with the purpose of encouraging his friend with a Foundation in Spain:

It is with pride & pleasure that I have received news of your Foundation. Spain was the first foreign country I set foot in at the age of 16 – at Vigo & Coruña where a very distant ancestor of mine lies in his tomb – Sir John Moore. I find quite inexplicable the important part which Spain has played in my literary career. My first (never published) novel dealt with the Spanish refugees in London during the Carlist wars. My third published novel (a very bad one) has as its scene Navarre during those wars. Since then, among my late books four are set in Spain or Spanish America.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Letter published by Leopoldo Durán in ABC Cultura 23rd July 1988, 47.

In the light of these words, Greene considered Spain a sort of ritual-like place where he could set his narratives in order to explore issues of his newly acquired faith, back in the thirties, and then, throughout his career. In an undated letter to his brother Hugh Greene, the author explained, “I’m learning Spanish, not for any “slow sweet name’s sake”, but for the third novel of mental gloom” (Sherry, I.386). In spite of the bad reviews, he pushed on with his third novel, *Rumour at Nightfall* (1931), and since its setting was Spain he felt he must take some lessons in Spanish. “The Spanish Affair”, he wrote to his mother, “is rather comic. All in class with a blackboard! I haven’t had time to do my homework and the class is tonight” (Sherry, I.386). This fact implies his growing interest in Spain, although his novel had not the expected success.

In the beginning of his writing career, Greene associated religion with themes of permanence and stability in that period – faith offered something “hard and certain” within the disorienting “flux” of life – and these characters’ frustrations and experiences of restlessness are related to their lack of faith (Sherry, I.256). Therefore, Greene’s protagonists of the thirties are involved in quests for peace and “meaning” in their lives, which is represented by their unconscious search for religious permanence. In this sense, as Sushil Sharma explains, “search for belief lies at the heart of Greene’s major preoccupations as a novelist” (1990, 25).

Along with being linked by their discontent and their secular perspectives, the protagonists of Greene’s early novels inhabit wastelands, secular landscapes,

which Peter Mumford describes as “arena[s] of human consciousness” (1996, 50), but these wastelands also symbolise images of spiritual condition, secular worlds abandoned by God. Greene tries to express the “absence of belief” in contemporary society by making a correlation between the banality and indifference of this world and the spiritual emptiness of it, which is depicted in his novel’s violent and seedy terrains.

Greene’s tendency to set his novels in Spain and South America recalls Cervantes’s choice of Thule in the *Persiles*. Cervantes displaces the action from Catholic Spain and locates his protagonists in northern barbarian Thule. By doing so, he is able to criticise the flaws of his own country, since his heroes, in their pilgrimage to find Faith and pure Catholicism, endure all kind of dangers and obstacles and they eventually find out that Faith is not easy to evince in safe and comfortable places. Faith is a constant process of conversion, a pilgrimage, an act of becoming, not a state or something which one could take for granted.

Greene, offended by the way faith and belief were lived in his own country, and seeing both the lack of religiosity of modern times and the lukewarmness of the Church of England, moves the action and characters of his novels away from England precisely to emphasise that negative spiritual condition.

Rumour at Nightfall

Philip Stratford has argued that *Rumour at Nightfall* should be regarded as Greene's "first Catholic novel" since it contains his "first attempt to find a religious basis for his emerging novelist's point of view" (104-105). Certainly, the "heated world" of Spanish Catholicism dominates much of the action of the novel. Thus, Greene took the nineteenth-century Carlist rebellion in Spain as its historical background. Journalist Francis Chase travels to northern Spain because he desires to interview the rebel leader Caveda.

The novel's action focuses upon the jealous relationship of two protestant Englishmen, Chase and his friend Michael Crane, who unexpectedly joins the former. Chase, trusted by the outlawed rebels, is angered and confused when his romantically inclined friend falls in love with an enchanting Catholic woman, Eulelia Monti, with whom Chase is infatuated. Crane is willing to become a Catholic in order to marry Eulelia (though his conversion is never confirmed) and they eventually get married. Crane is betrayed by his friend Chase and killed by the rebels.

Greene writes the thoughts of the protagonist, London correspondent Francis Chase, who has been in northern Spain for two years. In this scene, Chase seems not to have learned anything about the customs and the way the Spaniards round him live their Catholicism. In fact, he is regarded by most Spaniards as a foreign heretic, whereas he thinks that Spain is "rotten":

I shall never understand these Spaniards, he thought, and the importance they attribute to death. They seemed every one of them to fight under the shadow of this sense of immortality. Round corners, in the shadows cast by anonymous peaks, stood wooden crosses bearing bloodstones and contorted Christs, the superstitious emblems of a race untouched by scientific knowledge. Their religion seemed to him not a consolation but a horror, the product of a deadly cold and an intolerable heat. Dark silhouettes, they passed before him, he conversed with them in their own tongue, he jested with them, but they did not understand his mirth and he did not understand their seriousness. They were to him tall, dignified shadows on a screen. He could regard them aesthetically but not humanly. (RN, 6)

A close reading of scenes like this one, however, shows the ambiguity that Catholicism displays in Greene's fiction. The more Chase describes the "incomprehensible" ways of the Spaniards, the hostile environment, and the horror that Catholicism seems to infuse, the more that Chase, paradoxically enough, interiorises the aesthetics of that way of experiencing Catholicism. The string of religious elements fused with the physical references work as a litany, a sort of ritual, which leads Chase to discern unconsciously the aesthetics of the Catholic imagination, to feel and be aware of what is really happening. He senses the same as those who he supposedly cannot understand.

The heretic is in communion with the faithful through the aesthetics of the Catholic imagination. Greene, therefore, shows a baroque technique to emphasise

how Catholic imagination manifests itself in front of a non-believer's eyes making the most of the main baroque aesthetic trick: to reveal what is unveiled, to display what seems absent. A few lines below, Chase cannot understand all the fuss made about Roca, a fatally wounded man, instead of focusing on searching for the enemy bags they got – that might lead to Caveda's capture – because the reason is not palpable, the reason is still absent to Chase's eyes:

He heard Riego's voice: "Have you Roca there? Is he conscious?" The shadows outside the segment of light thickened and stirred confusedly with life. A horse blew windily in the dark, and voices fell to a murmur, like the respectful sounds which encircle any peaceful death-bed. A man ran from the dark into the light and into the dark again without a glance at Chase who stood alone in the desert of yellow radiance. Then Colonel Riego walked quickly past him and disappeared into the background of shadow. Chase wanted to call after him, "Leave Roca. Attend to me. Isn't this war? What does one man's death matter?" but from the absorption of the tired face that at that moment cared no more for Caveda than for Darwin he could expect no answer. With petulance Chase flung the bags upon the table and went himself into the dark from which the whispers came. (*RN*, 6-7)

Whereas Chase is unable to understand the scene, Riego desperately tries to comfort his dying man, and the Spaniards, in some sort of barbarian ritual for Chase, circle round Roca. Greene establishes a contrast between Chase's secularity and the Catholic imagination of the rest, who remain "quite unmoved

by the physical ugliness of death. They were accustomed to it. Every Christ in every church seemed to suffer more” (*RN*, 7). The last image recalls the communion of saints, a kind of Last Supper for Roca in a perfect sacramental synchronicity. Colonel Riego kneels down with a crucifix and a chain of beads and acts the role of a priest by calling Roca by his Christian name “with the tenderness of a parent” (*RN*, 8).

When Luis Roca finally dies, his companions start to pray for him, while Chase returns to a table with wind-blown candles. However, he cannot avoid hearing the prayers for the soul of Roca not to go to hell. “For a moment under the spell of that fear Chase wished himself back in London, back to small rooms lined with books, to cabs and the bustle of the gas-lit streets, to the policeman on his beat and to the clergyman explaining evolution to the black-coated figures in the family pews. There one could laugh with confidence at the notion of hell” (10). In this scene, Chase misses the commodities and religious indifference of England. In some sense, he feels as if he were “among barbarians” (*RN*, 10) because he is unable to understand the way an officer and a private become just human beings in need of the sacraments.

Chase’s inability to understand the sacramental Catholic imagination is highlighted in his relationship with Eulelia. Eulelia, or Eulalia, means “well-spoken” and for Chase she embodies rectitude, peace, shelter and reliability. However, she confesses to him that she has lost her virginity with Caveda, Chase feels fury and disgust. As has been explained above, Greene’s treatment of sex in the early stages of his life was, as Martin Turnell writes, “defective”, because

there is something “obsessive, something unbalanced” (Turnell, 1967, 20-21). “Pure” religious female characters may represent religious conversion, since they are desired figures of virtue. However, in terms of religious conversion, the pilgrim in search of desiring faith must reject sexual temptation. Thus, sex signifies a simulacrum of death, which paradoxically, is inverted leaving the pilgrim in total abandonment. This ambiguous vision of mysticism negotiates the image of sexual temptation, a yearning to overcome sexual intercourse with the carnal encounter with the Loved One. Once Crane begins to show an interest in Eulelia, Chase takes a darker turn in character. Crane, conversely, grows closer to Eulelia and she shares with him her devout father’s interest in the works of Southwell and Campion, as well as her understanding of terms like “good and evil, Heaven, Hell, and Eternity” (*RN*, 194).

Crane, who shared with Chase a secular perspective, becomes more sympathetic with Catholicism as the novel progresses. He states that the “exhilaration” and “freedom of the body” experienced when sleeping with a prostitute is not a permanent source of peace, since it lasts “perhaps for an hour” (*RN*, 165). Crane reveals that he has “found another way” to secure lasting peace, which the reader infers that this is achieved through his relationship with Eulelia. The mystical ambiguity is staged when Crane meets Eulelia in a church hoping to “kiss and touch and hold” her (*RN*, 213). However, when he is in her presence, he discovers that he feels spiritually rather than sexually attracted: “now all he felt was the inclination to pray, to beseech God on his knees”. Then, she promises him that he will experience “peace without end, conscious peace” (*RN*, 213) through

faith. He desperately wishes to believe in God, but he feels that this can only happen in a relationship with Eulelia: “If I love you, I love faith. I can believe in mystery with you here, in God upon the altar, in God upon the tongue” (*RN*, 217).

In his idealised image of Eulelia, Crane turns Eulelia into a sacrament through the allusions to the Eucharist. Eulalia, the well-spoken, works as a ritual for Crane to “see” the mystery of the Incarnation, of Transubstantiation. Consequently, he appears to undergo a kind of mystical experience as Eulelia continues her ritual-like narrative role:

She said with exultation: “He is everywhere”, but he knew in spite of her words that if He existed at all, He existed in that church, as He did not exist in the sun, in a theatre, in a crowd, at games, at an inn. He was said to be all-good, but in the sun that breed decay and made flesh rot, in any place where men were gathered for differing motives. He was qualified by evil. Here in the dark, in a building dedicated to His service, behind the lamp and in His golden shrine, He was untouched by the sins of His creation. (...) If there is a God, he thought, if that wafer is flesh and blood, enduring at every communion the actual pain of Calvary, the torture of the nails and the torment of the thief’s mockery, a thousand years foreshortened into this moment, may one be allowed to pity God? (*RN*, 210-211)

While looking at the altar Crane contemplates Christ’s sacrificial crucifixion and acknowledges that Christ’s death is made present by way of Transubstantiation every time Mass is performed. Crane focuses on the crucifixion, which is a recurring theme in Greene’s novels of the thirties, but he is

only able to consider the pain, blood, and torture affiliated with the act, rather than the theme of resurrection and renewal it also connotes. Although he feels burdened by humans' legacy of violence, death, and sacrifice associated with faith, Crane is willing to share Eulelia's religious beliefs because he wants to be permanently united with her in marriage.

Moreover, he concludes that by denying faith, he is basically rejecting the chance of being joined with Eulelia in an afterlife, and this realisation reaches him "like a spark from the lamp burning its sharp way to his brain". He even suggests that this "spark" of comprehension is sent by God: "I am dying, I know that I am dying. If God is a thief in the night, He has allowed me to hear His fumble at the latch" (*RN*, 216). The reference of "God as a thief in the night", from St. Paul 1 Thess. 5:22, was a favourite of Spanish mysticism and implies Crane's approach to faith through his mystical contemplation of Eulelia. In his words "I am dying", he knows he approaches death as hope in the eternal union with his lover. That is the "spark of comprehension" he experiences, the "ray of light" in the dark night of the soul. This mystic idea of love alters his senses and his conception of reality. Crane asks what difference Faith would make to him: "My body would have the same desires, my mind the same fears, life would be the same" (*RN*, 221). As he listens to that retort in his brain as if it had been spoken by Eulelia, he undergoes a supernatural experience:

For the moment, he saw it with the outer eye, a visible ring of white light roaring through the darkness of the church, first as small as a wedding ring, its orbit growing like the circle of a stone in a pool, enclosing the altar,

enclosing the pillars, enclosing the priest, brushing his own face with the wind of its movement, dazzling his eyes with its light. (...) For a moment, he longed to be the possessor of some mediaeval incantation that would kill the soul, until he saw the door open and in the darkness the shadowy outline of her face. (*RA*, 221, 223)

Crane is ready to marry Eulelia through his “conversion”, a simulacrum of death, the soul’s escape in the night to meet her lover. At the altar, he cannot understand “the Latin that the priest spoke with his Spanish intonation”, but he slips the signet ring from his finger. The priest continued with the ritual and turns to Crane, whose “motions were dictated, the words were dictated, the Spanish words coming awkwardly from his mouth, their meaning lost, as features were lost in the obscurity of the church” (*RA*, 224-225).

In Chase’s view, Faith has changed Crane’s perception of reality and thinks his former friend has undergone some kind of enchantment. Thus, Chase likens religious belief to walking in a “strange land”, a “region of the mind” (*RA*, 241). Greene depicts “epiphanic” moments, which occur within specifically designated religious spaces where his characters experience different forms of religious awakening. In this sense, Spain as the setting of the novel functions as a ‘strange land’ or ‘region of the mind’, phrase that Greene would repeat several times in his autobiography. This exotic image of Spain might be consider a stereotype in the ardent mind of a new artist, but it gives us an idea of the way Greene uses Baroque aesthetics in an attempt to show Catholicism at its most ‘primitive’ or original stage.

The Confidential Agent

The Confidential Agent (1939) offers a landmark in the politicisation of Greene's approaches to the social function of religious belief. The clash during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) between the anti-clerical Republicans and Franco's Nationalists supported by the Catholic hierarchy provides the inspiration for the political background to this novel. Greene saw himself in a strange situation: he could sympathise with the political left, but he was a Catholic. Although he had always been fascinated by countries where politics did not mean a simple alternative of parties but a matter of life and death, Spain represented a new challenge to his allegiances. When editor Tom Burns took over *The Tablet* in 1935, he emerged as a common thread linking Catholic authors such as Campbell, Greene, and Waugh. Greene was taken on as a regular reviewer in 1936. His *Tablet* journalism scorned the communism he had flirted with at university while holding back from the overtly pro-Francoist stance adopted by other contributors.

When the pamphlet *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish Civil War*, based on a survey, was published in June 1937, Greene used the pages of the *Spectator* to mock the vehemence with which left-wing writers such as Auden or Spencer had involved in the Spanish conflict lacking the necessary ideological conviction. Greene contrasted the political rantings of the thirties with the more easy-going attitudes of the Cambridge Apostles, among them Tennyson and his friend Henry Hallam, who in 1830 had undertaken secret missions in Spain in support of the rebel activity, primarily for the thrill of it. Greene, in his essay "The Apostles Intervene", compares both situations:

The Victorians were sometimes less high-minded than ourselves. The publication of a little booklet on the Spanish Civil War called *Authors Take Sides* has reminded me of an earlier group of English writers who intervened in Spain a hundred years ago. They were – questionably – more romantic; they were certainly less melodramatic: they were a good deal wiser. “With all my anger and love, I am for the People of Republican Spain” – that is not the kind of remark that anyone with a sense of the ludicrous should make on this side of the Channel. Alfred Tennyson did at least cross the Pyrenees, though his motives, to hysterical partisans like these, may appear suspect: there is every reason to suppose that he went for the fun of the thing – fun which nearly brought Hallam and himself before a firing squad as it did the unfortunate and quite unserious-minded Boyd. (...) When politics were touched on by the Apostles it was in an amused and rather patronising way. “‘Twas a very pretty little revolution in Saxony”, wrote Hallam in 1830, “and a respectable one at Brunswick” (the dilettante tone has charm after the sweeping statements, the safe marble gestures, the self-importance of our own ‘thirties – I stand with the People and Government of Spain”). Only in the rash Torrijos adventure did the Apostles come within measurable distance of civil war. (*CE*, 230-1)

Years later, Greene told Norman Sherry that one of the reasons he did not contribute to the *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish Civil War* survey was that, while he shared some sympathy for the Republican cause, he was horrified by the

brutality that the Spanish left had shown towards religious orders and the clergy. Meanwhile, on Burn's recommendation, Greene had read a book called *Mexican Martyrdom* which had been published in 1936 which was the cause of Greene's trip to Mexico.

Graham Greene, in his second autobiography, tells us about the genesis of the *Confidential Agent*:

The Confidential Agent was written in six weeks in 1938 after my return from Mexico. The Spanish Civil War furnished the background, but it was the Munich Agreement which provided the urgency. (...) I was struggling then through *The Power and the Glory*, but there was no money in the book as far as I could foresee. Certainly my wife and two children would not be able to live on one unsaleable book...so I determined to write another "entertainment" as quickly as possible in the mornings, while I ground on slowly with *The Power and the Glory* in the afternoons. The opening scene between two rival agents on the cross-channel steamer – I called them D. and L. because I did not wish to localise their conflict – was all I had in mind, and a certain vague ambition to create something legendary out of a contemporary thriller: the hunted man who becomes in turn the hunter, the peaceful man who turns at bay, the man who has learned to love justice by suffering injustice. (WE, 87-88)

D., a patriot from a country suffering a civil war, is in England to secure a contract with coal magnate Lord Benditch that will greatly assist the faltering loyalist cause. His country is nameless and the details of its history, geography,

and current politics remain vague. However, the reader could have little doubt – and Greene himself admitted as much – that the Spanish Civil War was his main inspiration for the book's depiction of a left-leaning, popular revolutionary republic.

Underscoring the Spanish connection, in the novel's final section, a ship travelling from England to the unnamed country must sail westward in the Channel and then cross the Bay of Biscay. According to some critics such as Robert L. Snyder, the novel “does not explore in depth any of his characteristic themes – the theological mystery of grace, the ambiguity of love versus pity, the entanglements of postcolonial intervention, the recuperation of existential purpose, and the moral dilemma of responsibility for others” (2010, 203). The novel falls into the category of what Greene called “entertainments”, a type of fiction that allegedly gave priority to the development of plot rather than character.

I do not agree with Snyder's idea of the themes the novel treats. In fact, the *Confidential Agent* seems to pave a definitive way in establishing what critics have labelled as Greeneland, a rather unfortunate term. In *The Confidential Agent*, Graham Greene moves in the opposite direction to that taken in his first Spanish novel, *Rumour at Nightfall* only to reflect on the same themes. The protagonists are not two Englishmen who travel to Spain in search of conflict. Now they are two Spaniards who move to England leaving war behind. While Chase and Crane have the opportunity of finding some comfort when they see Spaniards experiencing faith in action, D. and L. cannot ward off the effects of war and

death because they get to a country, England, which refuses to believe in anything. Even in an impending war. Crane and Chase function as literary doubles. They progressively separate from each other through Crane's understanding of Eulalia's faith. Eventually, Chase causes Crane's death. D. and L., despite the fact of defending opposite political sides, understand each other. In some sense, both D. and L. stand for the average person. They are the passive victims of others' violence. It is worth seeking that meaning in D.'s changing responses to people, incidents and conversational exchanges within *The Confidential Agent*.

A novel of action, Greene's book is also subtle in its account of the inner life of its main character. The agent of a Marxist government, D. cannot maintain the belief system he ostensibly supports: "heresies crept in (...) there were aspects of economic materialism which, if he searched his heart, he did not accept" (CA, 10). The movement to which D. belongs has split, turning in on itself like Russian Communism in the thirties or like the Republican liquidation of the Anarchists that Orwell recorded in *Homage to Catalonia* (1938). The result is an obsession with treachery and an endless and bloody inquisition in the name of purity and total commitment: "One friend was found with a holy medal under his shirt, another belonged to an organization with the wrong initial letters" (10). Heresy-hunting feeds universal suspicion, "You could trust nobody but yourself" (10). Worse still, as in D.'s case, it breaks down the individual's own personal and intellectual self-belief. Like the accused in Stalin's show-trials, or their fictional counterparts in Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* (1941), prepared to accuse

themselves for the good of the Party, D. “wasn’t certain that it wasn’t right for him to be watched” (10). D. is sustained not by his conscious political allegiances and beliefs but by his love for his dead wife and by his sympathy for the poor, seen as individuals.

If the Marxist regime and ideology he serves are collapsing into warring sects, heresy-hunting and treachery, D. finds little to admire in the Conservative views of his rival agent L., whom he unexpectedly encounters on the boat at Dover. D. recognises L.’s cultivated manners and confident sense of himself, “Five hundred years of inbreeding had produced him” (CA, 28). He sees his enemy as the understandable product of a privileged past, and is even ready to acknowledge L.’s charm: “But he recognised the man’s charm: it was like being picked out of a party by a great man to be talked to” (28). D. sees, too, that L. is loyal to his own standards, “The man had integrity of a kind: he gave an impression of truth” (29). The aristocrat tries to win D. over by several plausible arguments: “They’ll never trust you – you are a bourgeois” (29). L.’s lament for the beauty and culture the revolutionary government have destroyed strikes a chord with D. Then L. compares his own loss of a manuscript of St. Augustine’s *City of God* to D.’s loss of his wife: “It was amazing he hadn’t seen his mistake”, D. thinks while L. waits for his assent.

The civilisation L. purports to defend is no living organism but “a world of preserved objects” (30) kept for their quaintness or their picturesque qualities. Appreciation and scholarship without faith or love “could kill the human heart”, and D. understands that L. is, in some way, a victim of a time which has not “the

faintest conception of what it meant to love another human being” (30). Yet although D. despises L’s support of U.S. politics and ideal of “civilization”, he neither hates nor despises the man himself. He notices pathetic details about L., such as the way this “thin tormented creature” (29) cuts his meat into tiny pieces since “his digestion must be rotten” since L. suffers from dyspepsia (28). More significantly, he rejects the pleasure of vengeance on L. as an oppressor or a class-enemy. D. “wanted to be driven to shoot” (171), to believe that L. had given orders for the girl Else’s death, “to hate him, despise him and shoot”. Yet he knows that the fragile aristocrat would never do such a thing. When L. convinces him that Else was in fact killed by her employer, the crazy woman manager at the London bed and breakfast where D. had stayed, D.’s reaction is significant: “He felt a sudden lightening of the heart” (171) and an easing of responsibility. He may see L. all too clearly for what he is, but he also sees him with understanding, even with sympathy.

This may be Greene’s first great political argument as author. However, Brian Diemert rightly points out that, “While Greene clearly saw the importance of a political awareness in literature, on a personal level he was careful not to align himself formally with any one ideological or political group” (1996, 26). Although he had briefly become a member of the Communist party in 1925 and then, for a short time in 1933, a member of the Independent Labour Party, “Greene believed that the writer had to remain free of rigid ideological positions” (26). Maria Couto, nevertheless, insists on Greene’s tendency to align himself

with the emerging Left on the political spectrum since he thought that commitment arose out of sympathy (1988, 206).

Indeed, in books like *A Gun for Sale*, *England Made Me*, *The Confidential Agent*, and others, George Orwell saw that “there is the usual left-wing scenery. The bad men are millionaires, armaments manufacturers, etc. and the good man is sometimes a Communist” (1968, 496). However, Diemert states that, “The degree of Greene’s commitment to the Left in the thirties (...) is open to question” (1996, 26). Moreover, Judith Adamson has argued that Greene “wanted real social change (...) but was completely opposed to the Left and highly suspicious of any form of state intervention” (1990, 50). Adamson maintains that Greene, in the thirties, kept politics at “a sceptical distance in the name of objectivity” (11). Diemert affirms that Greene “was not blindly supportive of the Left in his fiction of the 1930s” (1996, 27). *It’s a Battlefield* (1934), which Greene described as his “first overtly political novel” (Allain, 87), is, as Diemert goes on to say, “as critical of the self-deluding and ineffectual efforts of the Communist Party (...) as it is of a British political and judicial system that brutally oppresses dissent” (1996, 27). Similarly, in *The Confidential Agent*, both sides in the Spanish Civil War are guilty of the same crimes – as D. remarks in the novel: “It’s no good taking a moral line. My people commit atrocities like the others” (CA, 60).

Although Greene was appalled at the cruelty many republicans had shown towards Catholics, the sympathy he felt for the Republic was principally focused on the Basque country, where a significant sector of the local population was both fervently Catholic and anti-Franco. According to Jimmy Burns, “Greene’s interest

in the Basque country intensified in the light of what occurred in the region in a town called Gernika (*sic*), where in medieval times the Catholic Kings of Spain had sworn before a totemic oak tree forever to respect the rights of the local people” (2010, 29).¹¹⁰ The bombing of Guernica on April 26, 1937, during the Spanish Civil War, and later immortalised by Picasso around June of that year in one of the most famous of war paintings, ensued a ferocious propaganda.

Guernica had become a symbol which stirred the artistic imaginations of painters, poets, and writers, among them Graham Greene. “Greene’s sympathy for the Basques lay in the fact that while they were on the side of the Republicans they were not fighting for a Communist or anarchist state, for they were Catholics and their army were attended by 82 priests who would celebrate Mass and be present at the last moments of the dying” (Sherry, I.612). However, Greene’s continuing refusal to declare his political allegiance openly for one side or the other probably saved him in literary terms. Franco was a Catholic and supported the Spanish Catholic Church, but Greene “hated him and all totalitarian systems” (Durán, 1994, 55). Neither did he care for the Communists and Socialists because they committed murder, particularly against the Church. Greene explains that “a restlessness set in then which has never quite been allayed: a desire to be a spectator of history, history in which I found I was concerned myself. I tried to fly into Bilbao from Toulouse, for my sympathies were more engaged by the Catholic

¹¹⁰ When the Domain of Biscay was incorporated into the kingdom of Castile the king of Castile visited Guernica and swore an oath under the Tree promising to uphold the *fueros* or local laws of Biscay. The oath of King Ferdinand, known as the “Catholic Monarch” on June 30, 1476 is depicted in a painting by Francisco de Mendieta popularly known as *El besamanos* (“The Royal audience”). On July 3, 1875, during the Carlist Wars, the pretender to the throne Don Carlos of the house of Hapsburg also visited Guernica and swore the oath.

struggle against Franco than with the competing sectarians in Madrid” (WE, 76).

Leopoldo Durán sheds some light on this episode:

He decided on a third path: to fight on the side of the Basques under the command of Aguirre. On the one hand, they were Catholics, like Greene; on the other hand, they had nothing to do with totalitarianism. In London he was supplied with some impressive credentials, covered with seals and stamps. They were an introduction to a certain person who would meet him in Marseille. The place where he was to meet this person was worse than humble, it was miserable. Graham walked up a dimly lit staircase and there in an untidy, rambling garret room was a man shaving. Graham handed him his papers, which the man read having broken the seals. He told Graham quite sharply: “There is no way in which I would go back and fly over Bilbao. The other day they sent me out against Franco’s planes and it’s still a miracle I’m still alive. No, I’m not going back there”. So ended Graham Greene’s intentions of being of some use in the Spanish Civil War. (Durán, 1994, 55).

He could not get to Spain eventually and returned to England. After his return from Mexico, he started to write the novel concurrently with *The Power and the Glory*. The images of the Mexican ruins probably mixed with the memories of the Spanish conflict such as those of Guernica, and helped Greene to create the ruined world of *The Confidential Agent*. Greene’s main political purpose in *The Confidential Agent* is, as Adamson rightly argues, “to expose, to

shake people out of their indifference” (1990, 64). This may be the main reason why Greene sets the action of the novel in a foggy and ghostly England, a sort of moral wasteland whose inhabitants seem to show indifference to the impending war. According to Greene, the crises of the thirties could not be overcome with the simplistic solutions of political parties because their roots lay deeper than an economic or political outcome. He seemed to have lost all hope in the thirties and novels like *The Confidential Agent* lead to the conviction that only violence could “satisfy that moral craving for the just and reasonable expression of human nature left without belief” (CE, 334). He was always uncomfortable with the critics’ attempts to label him as a political novelist or a Catholic novelist (Allain, 80, 159). Greene asserted that, “politics are in the air we breathe, like the presence or absence of a God” (Allain, 87).

Anne Loddegaard states that, “the new Catholic novel emerging after the First World War constructs an absent and silent God”, as opposed to the early French revival novel which “constructs a present and communicating God” (2008, 1-2). She traces back the origin of this hidden God in the Jansenist philosopher Blaise Pascal and his famous apology for the Christian faith *Pensées*, from 1670. Consequently, Loddegaard points out some parallels between Pascal’s work and some of Graham Greene’s novels, which might have found inspiration in “Pascal’s consistent use of the human perspective of the individual believer, to whom God necessarily appears as hidden” (2). Loddegaard focuses on the French case, where the antagonism between Catholicism and republicanism had not survived the effects of First World War and the Church ceased to appear as an

enemy to the state. The new generations of Catholics, she goes on to say, “fully accepted the secular state, and Catholic writers now turned their attention inwards, to the individual drama of faith” (3).

According to Loddegaard, in novels such as *Brighton Rock* and *The Power and the Glory* God remains absolutely silent. She points out the fact that “the characters are no longer heroic saints but antiheroes and sinners operating in a world without clear guidance from God, who never manifests himself *clearly* to them” (My italics) (4). Loddegaard shows great ambiguity in her argument since it would be difficult to imagine a “clear” manifestation of God and, at the same time, avoid the representation of a miracle. She adds that both virtue and sin are not experienced as easily definable, but are manifested in a halo of complexity and ambiguity. “In other words”, she concludes, “modernity and modernism come to occupy the Catholic novel” (4). The critic eludes *The Confidential Agent*, precisely the novel where God seems completely absent from the plot. The novel represents a far cry from that allegedly French solidarity between Catholics and republicans. Moreover, Loddegaard draws a parallel between Mauriac’s and Greene’s characters. She refers to Thérèse Desqueyroux as a hallmark in the new Catholic novel since Mauriac leaves Thérèse to face an uncertain future thus establishing an open ending where the author avoids the burden of declaring his protagonist saved by God. However, Greene, in a conversation with Henry Donaghy, stated that his Catholicism was very different to that of Mauriac’s: “Mauriac’s sinners sin against God whereas mine, however hard they try, can never quite manage to” (Donaghy, 1992, 40).

Greene did not look at France, but he was more interested in the Spanish conflict where the political clash, with Catholicism in the way, was anticipating the impending horror which would devastate Europe. What Loddegaard does not seem to convey is that Greene's preoccupation does not include any sort of *Deus Absconditus*, but the people's indifference and refusal to look for Him. For Greene, that indifference that blinds England on the threshold of human devastation is Modernity's loss of religious sense. The author brings the Spanish conflict to English ground in order to expose that loss, the abandonment of God:

"This is England", the little grey man shrieked as if he wanted to convince himself. He started to his feet and knocked a book off the shelf – it fell open upon the divan – a little book of devotional verse with "God" in capital letters. Certainly it was England – England was the divan, the waste-paper basket made out of old flower prints, the framed Speed map and the cushions. (CA, 166).

However, Snyder calls our attention to the "shadow of abandonment" that seems to loom over the whole work. He quotes a thought by the protagonist, D., who understands that "It was as if the whole world lay in the shadow of abandonment" (CA, 72). The metaphor, akin to Hardy's Earth as a blighted planet or Eliot's wasteland, not only anticipates the sense of abandonment and isolation of the whisky priest in his next novel *The Power and the Glory* (1940), but also that dystopian world inhabited by Greene's characters. More than physical, it seems a tragic La Mancha embedded in the characters' minds in his subsequent novels, "that familiar milieu of seedy borderlands and far-flung frontiers whose

degradation highlights the spiritual bankruptcy of a materialistic West” (Snyder, 204).

Indeed, the novel highlights the process that led to conflict. The problem is not the conflict itself but the humans’ indifference to the decay that comes before destruction. In a typical baroque image, D. is on the train to Benditch “passing halts under every slag-heap dignified by names like Castle Crag and Mount Zion. It was like gigantic rubbish heap into which everything had been thrown of a whole way of life” (CA, 191). This scenery of desolation and decay anticipates the perfect baroque image when D. gets to Benditch: “He did look. He was used to ruin, but it occurred to him that bombardment was a waste of time. You could attain your ruined world as easily by just letting go” (192). In Baroque aesthetics there is a continuation between the city in ruins and its human ruins. Far from Loddegaard and other critics’ established parallelisms between Greene’s novels and those of the French Catholics, I see a Baroque aesthetic tradition in Greene’s treatment of the decay of post-war England.

Octavio Paz and T.S. Eliot immersed themselves in the poetic and critical endeavor of recuperating from critical oblivion the Baroque and the Metaphysical poets. Eliot shows aesthetic ties with John Donne’s “The First Anniversary”, as well as Paz’s homage and rewriting of Francisco de Quevedo’s sonnet “Amor constant más allá de la muerte”. Cecilia Enjuto-Rangel explains in *Cities in Ruins: The Politics of Modern Poetics*,

Both Paz and Eliot use the Baroque tradition in the historical sense and as the “objective correlative” to rethink metaphors of death and decay, decomposed bodies and ruined cities in post-war Europe and America. (...) The intertextual dialogue they establish with the Baroque and the Metaphysical poets, in *The Wasteland* and “Whispers of Immortality”, and *Homenaje y Profanaciones*, “Himno entre ruinas”, and “Petrificada petrificante”. (Author’s emphasis) (2010, 89)

There are many and obvious connections between the Spanish Baroque and the English Metaphysical poets. Helmut Hatzfeld argues that the Spanish Baroque had an immense influence over all European poetry of the seventeenth century, especially in England, a protestant country which had adopted for more than half a century the spiritual elements of its main political and religious adversary. Hatzfeld specifically emphasises the influence of the Spanish Baroque on Donne: “Un poeta con su educación católica y su viaje a Cádiz (1596) conoce bien España y sus juegos de palabras y agudezas de ingenio” (1964, 448). The influence of the Baroque is exemplified in these correlations. Eliot’s poetic and critical work concerning the Metaphysical poets was mainly written in the nineteen twenties, while Paz wrote his in the fifties and sixties. Paz’s perspective is not only chronologically different from Eliot’s vision of the past; Enjuto-Rangel points out that Paz “wants to absorb the Metaphysical, the Baroque, and the Modernist poetic discourses. He is more interested in inscribing the Spanish tradition in a more *mestizo* culture of international exchanges, of which he claims to be the heir” (2010, 90). Yet, both poets elaborate an aesthetics that favours a

historical continuity between eras. As Enjuto-Rangel goes on to say, “In their quest for the eternal, (...) Eliot and Paz intend to resuscitate seventeenth-century poetry as a “usable past” without idealising it or presenting it as sacred and untouchable” (90-91).

In *The Confidential Agent*, Graham Greene also criticises political change in government policies, technological warfare, moral decay, and its versions of pseudo-progress where contemporary events and modern ruins are reflections of the political impact of the First World War and the Spanish Civil War. The portrayal in fiction of the modern city as a disintegrated, ruined space is part of a critique of visions of progress and modernisation that developed during the nineteenth century and continued during the first half of the twentieth century. As a literary commonplace, the topos of ruins has been thoroughly examined in Baroque and Romantic literary studies. Charles Baudelaire, Luis Cernuda, T. S. Eliot, Octavio Paz, and Pablo Neruda poeticised ruins as the cornerstones of cultural and political memory, and used the imagery of ruins to reinterpret their historical and literary traditions.

Greene’s interest in that imagery is reinforced not only by gloomy and ruinous tone of both *The Confidential Agent* and *The Power and the Glory*, but also by the numerous references to other images related. One of these recurring images at that time was St. Augustine’s *City of God*. When he had just finished *The Confidential Agent*, Greene persuaded the draft board for reserve officers to give him a further six months to finish *The Power and the Glory* when it was already completed. Greene quickly offered his agent a suggestion for a future

volume of essays. He called these *The Heroic Age*. The anthology “would attempt to give the general view of life as seen by a Catholic mind (...) The reader might find on one page a passage of Crashaw and on another such a murderer’s statement as I printed on p. 14 of *Lawless Roads*, a passage of St. Augustine’s City of God might jostle a coroner’s report on a suicide” (Sherry, II.30). Greene intended a general picture of the world “full of horror, grotesqueness, courage, meanness, spirituality, the shadow of the City of God would as it were fall across the whole” (Sherry, II.30-1).

Brennan points out at the way Greene interprets historical and literary traditions in the novel. D. had discovered a previously unknown Berne manuscript of the verse romance, “The Song of Roland”. According to Brennan, “Greene’s choice of this text is far from random since it tells how in 788 Charlemagne’s retreating Franks, after a Christian campaign against the Muslim Saracens in Spain, were attacked by the Basques. This echoes the current clash in Spain between the Church and secularism and Greene’s siding with the Catholic Basques” (Brennan, 2010, 66). Lying exhausted on his hotel bed, D. ponders the relevance of “Roland’s struggles to contemporary Western European politics and its relentless secularism” (Brennan, 66). The passage reminds of Cervantes’s praise of the battle of Lepanto and the British writer even uses the same vocabulary in the first part only to finish with a contemporary political image:

Fighting was better in the old days. Roland had companions at Roncesvalles – Oliver and Turpin: the whole chivalry of Europe was riding up to help him. Men were united by a common belief. Even a heretic

would be on the side of Christendom against the Moors; they might differ about the persons of the Trinity, but on the main issue they were like rock. Now there were so many varieties of economic materialism, so many initial letters. (CA, 62)

D. is surprised to learn that the aristocratic L. regrets having lost an early manuscript of St. Augustine's "City of God". However, Greene uses the scene to prompt D. to consider how sterile the world would become if religious objects were all reduced merely to the status of museum objects, "labelled 'Not to be touched': no religious faith, but a lot of Gregorian chants and picturesque ceremonies. Miraculous images which bled or waggled their heads on certain days would be preserved for their quaintness." (CA, 30). Greene puts these words in Republican D.'s mouth, as a Catholic lamenting the fact that the religious sense has been lost and reduced to a collection of antique, a faith not lived but just contemplated. These images take us back to the topos of the ruins, debris, and destruction, so frequent in Greene's novels. *The Confidential Agent* formally begins a tradition that can be seen in later novels such as *The End of the Affair*, which tells the story of finding God among the ruins of the London Blitz and can be seen as a continuation of the former novel both chronologically and thematically.

Several espionage fiction was written during the thirties, but Bruce Merry in *Anatomy of the Spy Thriller* recognises how *The Confidential Agent* differs from its antecedents: "The enemy is uncertain, the issues are obscure [,] and the

whole enterprise expresses (once again) its fear of falling into the clichés of turn-of-the-century cloak-and-dagger heroics” (1977, 205). The novel, therefore, maintains an ambiance that Roger Sharrock characterises as “strangely phantasmagoric” (1984, 77). Indeed, the novel has been taken by some critics as an example of Greene’s thematic and structural uses of death. Alan Friedman reasons that, “[t]he longing to get life over with, in order *then* to get on with it, is Greene’s defining note” (1990, 132). Moreover, Friedman calls this familiar characteristic of Greene’s fiction “a post-mortem fiction” (131). This is clear from the first lines of the novel:

The gulls swept over Dover. They sailed out like flakes of the fog, and tacked back towards the hidden town, while the siren mourned with them: other ships replied, a whole wake lifted up their voices – for whose death? The ship moved at half speed through the bitter autumn evening. It reminded D. of a hearse, rolling slowly and discreetly towards the “garden of peace”, the driver careful not to shake the coffin, as if the body minded a jolt or two. Hysterical women shrieked among the shrouds. (CA, 3)

The certainty of death is accentuated by the narrative structure; the novel begins with death and then circles back to that originating end, as if this were the only possible teleology. The protagonist D. is a kind of knight-errand who roams through a world without any values from a country in a civil war to another menaced with imminent conflict. “He carried the war with him. Wherever D. was, there was the war. He could never understand that people were unaware of it” (CA, 3). D. is an academic who discovered a variant manuscript of *Le Chanson de*

Roland, the medieval poem about loyalty and bravery which allows Greene to write about those noble values in the context of a modern war. He also has memories of: his wife being shot by the opposition (by mistake); his house being bombed and lying for 56 hours in the wreckage before being rescued; and he is obsessed with the melodramatic and self-pitying idea that he is infected with violence. D. resembles Don Quixote in some ways. He is scarred, beaten up and a victim of a disillusioned world. At the same time, he carries violence wherever he goes. There is a scene where Rose drops him to his hotel. She wants to go with him, but D. refuses. She misunderstands him because she thinks he is going to spend the night with Else, an angelical and naive young girl. D. takes Rose's hand but Rose hits him. She says, "Let go of my hand". He dropped it quickly. She said, "You damned Quixote. Go on. Get shot, die...you're out of place" (CA, 75).

Else represents goodness, beauty and purity in a black, violent and evil world. While staying in a seedy hotel, D. entrusts his identity papers to her, the serving girl at that hotel. Later, she is brutally killed when she loyally refuses to betray him to her mannish manageress. After this senseless tragedy, he takes upon himself the role of avenger. D. embraces a passionate desire for justice instead of just accepting a world of human frailty. As he gazes on her lifeless body, he wonders if a belief in God would have allowed him to consider Else "saved from much misery" and to leave all "punishment to God". (...) "But he hadn't that particular faith. Unless people received their deserts, the world to him was chaos, he was faced with despair" (CA, 138).

Despite such dark thoughts, *The Confidential Agent* does not ultimately privilege secular justice over God's authority. Although God seems frustratingly remote to D., this sheer divine absence makes God paradoxically present again. D. admits to Rose that if he could believe in God "it would be simpler" (67). Similarly, when he meets the Jew Furtstein, Forbes, he enviously imagines him as a figure from the Old Testament possessing a firm balance of violence and justice: "Very far back in the past was the desert, the dead salt sea, the desolate mountains and the violence on the road from Jericho. He had a basis of belief" (111).

Later, as D. threatens the traitor K. with a gun, he accidentally knocks a book of devotional verse off the shelf and it falls open at the lines: "God is in the sunlight, / Where the butterflies roam, / God is in the candlelight, / Waiting in your home". D. then realises that because he cannot "believe in God" he ultimately has "no home" (169). D. eventually makes his escape and, waiting on a dark Sunday morning for his train, he remains troubled by the absence of a consoling divinity. He cannot undergo conversion but instead takes consolation in Rose's lament that they are merely unlucky: "We don't believe in God. So it's no use praying. If we did, I could say beads, burn candles – oh, a hundred of things. As it is, I can only keep my fingers crossed" (186).

Desperation seems to lead the action of the novel since Greene seems to be declaring that nobody is permanently sane in the modern world. The problems of the age are personified by D. and other characters he encounters in his tedious struggles with fate and life. Indeed, *The Confidential Agent* is a parody of the modern world and human's place in it. D. can thus be described as Everyman,

who personifies the human pilgrimage on earth. His pilgrimage has been a quest ending in nothing. Greene, in the novel, explores the fragmented and unsettling condition of modern life. He probes into the destructive and primitive nature that lies behind the civilized exterior of the individual. The dissonant relationships between D. and his antagonists (L, K, the chauffeur and the manageress) reveal that modern civilisation is unpredictable, excessive, uncontrollable and destructive. The reader is made to believe that the only period when man does not experience violence is in his sleep and dream. D.'s only opportunity of finding peace is only in his dreams where he remembers some romantic images of the idyllic past – compensation, wish fulfilment, his deceased wife, wine, flowers and food.

The socio-economic and political realities of the period make the novelist take some painful issues as his thematic preoccupations in the novel. The modern man, like the average Greene character, tends to keep on asking the question: “Who am I?” This reflects the crisis and conflict between self-identity and society – a Godless society unable to give identity, through which Greene lays bare the strains and tensions of the modern world. Desperation is the pervading metaphor he uses to depict the pains of man in the modern world. Anybody who does not feel the pain of desperation is dead; this feeling is the measure of man's existence – hence, the parody of the famous Cartesian philosophical postulation, “I think, therefore, I am”, by the Cabin-passenger in the novel: “I feel discomfort, therefore, I am alive” (9).

D. is infected by violence, lacks self-identity, and cannot find a god to believe. These tensions point to the need for confession. Adam Schwartz states that, “As was Chesterton, [Greene] was fascinated by sacramental confession; but unlike his predecessor, Greene celebrated this sacrament often, at least during his early Catholic years. Confession allusions and motifs also pervade his fiction” (2005, 147). The only way out of all the fear and desperation that characters suffer in the novel is the sacrament of confession. Greene believed that a Catholic could “lose the burden of his fear and responsibility” even “after a lifetime of the most hideous crime” through sacramental participation in Christ’s Atonement.¹¹¹

My idea of sacramental confession as part of the structure of the novel is reinforced by the numerous references to the sacrament throughout the work or by scenes which are structured around a confessional act in pages 54, 59, 65, 84, 125, 128, 150, 171, and 201. Through these scenes of both conscious and unconscious confessions, the plot develops and, as truths are told, life can be endured since “The dead were to be envied. It was the living who had to suffer from loneliness and distrust” (246-7).

The novel ends in the same place where it begins: on a ship. This time, however, the ship is not described as some kind of coffin, but as an unknown destiny. Just as life itself. The novel develops a sort of conversion through confession in an inverse way: from death to life. D. is brought to a life full of violence and death. Now he is leading to his real death. Now he feels alive as Rose says in the closing line: “The light went by astern: ahead there was only the

¹¹¹ See Greene’s *BOC*, 52, and *PG*, 189.

splash, the long withdrawal, and the dark. She said, “You’ll be dead very soon: you needn’t tell me that, but *now...*” (247).

Greene shows the Baroque aesthetics impulse that emphasises the sense of distress and disenchantment represented by the image of ruins. Like Paz and Eliot, Greene also shares the modern disenchantment, a form of identification represented by the cities in ruins. Quevedo was one of the first precursors. Paz sees Quevedo’s works as reflecting a consciousness of the fractured self which is strikingly modern: “Quevedo (...) nos muestra la visión de la caída de la conciencia en sí misma, una caída que nos revela nuestra fractura interior (...) el primer poema realmente moderno de la literatura española es *Lágrimas de un penitente*” (Paz, 2000, 74-75).

Moreover, Quevedo’s sonnet “Avisos de la muerte”, which begins with “Miré los muros de la patria mía / Si un tiempo fuertes ya desmoronados” compares the devastation of the city/homeland with the decay and mortality of the body as well as the lost glorious past. The themes are reconciled by the image of the ruins and the day fuse with the night (chiaroscuro). Like Quevedo, Greene embraces the topos of ruins and debris through human remains; the modern split of consciousness literally ruptures the body, but may find solace in literature.

Quevedo’s sonnet *Amor constante más allá de la muerte*, that Dámaso Alonso considers the best of Spanish literature, represents a kind of obsession about death, but a death that is transcended through memory. The poem serves as a tool against death and oblivion. In clear sacramental fashion, love is expressed

and materialised through the body, which death can transform but not obliterate. As in Eliot's poems, remembering the dead is an act of creation that secures the literary immortality of both the subject and the object of remembrance. In Quevedo's sonnet, death fuses memory and body. *The Confidential Agent* ****

In Ulyse's fashion, like a Conradian journey through the heart of darkness, *The Confidential Agent* is a horrific pilgrimage to some sort of Inner Station, to the city of death. D. comes from the hell of a civil war only to find the gloomy circles of purgatory in the heart of England. Using Baroque aesthetics, Cervantes also depicted an inversed purgatory in Persiles's pilgrimage and a grotesque purgatory in Don Quixote's adventures, above all in the second part. In this sense, Purgatory is not only approached as a transitional stage from death to afterlife, but it acquires a kind of subversive tone, like a mirror where meanings are inverted or distorted. Indeed, Cervantes, Baudelaire, Eliot and Greene view limbo and purgatory as worse than hell, neutrality worse than egregious sin, life itself as hell. In the cannibals of *Persiles*, Cervantes symbolises the inversion of Christ's sacrifice. He sees sacrifice as retaining its symbolic power, as in the Catholic Mass. In essence, the sacramental quality of primitive sacrifices is analogous to the Catholic representation.

In *The Confidential Agent*, the death of D.'s wife, Else's crime, and even Rose's understanding of D.'s honesty and integrity – her attraction to D.'s beaten, bloodied face – are moments in which sacramental imagination renews that vitality of ritual sacrifice. These episodes turn D., a hunted man, into a hunter for justice. In a gloomy London, where indifference makes people appear as souls

that wander aimlessly as in Catholic limbo, D.'s Christ-like image and mission brings some hope. Eventually, plans do not turn out as expected. At the end of the novel Rose Cullen joins D. on the small Dutch vessel in the English Channel that will carry him back to the horrors of the civil war in his homeland – until death will part them. As in Baudelaire and Eliot, the limbo status seems the worst of all: the absence of climatic death creates an ending that lacks dignity as well as definitiveness.

D.'s mission has not been accomplished: I am not referring to the material mission, the acquisition of coal, but to D.'s stay in the purgatory of England after experiencing the hell of his homeland. Greene seems to depict modernity's destruction of moral order. Both the primitive and the civilised structures are reversed, Christianity displaced with a new religion of death. In Greene's fallen world, "Goodness has only once found a perfect incarnation in a human body and never will again" (*CE*, 17).

The entire atmosphere of *The Confidential Agent*, with its foggy and dark tone, reflects Greene's memories about that London where "there was an exciting sense of living on a frontier, close to violence" (*SL*, 74). The aesthetics of the novel highlights that sense of 'passing through' where death is all looms over the action. It might also be seen as the anticipation of the kind of life Greene was due to lead at the dangerous edge of things. He could not get to Spain during the Civil War, but he could walk on that edge during his trip to Mexico.

The Power and the Glory

As has been explained above, in June 1937, at the time of the Spanish Civil War, the British periodical *Left Review* sent a questionnaire to writers and poets with the following question: ‘Are you for, or against, the legal government and the people of Republican Spain? Are you for, or against, Franco and Fascism?’ The results were published in a booklet entitled *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish Civil War* (1937) and, unsurprisingly, the vast majority of the writers listed (127 out of 149) favoured the Spanish Republic over Franco. To many people’s surprise, however, Greene professed neutrality. Greene, as W. H. Auden was later to feel, was horrified by the Republicans’ brutality against Catholics. In a way, *The Power and the Glory* is about Spain as well as Mexico: it could be seen as Greene’s displaced apologia for his response to the *Left Review*’s question about the Spanish War by dramatising the plight of a Catholic priest in a context of danger, intolerance and persecution. In other words, what Greene brings to this central relationship between lieutenant and priest in *The Power and the Glory* is a more complicated personal, political and religious baggage than he himself probably acknowledged.

Both novels, *The Confidential Agent* and *The Power and the Glory* were written concurrently. The atmosphere of both places reflects time and space running out, the situation of someone being hounded unto death. This idea is conjured up in the epigraph to *The Power and the Glory* by the seventeenth-

century poet John Dryden: “Th’ inclosure narrow’d; the sagacious power / Of hounds and death drew nearer every hour”. In *The Confidential Agent* the prototypes of characters that recur in Greene appear as the hunter and the hunted, but the hunted eventually becomes the hunter. In *The Power and the Glory* there is a hunter, the lieutenant, and a hunted, the priest, but the effect is in some sense reversed by the sacrifice of the hunted. The priest’s martyrdom reminds us of Christ’s Passion.

The Incarnation is the supreme demonstration of God’s love for mankind, when the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity took on our human nature while remaining a divine Person. The greatest act of love in History for a Catholic surely is Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross. Giving one’s life to save another signifies the most selfless act of all. The Passion of Christ and his Resurrection are the source of human conversion and hope. Christ’s body and blood made possible a direct contact with God through the sacramental ritual. The most shocking parallelism in humans is to be found in the example of martyrs. The Mexican Catholic martyr Miguel Agustín Pro-Juárez was executed by firing squad on 23rd November 1927 in Mexico City. He managed to conduct his ministry before being apprehended by the government authorities during the anti-Catholic persecutions carried out by President Plutarco Elias Calles who, having failed to fulfil his populist promises (1924-26), entered a repressive and violent anti-Catholic phase (1926-28).

Father Pro and his brother, also a priest, were falsely accused of complicity in an attempted assassination of the former president and condemned to death. As

Father Pro walked from his cell to the courtyard and the firing squad, he blessed the soldiers, knelt and briefly prayed quietly. Declining a blindfold, he faced his executioners with a crucifix in one hand and a rosary in the other and held his arms out in imitation of the crucified Christ and shouted out, "May God have mercy on you! May God bless you! Finally, he cried "*Viva Cristo Rey*". When the initial shots of the firing squad failed to kill him, a soldier shot him at point-blank range. The government ordered photographs to be taken at his execution so that they could be spread as a warning to other Catholics in Mexico. This propagandist plan backfired since the photographs – the first such record of an actual moment of martyrdom – were soon venerated as holy objects, commemorating Pro's heroic missionary zeal.¹¹²

Greene was told about the heroic sacrifice of Father Pro by his wife Vivien and confirmed to her that he had carefully read "the article on the Mexican martyrs" in November 1927 (Sherry, I.698). In *The Lawless Roads*, Greene called the anti-clerical and anti-Catholic rule of President Calles "the fiercest persecution of religion anywhere since the reign of Elizabeth" (19). Greene had written an enthusiastic review of Waugh's biography *Edmund Campion*. For Waugh, as Brennan explains, "the essence of Campion's achievement lay in his heroic commitment to the inevitable culmination of his mission – a resolutely embraced martyrdom which would serve as an inspiring example to other missionary priests" (2010, 57).

¹¹² See Matthew Redinger's *American Catholics and the Mexican Revolution, 1924-1936*. 2005.

In his final chapter, titled “Martyr”, Waugh describes the horrific agonies of Campion’s torture, hanging and mutilation “as both a reverential imitation of Christ’s Passion and a means of ensuring the inspiration of others to continue his work” (57). When Campion’s disembowelled entrails were thrown into a cauldron of boiling water, an onlooker was splashed by a spot of his blood.

This was the future Jesuit martyr Henry Walpole. Waugh explains: “In that moment he was caught into a new life; he crossed the sea, became a priest, and, thirteen years later, after very terrible sufferings, died the same death as Campion’s on the gallows at York. And so the work of Campion continued; so it continues” (1987, 167). Greene noticed that anointing of Walpole with a “spot of blood from Campion’s entrails” in his *Spectator* review to emphasise precisely how Catholic martyrdom created “a continuity of culture”. Greene had been very interested in writing about the Mexican Revolution and the Catholic Church since 1936. Finally, in 1938 he convinced Jesuit-educated Tom Burns at Longman to launch the project.

During his visit to Mexico in 1938, Greene confirmed the vision of a world full of “the violence, cruelty, evil” (*LR*, 14) that he had perceived in his own childhood. Greene takes his own experiences as primary symbols of an evil world, and in the Mexico where Catholics were persecuted he found a symbol of the suffering consciousness: “Mexico is a state of mind” (224). In *The Lawless Roads*, he records the recognition of the fervent faith struggling to survive and be lived amid such horrible violence and suffering.

While in Mexico he discovered the ardent faith of the persecuted Catholics, in contrast he found only lukewarm piety among people without any sense of catastrophe. He experienced this contrast in the elegant Mass in San Antonio to which he went before he crossed the Mexican border and the peaceful Mass in Chelsea to which he went after he returned. Those celebrations seemed to him so lulling and fictitious that he felt the need of danger and pain. Greene draws our attention to the difference of faith between the Pharisees and Christ who criticised the law-abiding Pharisees for hypocrisy and self-righteousness, and praises the strong and lively faith of the persecuted Mexicans waiting eagerly for Christ's voice.

Two years after his stay in Mexico, Greene wrote *The Power and the Glory* (1940), setting the novel in Mexico where Catholics were persecuted by the Communists. The novel tells the story of the anonymous "Whisky Priest", the last priest who still remains in the Mexican state of Tabasco. In that state, a rebellion had burst, in which a cruel and implacable religious persecution began. Consequently, the great majority of priests moved to other states where they could go on with their ministry. Those who could not escape were put under arrest and executed by firing squads. The Whisky Priest and Father José are the only ones who still remain in the state. Father José, however, accepts the government law through which those religious members who want to stay in Tabasco have to renounce to their ministry and marry.

The Whisky Priest, on the other hand, continues his exercise secretly for eight years. His life is not exemplary since he drinks in excess and has an

illegitimate daughter, Brigitta. He is persecuted by another anonymous character in the novel, a lieutenant of the police, who finally arrests the priest. The whisky priest receives a call to help a moribund American gangster with his last sacraments. He knows that it is a trap, but he goes anyway. When he reaches the hut, the Lieutenant is waiting for him. He is arrested and, after a night in prison, is executed the next morning.

In the last part of the novel, we learn that the different characters that had had some relationship with him become deeply affected by his death. Father Durán, in his work *La Crisis del Sacerdote en Graham Greene*, defines the basic lines of the novel: “*The Power and the Glory* es una narración en torno a un sacerdote nada común y contiene las hondas intuiciones del autor sobre el sacerdocio católico” (1974, 51). He goes on to explain the crucial outline of the book:

Es la historia de la pasión y muerte de un sacerdote que, a pesar de muchos defectos personales, permanece estrechamente unido con Cristo, tanto en su ministerio sacerdotal como en las profundidades de su alma. (...) El ambiente, tanto físico como moral, juega un papel decisivo para comprender el personaje central – el “Whisky Priest” – [y] Tabasco [que] es “el Estado sin Dios”, con un clima enervador y condiciones de vida casi insostenibles. (1974, 51)

Greene wants his readers to experience the great effort that the priest has to suffer physically and morally. As for the spiritual environment, things are worse. A priest in the godless State explains sufficiently the extreme situation in

which Greene places his hero priest. What the government wants is to erase from the Earth the image of God. The priest then appears as the only hope in that place to sow a hopeless seed. But the Whisky Priest stands for all the priests, he represents the true image of a Christ in a strange land. That is the reason why Greene introduces him as the “stranger” or the “fugitive”.

These words populate the whole novel whenever the narrator makes any reference to him. This nameless priest, threatened by death, is conscious of the weakness of the flesh he suffers from, but he is courageous enough to surmount his weakness and perform his duty. He fights against his persecutors, external fight, and against his inner agony derived from the consciousness of his sinfulness. The priest finally acknowledges that when people suffer and are unhappy, they love others, and experience true faith in God. As John Atkins puts it, “suffering is not an isolated emotion. From it spring religion, love, tragedy, and pity” (1963, 122).

The Baroque aesthetics in this novel frame the whole novel as if it were a great picture. The first thing that calls our attention is the description of the place. A wasteland, an ugly, disturbed, decaying world:

Mr. Tench went out to look for his ether cylinder, into the blazing Mexican sun and the bleaching dust. A few vultures looked down from the roof with shabby indifference: he wasn't carrion yet. A faint feeling of rebellion stirred in Mr. Tench's heart, and he wrenched up a piece of the road with splintering finger-nails and tossed it feebly towards them. One rose and flapped across the town: over the tiny plaza, over the bust of an ex-

president, ex-general, ex-human being, over the two stalls which sold mineral water, towards the river and the sea. It wouldn't find anything there: the sharks looked after the carrion on that side. Mr. Tench went on across the plaza. (*PG*, 1)

The “ex-“ repeated three times implies the weak political stability, military rule or dictatorship, and lack of humanity. The only person in the scene appears surrounded by death signs: vultures, carrion, sharks. On land and in the water, Greene evokes the atmosphere of despair, rotting flesh, and hopelessness. He is a dentist who has been separated from his wife, stuck in Mexico, for twenty years. He has lost all hope and now he is accustomed to live with pain. There are other spiritually dead characters in the novel such as Captain Fellows and his wife. Thus Tabasco is a place of hopeless people who have lost their way. They have forgotten their human conditions and courage to confront reality. In this abandoned land, there are only two men who endeavor to lead the frightened ones: a Communist police lieutenant and the Whisky Priest. The lieutenant tries to make people happy with material riches. The Whisky Priest exerts himself to save the hopeless people by the spiritual regeneration of the sacraments. The picture of the novel, nonetheless, is darkness everywhere except for these two figures.

The lieutenant feels “no sympathy at all with the weakness of the flesh” (24) and despises cowards. He endeavours to eliminate the belief in God, to banish God from the land. The lieutenant is a Marxist who has lost the piety and mysticism of his childhood because of the influence of positivism and Darwinian evolutionism and his repugnance with the Church's dogma. Unlike the lieutenant,

the whisky priest shares the sense of desertion with the “bystanders”. The priest longs to escape from persecuted Tabasco and go to Mexico City or Las Casas where the churches are still open. He has lost his church and is in a state of sin, unable to find another priest to hear his confession.

In literary terms, the Whisky Priest quest for God turns him into a kind of knight seeking out adventure. This “adventure” is not voluntary at first, but as in baroque aesthetics, a ray of light shines from the surrounding darkness of the narrative that makes the Whisky Priest move in search of what he has lost. This is what Greene called “the effect of Faith in action”. The meaning of the term “adventure” changes between the ancient and Christian world. In literature prior to medieval romances, adventure means fate and chance, but in the Christian knightly system, adventure signifies a quest, a pilgrimage that knights seek out and endure. This new attitude toward adventure recalls, and even may have its roots in St. Paul and the rest of the Apostles who left the safety of their homes to spread the Gospel news and administer the Sacraments.

In *The Power and the Glory* Greene depicts an adventure that takes place over hundreds of square miles of wasteland, and the knight-errant of the adventure is a priest escaping totalitarian persecution. The whisky priest brings the sacraments with him in his escape, extending the Church over the land where God seems absent, but the priest makes Him accessible from any point. At the same time that the priest is looking for a safe place, the novel focuses on his journey toward a more human understanding of his vocation. Ultimately, the priest’s journey is a journey of redemption towards his own personal eschatology.

On the level of the aesthetic spectacle itself the drama of his “conversion” is presented, according to Lambert, “as the symbolic equivalent of the power of the artwork itself, or at least, of the “nature” of the presence that stands behind it” (2004, 34). The procedure takes the form of a central absence or a violent and dramatic content such as barren landscapes, fierce attitudes, ruins that tell us of the corrosive force of humans and the passing of time, and affective images of incredible sadness and suffering.

Other techniques associated with Baroque art are those that distract attention at first, but by changing perspective appear visible and significant for the narrative understanding. Greene produces this anamorphic effect through the studied carelessness in the style of construction. “The effects of this style”, according to Lambert, “often resulted in an enforced confusion between the representation of the movement that occurs upon surface of the work and the emotional and perceptual movement that takes place in the apprehension of the spectator – blurring the boundaries between “inside” and “outside” (1994, 34).

Thus, as the whisky priest loses the formal accoutrements of priesthood, he becomes vulnerable to truth, naked before God. “Human struggle” and “mystery” are exactly the two aspects of life in God’s drama that he must interpret as he makes his pilgrimage towards death. The priest’s spiritual evolution depends upon human encounters and his openness to others. After he flees the village when it is raided by the Communists, he encounters a mestizo, his personal Judas. But the priest feels compelled to value this man with the two yellow fangs, realising that “at the centre of his own faith there always stood the convincing mystery – that

we are made in God's image. God was the parent, but He was also the policeman, the criminal, the priest, the maniac, and the judge" (*PG*, 98).

Whenever the priest stops moving, his past weighs upon him, causing his spiritual motivation to lag. His spiritual survival depends on movement. Each encounter defers the priest's execution. The reader is certain that execution awaits the priest, but the deferral of that execution allows him time to arrive at new sacramental knowledge about his vocation. As in the case of Pinkie, grace in the form of a bird (Holy Spirit) chases the priest.

[Coral Fellows's] clumsy progress reminded him of a bird feigning a broken wing... He made no movement to follow her, and before she reached the trees she stopped and watched him; he began to move slowly back towards the other hut. Once he turned: she was following him at a distance, keeping her eyes on him. Again he was reminded of something animal or bird-like, full of anxiety. He walked on, aiming directly at the hut. Far away beyond it the lightning stabbed down, but you could hardly hear the thunder; the sky was clearing overhead and the moon came out. Suddenly he heard an odd artificial cry, and turning he saw the woman making back towards the forest; then she stumbled, flung up her arms and fell to the ground, like the bird offering herself. (*PG*, 148)

On the evening before his execution, the priest has a dream of a surreal eschatological banquet. Plates from a café rest on an altar during mass. At first the priest does not pay attention to the Host, but when someone fills his glass with the wine he has a vision of Coral Fellows, the thirteen-year-old daughter of Charles

and Trixy Fellows.¹¹³ He remains unaware of the mass until she begins to tap out Morse code. The priest taps back in code, and in response the congregation taps code in their pews. Coral's act of risking her life and sheltering him alerts the priest to her relationship to the Host on the altar. Once the priest realises this, the entire congregation taps the word "News".

The dream awakens the priest to the good news of human communion that the lieutenant has denied. The central irony of the novel is precisely the story of Christ's Passion. Apparent failure turns out to be victory. Death becomes life. After the lieutenant talks with the priest, his hatred of the priest disappears, because he finds in the priest a self-sacrificing love that he did not expect. Even though he succeeds in arresting the priest, he is not happy at all. His conviction begins to shake: "He felt without a purpose, as if life had drained out of the world" (205).

According to the Bible, after Christ's crucifixion the disciples felt abandoned on the journey to Emmaus, but Christ was present and accompanied them unrecognised. At the outset of *The Power and the Glory*, abandonment is repeatedly stressed. Tench experiences "the huge abandonment". The priest feels that "he was abandoned". The church has been abolished by the state; and Luis's father says, "We have been abandoned here".

The spectator appears adrift, struck by dizziness, without companionship or guidance, without any "origin" or point of reference. It is by this image of confusion brought on by a loss of perception and, in a certain sense, by the

¹¹³ When the thief and murderer James Calver sends the Whisky Priest a message written on one of Coral's lessons, the implication is that he murdered her.

unconscious itself, that the experience of the sublime presents a simulacrum of death. Maravall writes: “the condition of that which terrifies and to a certain extent blinds, as it happens in the spectacle of death that occurs at a time when the experience of death had greatly changed” (1986, 212). Consequently, Maravall’s statement allows us to better understand why the sublime, understood in a more mythic sense as a simulacrum of death, entertains an essential relation to the drama of conversion. The morning of his death, the Whisky Priest confesses alone:

He caught sight of his own shadow on the cell wall; it had a look of surprise and grotesque unimportance. What a fool he had been to think that he was strong enough to stay when others fled. What an impossible fellow I am, he thought, and how useless.... He felt only an immense disappointment because he had to go to God empty-handed, with nothing done at all. It seemed to him, at that moment, that it would have been quite easy to have been a saint. It would only have needed a little self-restraint and a little courage (...) He knew now that at the end there was only one thing that counted – to be a saint. (*PG*, 209)

The Whisky Priest’s pilgrimage reflects this process of conversion, rather “re-conversion”, which will lead to his “actual” death. The priest’s failed escape becomes victory, representing and reproducing the Passion story. Greene turns the priest’s death into a martyrdom that invites us to evoke his actions the same way in which Christ draws us to recreate the power of the incarnate Word in the world. The Baroque aesthetics implies, according to Lambert, a fuzziness in perception,

or provokes an emotional dizziness – such as in both Pinkie’s death and the whisky priest’s sacrifice – where the reader/spectator “might be led to wonder whether it is there in the work or here within “me”” (1994, 34). The sense of incompleteness is enhanced by the anamorphic technique that addresses the work’s essential representation as concealed and secret, which can be revealed by the reader’s active participation in completing the surface of the aesthetic representation to arrive at a satisfactory sense of truthfulness.

Brighton Rock and *The Power and the Glory* are two great examples of this Baroque technique, unconscious to Greene most assuredly, but inherent in the novel written with a Catholic imagination. Thus, the whisky priest becomes the church and the Apostle wherever he goes across spiritually barren Tabasco. In this sense, the concealed representation “inside” might be that the priest himself becomes the Sacrament. Consequently, the concealed secret “outside” might be that the novel itself becomes the representation of that Sacrament, its liturgy. Thus, God’s power and glory may manifest themselves in the weakest and most insignificant of his creation. The Whisky Priest’s execution is seen through Mr. Tench’s eyes, who observes the scene through the window:

The crash of the riffles shook Mr. Tench: they seemed to vibrate inside his own guts: he felt sick and shut his eyes. The there was a single shot, and opening them again he saw the officer stuffing his gun back into his holster, and the little man was a routine heap beside the wall – something unimportant which had to be cleared away. Two knock-kneed men

approached quickly. This was an arena, and the bull was dead, and there was nothing more to wait any more. (*PG*, 215)

The priest's death is interpolated between elements that recall routine and unimportance, thus conveying his human condition, which turns into extraordinary and divine with the horrible sound of the coup the grace. The priest's body becomes a sacramental incarnation of Christ through the blood spilt. His body and blood turns into the body of Christ, transformation that Greene depicts through the allusions to Mr. Tench's guts. The priest's death invades Mr. Tench's senses. We learn of the tragic end through the dentist's hearing, sight, and mouth. We take the priest's body as communion, Eucharist. The final allusion to the arena and the dead bull is interesting from the point of view of bullfighting as a ritual-like event.

Patrick Query, reflecting on Cousineau's idea of ritual as an "unpurged mythic residue", argues that this residue, that "clings to modernist narrators' treatments of ritual, (...) explains their partial endorsement of scapegoating mechanisms". As he goes on to say, this "mythic residue" associated with those rituals such as bullfighting "augments the symbolic power that they retain by virtue of their ritual structure, even absent a specific context of belief. What has fallen away of spiritual dogma is replaced by the political, the social, the cultural, even the spiritual reconceived – whatever the preoccupations of the modern moment may be" (2012, 19).

Indeed, Greene, in his autobiography, stated that he wanted to study "the effect of faith in action" with this novel. For him, "Catholicism was no longer

primarily symbolic, a ceremony at an altar with the correct canonical number of candles, with the women in my Chelsea congregation wearing their best hats, nor was it a philosophical page in Father D'Arcy's *Nature of Belief*. It was closer now to death in the afternoon" (*WE*, 75-76). Consequently, the priest's Catholicism, his ministry and quest for God, becomes a matter of life or death, where the implications have an importance beyond the ordinary and safe. The reference to the dead bull as the final act suggests in the collective mind of the readers that the ritual must be repeated and reproduced. After putting sand on the blood spilt, the arena is ready for another bout.

The godless state of Tabasco turns into a sacred place where the ritual of Faith is represented. Greene's descriptions of Catholic devotions in Mexico blend familiar Christian rituals with tragic reminders of the sufferings of the faithful. In Monterrey, Greene attends eight o'clock Mass in the Cathedral:

An interior all white and gold with pale refined unSpanish statuary, and three girls doing the Stations of the Cross, giggling and chattering from agony to agony. I remember what President Cárdenas had said in a public speech in Oaxaca, "I am tired of closing churches and finding them full. Now I am going to open the churches and educate the people and in ten years I shall find them empty". The girls giggled their way up Calvary and I wondered if Cárdenas has made a true prophecy. The very old priest at the altar knelt and rose and raised God in his hands; what did it matter in the long run, anyway? God didn't cease to exist when men lost their faith in Him; there were always catacombs where the secret rite could be kept

alive till the bad times passed: during the Calles persecutions God had lain in radio cabinets, behind bookshelves. He had been carried in a small boy's pocket into prisons; He had been consumed in drawing-rooms and in garages. He had Eternity on His side. (*LR*, 39-40)

II.4 GREENE IN SPAIN

More than ten years before the publication of *Monsignor Quixote* (1982), David Lodge detected in Greene's work a "progress from fiction based on tragic conflict between human and divine values, to fiction conceived in terms of comedy and irony in which the possibility of religious faith had all but retreated out of sight in the anarchic confusion of human behaviour" (1971, 117). Besides the fact of its textual relationship with Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, the pages of *Monsignor Quixote* are full of other kinds of literature, as Holderness explains, "scriptural, theological, devotional, ethical – St. Augustine, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, St. Francis de Sales, Father Caussade, Father Heribert Jone – a Catholic literature which is continually thrown into dialectical relationship with the classics of Marxist philosophy, especially *The Communist Manifesto*" (262).

Theological discussion and argument occupy many pages of the novels, which reflects the ecumenical spirit of the great Catholic act during the second half of twentieth century: the Second Vatican Council. Indeed, the Council encouraged Catholics to engage in dialogue with other religions and non-believers. Although Greene himself was not completely satisfied with the results, he saw the Vatican II as an opportunity to open a process of revaluation of issues that concerned Catholics. In the novel, this ambiguous position towards the

Council is constantly shown. Most Catholics, including Greene, followed the event during its four yearly sessions. Greene was deeply influenced by some of the theological issues of the Council in his own religious imagination such as the struggle for belief, for a justice that should be the fruit of faith, and for sacramental renewal.

Indeed, with Pope John XXIII's announcement in 1959 of an ecumenical council, there was great enthusiasm for a Church-wide *aggiornamento*, and this was felt not only by Catholics but also by intellectuals, both religious and secular. The Council became a point of interest especially to the political left of Europe, where a desire to engage in a dialogue between Marxist thought and Catholicism began to be debated and illustrated in many books of the sixties. Bosco draws attention to Terry Eagleton, then a Catholic leftist literary critic, who "reinterprets the Catholic liturgy as a sacrament in which a Marxian notion of human alienation is healed by the selfless communication of God in Christ" (2005, 77). This desire for a cooperative relationship between Christianity and Marxism that would transform the Church as well as the State proved to be, as Bosco rightly asserts, a naïve attempt in hindsight.

Even though Greene was critical of Marxism as an ideology, he sincerely admired its determination as a sort of faith, a system of beliefs. Some of Greene's novels, moreover, had uncovered the similarities and differences between Marxist socialism and Catholicism. In *The Power and the Glory*, the positive features of the lieutenant's descriptions reflect that long-lasting admiration of Greene for Marxism that dates back to his years in Oxford.

The Second Vatican Council began a long effort by the Catholic Church to have a dialogue with the culture created by the West during the past two centuries. The goal was to place Catholicism at the centre of philosophical, political and social movements of the mid-twentieth century. Bosco explains how this shift is seen clearly in the language of the Council:

The emphasis on a continual, humanistic, inner renewal of the Church centred on the following key themes: the acceptance of historical consciousness in the articulation of the church's history and doctrine; the importance of an active role for the laity; the spirit of détente between the Church and the modern world; the modification of the Church's identity beyond clerical, institutional, and hierarchical terms to the more inclusive term 'people of God'; the renewal in liturgical and devotional practices; the effort at interreligious dialogue; the clear affirmation of religious freedom to worship according to one's conscience; and the stress on human rights as fundamental to religious faith. (Bosco, 2005, 78-79)

Dialogue was the 'magical word' of the Council and its theologians. However, the Council had an overall effect of compromise and ambivalence and invited, as Bosco goes on to explain, "a critical and, for Catholics, an uncomfortable ambiguity into the new expression of being a post-Vatican II Roman Catholic" (79). Greene also expressed this ambiguity with the Church's adaptation to contemporary forms, in an interview in 1988: "I haven't liked all that Vatican II did, but it was a breath of air, anyway" (Couto, 2006).

The Second Vatican Council tried to reformulate the nature of Catholicism negotiating a difficult balance between traditional Catholic identity and philosophical and social openness to modernity. Consequently, the Catholic Church had to reformulate the nature of analogical language, metaphorical images, homilietic inclusiveness, and other elements that defined Catholicism as the close relationship of art, both music and plastic, with the ritual.

According to Bosco, many Conciliar theologians spread the idea that “Catholicism had in the past stressed a vertical relationship between God and the human person” (sic) (80). The new impetus of the Council, then, was to imagine Catholicism in horizontal relationships. This shift would not have been necessary since Baroque aesthetics and the Catholic sacramental imagination impulse of the Catholic Reformation precisely emphasised and promoted the physical contact with God. During the Council deliberations, the Catholic imagination of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seemed to have been obscured or, at least, ‘forgotten’. The Catholic Church was gradually been deprived of its mystery and beauty, considered as obstacles for the new horizontal impulse, while other controversial matters affecting the lives of young Catholics were debated unsatisfactorily for the general population.

In a way, the post-Conciliar theologians’ contribution was to reframe Catholicism so that their imagination was radically reinterpreted in a more ‘ecumenical’ manner even though the scholastic language of formal orthodoxy was maintained. The post-war Protestant movement of radical theology, also known as ‘death of God’ theology, protested that God’s *transcendence* really

meant God's *absence* from the world, that the process of secularisation had killed the 'God of religion', as Schillebeeckx analyses in his 1969 *God the Future of Man*.¹¹⁴ They pleaded for a "definitive silence about God (...) or a provisional waiting silence about God" (1969, 64).

According to some Catholic theologians, the stress on the absence of God was merely the emptiness of rationalist and utopian constructs surrounding modern religious awareness. Schillebeeckx claimed that the modern experience of God's absence is in fact a moment of *metanoia*, the transcendence of God experienced as human surrender to mystery, where "the believer knows that God is present, but he experiences this presence only in the painful experience of absence, which nonetheless betrays a very intimate nearness and thus keeps hope alive" (1969, 84). In this sense, God's absence does not only point to an original presence, but also that absence is also eschatologically orientated. God transcendence is not only memory; he is also the God who is to come. This thought is based on the Catholic mystical language of John of the Cross revealing the imprint of Baroque aesthetics and scholastic impulse of the Catholic Reformation in any modern discussion on Catholicism.

These debates had an impression on Greene. In an interview with Marie Françoise Allain, when asked about what was God like for him he answered that He is "mystery, an inexplicable force. That's why when one prays one shouldn't, in my opinion, address oneself to this inexplicable and mysterious force but to His

¹¹⁴ See Schillebeeckx's discussion on 'death of God' theology in that work, pages 53-90.

intermediary, Christ” (1983, 155). When asked about the Vatican’s investigation of Küng and Schillebeeckx’s works, Greene says:

I must admire Hans Küng, especially for his book *On Being a Christian*. Schillebeeckx is a great and very learned, very estimable theologian; but, as a barely practicing Catholic, I find it very disagreeable when a historical event like the Crucifixion is turned into some wooly sort of symbol (...), if one considers oneself a catholic, there is a certain number of facts which have to be accepted. On the other hand if I were told that for some reason or other they had got it wrong about the Virgin Mary, or that the Trinity was no longer an article of faith, that would barely disturb my faith. (...) Catholicism has to remain human. A man lived: Christ. He lived in history. Why turn him into a concept, fit only for a handful of visionaries? (Allain, 158-159)

In the same interview, Greene is asked if he would publicly defend Küng and Schillebeeckx against their label as ‘heretics’ of the Catholic Church today. He answers, “I would defend them as Christian theologians but not as Catholic theologians. I’m not in opposition to Rome” (Allain, 158). Greene goes on to explain that, “this controversy has enabled me to discover an amusing paradox, almost a Chestertonian one: while Fr. Schillebeeckx’s declarations were intended to make the unbelievable credible, they have had the opposite effect on me – they have suddenly revived in me a deep faith in the inexplicable, in the mystery of Christ’s resurrection” (Allain, 159). In *Graham Greene: Friend and Brother*, Father Leopoldo Durán reproduces a letter from Greene dated the 30th April 1984:

Now paradoxically in the affair of Father Hans Küng and Father Schillebeeckx I find myself grateful to those two priests for reawakening my belief – my belief in the empty tomb and the resurrection, the magic side of the Christian religion if you like. Perhaps that is the unconscious mission of Father S. when he writes of the resurrection as being a kind of symbolic statement of the spiritual impression which the apostles experienced after the crucifixion. I remember again in St. John's gospel the run between Peter and John towards the tomb. Peter leading until he lost breath, and then the younger man arriving fast and seeing the linen cloths but afraid to go in, and then Peter overtaking him...it's like *reportage*. I can be interested in the *reportage* of a mystery: I am completely uninterested – even bored – by a spiritual symbol equally 'unhistoric' in Küng's sense as the *reportage*. The attempt to get read of the fairy tale makes me for the first time in years begin to believe in it again. I am against the condemnation of Father S. for he has communicated belief to at least one Catholic. (1995, 289-290)

Greene criticises Schillebeeckx when the theologian wrote that the gospels stories of Jesus are themselves a hermeneusis of Jesus's Parousia, or imminent second coming, and resurrection. According to this, there will be no way out of this hermeneutical circle. Thus, Schillebeeckx focuses on Peter's reassembling of the disciples after Jesus' death. The central question is what happened between Jesus's death and the birth of Christian faith in his followers some weeks or months later. The usual Christian answer is, of course, the resurrection, whether

that be understood as an objective, perhaps empirically verifiable, historical event or merely as a subjective renewal of faith on the part of the disciples.

The way Greene castigates both Küng and Schillebeeckx takes the same aesthetics as his novels. He “reports the news” about the moment that Peter and John discover that Christ has resurrected. The scene evokes Baroque aesthetics revealing the absent presence of the Risen Christ, the mystery of the resurrection as the real story that is narrated and reproduced in every mass, in every Catholic ritual, not as a symbol or a memory, but as a real fact. According to Greene, many of Second Vatican Council’s theologians have stripped the Catholic Church of its mystery, of its beauty. Bosco suggests that Greene shows some affinity with those theologians about their emphasis on the humanity of Jesus.

This emphasis, however, has proved negative because it has obscured the real presence of Christ in favour of a “fairy tale” version of the drama of salvation. This led Greene, Bosco admits, to suggest his weariness about Küng and Schillebeeckx’s “purported need to explain the Resurrection in a way that diminishes the historicity of the Biblical narrative” (2005, 89).

The developments that were stressing the humanity of Jesus affected the understanding of the sacramental character of Catholic worship. Indeed, Schillebeeckx’s 1960 *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* had an enormous influence among Catholic scholars prior to the Council. This work asserts that Catholic tradition is grounded by a belief in mediation that an experience of God can occur only insofar as God adapts to human materiality. Therefore, sacraments transcend the traditional scholastic dichotomy of ‘sign’ and

‘causality’ thus becoming an ‘encounter’, a more existential and postmodern term. There is an ongoing dialectic of encountering the sacred in the profane, according to the new theologians. However, this idea was rooted from medieval times and perfected aesthetically by the Counter-Reformation.

Post-Vatican II sacramental theology “reorients the sacramental principle from God’s vertical intervention”, Bosco argues, “from on high to a horizontal celebration of God’s continuous action in the life of the Church” (91). Bosco goes on to say that “the renewal in sacramental theology greatly affected the way in which Catholics thought about the Church’s sacraments” (91). He supports this idea with some examples about the denomination of the sacraments and the implication of these linguistic changes.

Baptism, for example, was no longer described as washing away “original sin” but rather as an initiation into the Eucharistic community. Confession was renamed the sacrament of Reconciliation to stress not the guilty person but God’s reconciliation with that person through Jesus. The vernacular mass and the revised sacramental rites dramatically shifted the participatory nature of the liturgy. Although the Eucharist is still understood as a “divine sacrifice”, Vatican II also describes it as a “sacred meal in which community shares”. Bosco adds that,

In contrast to Protestant reformers, Catholic attachment to the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist became a defining mark of Catholic belief and ritual. The Second Vatican Council determined, moreover, that Christ’s presence is not confined to and isolated in the consecrated elements but

also present in the community gathered together, in the person of the presiding minister, and in the proclamation of Scripture. (2005, 91).

In their attempt to make the Church more attractive and amusing to “people”, the theologians of Vatican II might have ended up making the Catholic Church and its rites less attractive, less mysterious, more dull and boring. In short, less Catholic. Precisely, Baroque Catholicism tried to recuperate those original features of Christianity. Greene’s novels before the Council already depict these preoccupations. Positive as Second Vatican Council’s provisions may seem, they did not give the results expected. Marian Crowe puts it this way:

The more substantive change in Catholic education, however, was due to the philosophical shift that transformed Catholic education, homiletics, and evangelisation. The emphasis was on the love of God, rather than the fear of God. Affective education was preferred to dogmatic or intellectual. (...) Consequently, a generation of young Catholics reached adulthood having almost no substantive knowledge of Church doctrine, moral teaching, Church history, or apologetics. Preaching also became less doctrinal, although it became more scriptural. It was Christian or humanistic, rather than Catholic, and many Catholics thought themselves primarily as Christian rather than Roman Catholic. They were losing that Catholic ‘oddness’. In comparison with all these social upheavals, philosophical shifts, and contested issues of gender and sexuality, the liturgical changes initiated by Vatican II might seem to be a superficial and cosmetic matter. (Crowe, 2007, 57)

Yet the changes in liturgy and church architecture and ornamentation were unsettling to many Catholics. The emphasis was less on the mass as a sacrifice and solemn worship, and more on a community celebration. Crowe goes on to say that, “both the style of the new mass and the changed character in religious education tended to minimise the supernatural aspects of religion and to emphasise the human” (58). Even the use of religious art was minimised. These changes were not simply cosmetic, nor even aesthetic.

All these developments in Catholic life and aesthetics are reflected in the novels of this period. The muting of a sense of sin developed by contemporary theology together with less attention to the supernatural and miraculous, and liturgy with a diminished sense of mystery, creates a real problem for the novelist. As Crowe concludes, “[I]t is difficult to write fiction that is incisive, dramatic, and compelling against a backdrop of religion that is so comfortable, humane, and prosaic” (66). Although Marian Crowe thinks more on contemporary novels with Catholic elements and plots, the same could be said of Graham Greene’s post-Conciliar novels, especially *Monsignor Quixote*.

Monsignor Quixote

In his first novel set in Spain, Greene anticipates his famous definition of La Mancha (Spain) as that tragi-comic region where he expects to stay someday. At the end of his writing career, Greene returns to the origin where Catholicism and the novel ran into each other for the first time. *Monsignor Quixote* (1982) is a novel modelled on the epic romance of Cervantes's *The Adventures of Don Quixote*. In a comic mode, it comments on the art of fiction by making a "real" character the descendant of his fictional forebear. Father Quixote is a parish priest of El Toboso in the region of La Mancha. After being promoted to the rank of monsignor on the recommendation of the bishop of Motopo, he travels about with the retired communist mayor of the village, riding in the priest's old car. Father Quixote calls the ex-mayor Sancho and his car Rocinante. Like Cervantes's classic, the book is divided into chapters, which, at the same time, tell adventure after adventure showing all over the novel parallelisms and allusions to the classic book. Both the priest and the ex-mayor share adventures and deep conversations about politics and religion, Communism and Catholicism. Both also share a sort of inner struggle against doubt in their own beliefs.

The genesis of the novel must be found back in 1964 when Father Durán began his acquaintance with Greene by questioning the writer about his work for a doctoral thesis. They became friends and Greene used to travel together with Father Durán in Spain and Portugal from 1976 onwards. Father Durán also

became a kind of adviser in doctrinal matters and his confessor as well. There is no doubt, therefore, about the influence that the priest had on Greene, as Durán himself explains in his work *Graham Greene: Friend and Brother* (1994). Moreover, one of Greene's favourite critical writings about his own work was Father Durán's *La Crisis del Sacerdote en Graham Greene* (1974).¹¹⁵

According to Father Durán, Greene conceived the idea for his new book during their visit to Miguel de Unamuno's burial site in Salamanca in July 1976. Jai-Suck Choi in his book *Greene and Unamuno* (1990) notes the influence of the Spanish philosopher on Greene's work after the writer's reading of Unamuno's *Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho* (1904). Choi goes on to explain that Greene is closer to Unamuno in *Monsignor Quixote* than in the previous Catholic novels because "Unamuno maintains that a living faith is attained only when we go through agonizing doubt and uncertainty" (1990, 189).

In July 1977 the author and Father Durán visited El Toboso, home of Don Quixote's Dulcinea; on that occasion, Greene announced his intention to reread *Don Quixote*. Later that year he completed the first chapter of *Monsignor Quixote*. On 1 February 1982 Durán received the complete typescript from The Bodley Head. Durán's account of the celebration at Bently's restaurant on August 25, 1982, the day the novel was published, exemplifies some important ways in which episodes from the narrative were born directly from events in their travels:

Somewhat emotionally, we recalled some of the actual moments of the journey which are echoed in the novel: our innumerable discussions about

¹¹⁵ It is unlikely that Greene could read in Spanish, but he probably read Father Durán's dissertation thesis, written in English, and the origin for *La Crisis del Sacerdote en Graham Greene*.

theology and communism; the five or six bottles of tonic water that I drank in Talavera; (...) There were many other memories, but above all we remembered those countless meetings we had with Señor Antonio de las Regadas (Señor Diego in the novel), the picnic lunches under his fig tree, and his excellent “unlabelled” wine which we took with us everywhere. (Durán 1994, 221)

Roger Sharrock, in *Saints and Sinners and Comedians: The Novels of Graham Greene* (1984), notes the movement into comedy in a second phase in Greene’s oeuvre after *A Burnt-Out Case* until his last novels. According to Sharrock, the Greene of the later phase is a superior artist entering “into his full maturity” (22). He also sees the backgrounds of Greene’s earlier novels a bit sketchy and celebrates the writer’s widening of scope, as he turned outward from himself and from England in the later works. The new background that Greene finds is “the tragic-comic region of La Mancha”, as a representative of the whole Spain in which issues of fiction and reality converge, not only because of Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*, but also because Spain is the nation in which the finest mystical literature flourished. In his later years, Greene was very interested in Mysticism and Theology, which together with Durán’s influence, helped the writer attain, according to Hoskins, means of accommodating his own doubts and a measure of happiness for which he was grateful. More importantly, *Monsignor Quixote* is a last testimony to prove that Greene retained a faith strong enough to withstand his intellectual uncertainty, his “unbelief”. He remarked once that, “the trouble is that I don’t believe my unbelief” (Durán 1984, 97).

Greene's *Monsignor Quixote* may be his most self-reflexive novel, which is, before any other classification, a religious parody of Cervantes's classic. But as we have explained above, *Monsignor Quixote* is the result of a gradual shift in Greene's later fiction. His later works move "toward a resolution, or at least a philosophical acceptance, of those tensions and conflicts that have plagued the real and figurative novelist in Greene's portraits" (Hoskins 1999, xviii).

This is clear in the allegorical separation of personality into two closely linked, but at the same time contrasted characters in many of his works all throughout his career. It can be seen, for instance, in *Rumour at Nightfall* in the dual protagonists Chase, secular and rational, and Crane, spiritual and romantic. Later, in the opposition of the priest and the lieutenant in *The Power and the Glory*, and more explicitly in the last phase of his work as in *Monsignor Quixote*. The three novels set in Spanish or Spanish American lands.

Here Hoskins observes that "the extended dialogues between these symbolic characters, [Father Quixote and the Mayor], present the rival claims of Catholicism and Marxism, the supernatural and the natural orders, which the author struggled to reconcile in his own attitude towards life" (1999, 112). With the expression "symbolic characters" Hoskins highlights the role of the storytelling, and ultimately the relevance of his role as an author, to the detriment of the characters. This tendency, made clear in his later phase above all, reveals Greene in his dual role as author, "one who persistently projects literary experience into his own view of life, and who subsequently projects both his experience and its 'literary' interpretation into his created fiction" (xviii).

Unlike other writers of his time, however, this shift in his oeuvre is a gradual movement. It is precisely in his later fiction that Greene makes an exhaustive use of recurring themes, ideas, patterns, images, and characters in which the conscious reader may feel tempted to recognize Greene's authorial hallmark. Indeed, as Hoskins suggests, "it is important to identify the stage of a writer's career when a self-conscious awareness or evaluation of his role as artist begins to appear as a primary feature of his work" (140).

For the first and only time, Greene modelled the fictive world of a novel on that of a famous classic. Although he had used a similar picaresque sensibility in previous novels, Greene this time drew on *Don Quixote*, as Valerie Sedlak points out, "to structure the adventures of the 'monsignor errant' and his Sancho, depending all the while upon the reader's familiarity with Cervantes to recognize the many similarities between *Don Quixote* and *Monsignor Quixote*" (2001, 579).

The analogies are more than obvious not only in the names of the main characters, but also the structure in episodes or adventures, in which the parallelisms with Cervantes's book work as parody in the reader's mind: the books of chivalry and the books of theology and mysticism, the tilting at windmills and the encounter with the Guardia Civil, freeing the galley slaves and helping the thief to escape or offering Sancho a kingdom, to put some examples.

These parallelisms remind us of John Barth's concise definition of metafiction as being a "novel that imitates a novel rather than the real world" (quoted in Currie, 1995, 161). Greene, therefore, makes explicit demands on the reader to fulfill his fictional world. *Monsignor Quixote's* parody, comic tone, and

meaning depends, to a large extent, on the reader's collaboration and knowledge of classic works such as *Don Quixote*, philosophic, theological, and socio-political writings, and of course Greene's own previous work and life.

In other novels, life and literature converge, but to note that it is important for the reader to have a certain familiarity with Greene's work, which is full of allusions, self-parody, and references to nineteenth-century novels from which he drew. *Monsignor Quixote*, however, is an allusion in itself reinforced by the eponymous hero when he affirms, at the beginning of the novel, to be a descendant of Cervantes's hero. Fiction and reality seem to merge in the course of the whole novel as its protagonists ride across that "region of the mind" called La Mancha.

That "landscape of the mind" which Greene finds in *Monsignor Quixote* is a mixture of physical and spiritual terrain, where the author conveys and discusses issues that populate his life as well as his fiction. As Holderness puts it:

Since the context of this well-known observation is a discussion of the relations between belief and writing, it is almost unavoidable for us to read "region" as both a fictional domain and a psychological condition, a chosen imaginative landscape and a settled state of spiritual resignation. (1993, 268)

In *Monsignor Quixote*, Greene finds the perfect narrative terrain to make all these elements converge. Besides, this novel is the only one where Greene used overtly the technique of tragicomedy. The formal structure of the text, in both "picaresque" and "conversational" strategies, encourages that interpretative

model that tragicomedy embodies. And it is because this convergence that it is absolutely necessary in terms of the structure and the plot to read the novel in the light of a rereading of *Don Quixote*. The techniques of tragicomedy serve Greene to convey freely that mixture of the picaresque and the conversational.

Giambattista Guarini's essay "Compendio della Poesia Tragicomica", published in 1601, was the first and remains a substantial analysis of the tragicomic form. Written in late Renaissance Italy, it represents a justification of that mixed genre which was brought to its height at the turn of the sixteenth century. It has, on the one hand, the thoroughness and the significance of Aristotle's justification of tragedy in the *Poetics* and, on the other, the detailed examination of the implications of comedy we find in Bergson's celebrated essay on laughter. Guarini suggests that tragicomedy's technical aim is the imitation of the actions of private men whose mistakes move us to laughter, while its overall objective is the purgation of melancholy in order to gladden our soul. This culminates in the complex but logical formulation that the aim of tragicomedy is therefore:

To imitate through the *mise en escène* a contrived action which combines all the tragic and comic elements, which can believably and decorously coexist, regulated within the framework of a unified dramatic form whose aim is to purge with delight the sadness of the audience. (Guarini 1984, 246)

For Bergson, *Don Quixote* exemplifies "systematic absentmindedness" which he sees as "the most comical thing imaginable: it is the comic itself, drawn

as nearly as possible from its very source” (2010, 146). Thus, Quixote bears out the true of his theory that, “laughter is, above all, a corrective. (...) By laughter society avenges itself for liberties taken with it. It would fail in its object if it bore the stamp of sympathy or kindness” (197).

Nothing could be farther from Pirandello’s point of view in his work “On Humor”. For him, Quixote represents the existential crisis of Cervantes in which a writer acknowledges the conflict in his own life between idealism and the naked self, recognising a world devoid of illusion. Tragedy and comedy are inseparable in Cervantes’s recognition of himself in prison: “He sees who he is and laughs at himself. All his sufferings burst into laughter” (Pirandello, 88). The psychological and social implications of Pirandello’s theory of humor are far more complex than Bergson’s reflections on laughter.

In seeing the differences between reality and the illusions which we cherish until they assumed a reality of their own, the humorist does not merely laugh (like the comic writer) or feels superior (like the satirist): “He will rather, in his laughter, feel compassion” (Bergson, 89). Greene, therefore, uses elements of both theorists and expresses them through the dialogic relationship between Father Quixote and Sancho. In the same fashion as Cervantes, Greene recognizes himself when he is trapped in the prison that his doubts built. Through an inversion process in the tone and the doubling of characters from those of *The Power and the Glory*, he succeeds in reflecting his own life’s anxieties on his fiction as if it were some sort of therapy.

His two autobiographies show the shift from the time of *The Power* to *Monsignor Quixote* early from their very titles: from “a sort of life” to the “ways of escape”. He transforms his life’s anxieties into therapy. The best way to do it is through tragicomedy, because laughter is a corrective that may heal the spirit as long as that laughter is shared and not private or subjective, as Father Quixote explains:

“Laughter is not an argument. It can be a stupid abuse. Perhaps they saw things differently from me. Perhaps it was beauty that they saw. All the same, sometimes I longed for one of them to laugh – even you, Sancho – so that I could laugh too. But I was afraid to break that total silence. There is something holy in silence. It would hurt me if in church when I raised the Host someone laughed”

“Suppose everyone in the church laughed?”

“Ah, that would be quite different. Then I would think – I might be wrong, of course – that I was hearing the laughter of joy. A solitary laugh is so often a laugh of superiority”. (*MQ*, 139)

Robert H. Polhemus comments on the connection of laughter and religious experience in his study of the underlying, original ties between religious and comic celebration. He argues for “the validity of equating prayer and laughter” in fiction, which “perform[s], in secular and hypothetical fashion, many of conventional religious functions of the old ‘divine comedy’”; this serves, Polhemus explains, “to defend culture by authoritative moral sanction against selfish and destructive behavior”, to “let loose wrathful indignation and hostility

in good conscience” and “to lift [people] out of themselves and free spirit” (1980, 4-5). Thus Father Quixote avoids a solitary laugh, because for laugh to be effective it is necessary to be shared.

The comic sense “can cause a sensation of wholeness and integrity of being”, Polhemus argues, for “when we are in a festive mood and laughing, we seem to go out of our normally anxious reflective selves into a different phase of being” (5-7). Father Quixote often laughs at himself; other characters or even readers may laugh at his innocence and comic predisposition. But this, however, makes us feel admiration for him and consider him a better person, and closer to truth than ourselves. In this way, Polhemus concludes, “the act of laughter (...) could be seen and felt as a natural intrusion of the miraculous into the self – as that is, a religious experience” (7-8).

When Lukács wrote this famous pessimistic image of the novel as “the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God” (1971, 88), he had in mind Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*,

Thus the first great novel of world literature stands at the beginning of the time when the Christian God began to forsake the world; when man became lonely and could find meaning and substance only in his own soul, whose home was nowhere; when the world (...) was abandoned to its immanent meaninglessness. (103)

Ortega y Gasset agrees that the world mirrored by the modern novel came into being only through the destruction of the traditional epic’s world and the cultural and philosophical conditions that supported it. Like Ortega and Lukács,

Bakhtin views the novel as the genre whose development implies a movement away from the “idealization of the past” of the epic, to an orientation towards contemporaneity (1981, 20). The novel in Bakhtin’s view discovers its authentic folkloric roots in the ancient and medieval tradition of popular laughter. The “absolute past” of the gods and heroes is thereby “contemporised, brought low” in the novel, which represents its subject “on a plane equal with contemporary life, in an everyday environment, in the low language of contemporaneity” (21).

Thus, the novel for Bakhtin partook of folk carnival humour as opposed to “the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture” (1984, 4). This force manifested itself in ritual spectacles of the marketplace or inns, comic verbal compositions and various genres of abusive language. It “demolishes fear and piety before an object, before a world, making of it an object of familiar contact”, laughter becomes “a vital factor in laying down that prerequisite for fearlessness without which it would be impossible to approach the world realistically” (1981, 23). What distinguishes Bakhtin’s theory from those of Ortega and Lukács is his perception of the role laughter played in annihilating the conceptual conditions of the epic:

The novel took shape precisely at the point when epic distance was disintegrating, when both the world and man were assuming a degree of comic familiarity, when the object of artistic representation was being degraded to the level of contemporary reality that was inconclusive and fluid. From the very beginning the novel was structured not in the image of

the absolute past but in the zone of direct contact with inconclusive present-day reality. (1981, 39)

The perception of the novel's world as a place marked by Lukács's "meaninglessness" and Bakhtin's "openendedness" implies a genre which mirrors the characteristic relativity and ambiguity of modernity. Unlike the epic hero, who never doubts his world's ideas or beliefs, and institutions, the novelistic hero doubts himself, and his self-doubt, as Octavio Paz explains, "is also projected on the reality that sustains him. Do Don Quixote and Sancho see windmills or giants? (...) The realism of the novel is a criticism of reality and even a suspicion that reality may be as unreal as Don Quixote's dreams and fantasies" (2009, 207).

Picaresque and dialogic novels originated in Spain, the former originated by *El Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) and the latter with *Don Quixote*. Greene was deeply concerned with 'action within words', and picaresque novels provide this action through words far from the realist rigid fictional forms. As Holderness explains, "picaresque novel produces significance in an intensely immediate and contingent way, centrifugally located within the specific situation of a particular event" (1993, 266).

The shift from *The Power* to *Monsignor* is relevant in this discussion. In the former, disagreement entails violence and abuse of power, and the dialogue between the Whisky Priest and the Lieutenant is never completed due to their mutually incompatible languages. In *Monsignor Quixote*, however, Greene places the action in the Spain of the eighties, a very different country from that Mexico of the earlier novel. The post-Francoist democracy of Spain permits the

possibility, and also the necessity, for a conversation between Catholicism and Socialism, which is both open and reciprocal. The journey of Father Quixote and Sancho is engendered in a “comradely silence” that will lead them to the “silent world of Osera” (*MQ*, 35, 236). Silence is seen here as the deep comprehension of the other’s belief through disagreement and discussion. Silence is also the way to achieve physical and intellectual contact with spiritual matters, as it happens in Spanish mystical literature. One of the most idiosyncratic features of *Monsignor Quixote* is its intertextual relationship with *Don Quixote*, but it also makes reference to theological and mystical literature like St. Augustine, St. John of the Cross, and St. Therese.

A major achievement carried out by Greene in *Monsignor Quixote* is precisely Father Quixote’s mysticism. This element makes him different from Greene’s other spiritual characters. Father Quixote is fully aware of, and has a good practice in mystical experience. He considers that it is “a waste of time trying and failing to pray” and chooses instead the mystical way of approaching and communicating with the divine (*MQ*, 151). He uses mystical meditation, silence, even to the point of affirming that, “I don’t just believe in Him. I touch Him” (*MQ*, 161).

In the mystical tradition, the natural and the supernatural, fact and fiction, converge like in the tragic-comic region of La Mancha, where they were able to make “nonsense of distance” (*MQ*, 106). In Salamanca, where St. John of the Cross studied, fact and fiction are related and their boundaries blurred by the narrator:

This was the university city where he had as a boy dreamt of making his studies. Here he could visit the actual lecture room where the great St. John of the Cross attended the classes of the theologian Fray Luis de León, and Fray Luis might well have known his ancestor if the Don's travels had taken him to Salamanca. (*MQ*, 110)

Later we can find another remark made by the narrator on the same issue of fact and fiction: "Father Quixote suggested they take the road to Valladolid in order to see the house where the great biographer Cervantes had completed the life of his forebear" (119). Even the omniscient narrator leads us to a sort of magical territory where fact and fiction converge thus mixing literature with history. In the course of the novel, the geography and the historical figures of Spain are related to mystical consciousness.

Greene defines the mystical process, when Father Quixote, having stopped to pray, tries "to exclude all thought, to be aware of nothing, to enter a complete silence, and after a long while (...) feel[s] himself on the threshold of Nothing with only one step to take" (151). Thus, he empties out the self "of all its empirical contents", which is "the universal precondition of the introversive mystical experience", and in this new state of consciousness, he is ready to experience the "emptiness of nothingness" that is the prelude to what Christian mystics describe, according to Walter Stace, as union with the divine (1960, 186).

Greene, however, never uses the term 'mysticism', although it can be understood through the clues he gives during the narrative. He mixes Father Quixote's mystical elements of spiritual life with humor and laughter to bring

about the mystical experience. Thus Father Quixote leaves logic, reason or belief behind, and remarks that he touches God, which is a mystical spark of divine love. He deals with intuition and his innocently erroneous paths lead him directly to God's grace in spite of all the comic situations to which these paths also lead. Father Quixote laughs at himself and also appreciates the laughter of others, including St. Augustine, who says in *The City of God* that, "there are those that can break wind backward so artificially that you would think they sung" (*MQ*, 102). He reacts to Sancho's remarks about belief, sin, and drunkenness with laughter and jokes instead of with a more priest-like attitude.

The comic process that often moves father Quixote and Sancho is related to their continuous celebration of food, wine, and love. According to Polhemus, "the comic mode is historically, psychologically, and metaphorically grounded in the physical experiences of laughter, sex, and eating" that act as "thematic variations on the regeneration of life" (1980, 9). Father Quixote "escapes" physically through his journey from civil and ecclesiastical hierarchies when, ironically, he has been appointed a Monsignor. He also "escapes" spiritually from rigid dogmas and tries to reach a mystical experience through love.

The final chapter, "How Monsignor Quixote Rejoined His Ancestor", is divided into four sub-sections. In the first section the Osera monastery is described in Baroque terms:

The carved exterior which dates from the sixteenth century hides the twelfth-century interior – an imposing stairway, perhaps twenty metres

wide, up which a platoon could march shoulder to shoulder, leads to long passages lined with guest rooms above the courtyard and the cloisters. Almost the only sound during the day is the ring of hammers where half a dozen workmen are struggling to repair the ravages of seven centuries. Sometimes a white-robed figure passes rapidly by on what is apparently a serious errand, and in the dark corners loom the wooden figures of popes and of knights whose order founded the monastery. They take on an appearance of life, as sad memories do, when the dark has fallen. A visitor has the impression of an abandoned island which has been colonised only recently by a small group of adventurers, who are now trying to make a home in the ruins of a past civilization. (*MQ*, 233)

The monastery is described with elements of Baroque aesthetics: the pictures of the ruins and past civilization, the sense of a more glorious past, sad memories, darkness and decay, and the statues that watch long passages. The figures that “take on an appearance of life” give a sense of the old monastery coming back to life when darkness falls. This image recalls Poe’s *The Fall of the House of Usher*, but the monastery of Osera does not represent death in that inverted Gothic way. The monastery seems like a half-gate between Heaven and Earth, and darkness represents, according to Baroque aesthetics, God’s absent presence. Both darkness and silence are living presences within the monastery walls, they seem to weigh and even affect the way the monastery’s guests understand life.

Inside, the reader meets one of the Trappists, Father Leopoldo, and the monastery's only guest, Professor Pilbeam. Father Leopoldo turns out to be a frustrated Cartesian rationalist who finds himself stranded in a monastery dedicated to silence. Pilbeam, a professor of Hispanic Studies, is a pedant who deems Cervantes's imaginative richness too "fanciful" and remains a Catholic only because he cannot be bothered to "change the label" of his birth. Despite the fact that Pilbeam is an American professor, his Catholic position might well represent that of many "cradle Catholics" from Catholic countries like Spain. Greene criticises the position of those Catholics who consider their religion as a "cultural Catholicism" instead of keeping their religion alive. Alive means absolutely real in terms of human experience. Professor Pilbeam is regarded as the greatest living expert on the Jesuit Saint Ignatius de Loyola. He cares nothing for Saint Ignatius's spirituality and instead hopes to find undiscovered documents about the saint's life. Professor Pilbeam also emphasises the lack of spirituality of those Catholics more preoccupied about "facts" than faith. He would represent those viewers of pictures such as Velázquez's *Christ on the Cross*, or Caravaggio's *Conversion on the Way to Damascus*, who do not manage to see God's absent presence in the bright darkness of the canvas.

Looking for Father Leopoldo, Professor Pilbeam steps into the church:

The church was ill-lit, and as he entered by the private door from the monastery he did not at first recognise a figure which stood examining the rather grotesque painting of a naked man stuck in a thorn bush. Then the man spoke in his American accent – it was Professor Pilbeam.

“I know you are not very fond of Saint Ignatius”, he said, “but at least he was a good soldier and a good soldier would find more useful ways of suffering than throwing himself into a lot of thorns”.

Father Leopoldo abandoned the thought of private prayer, and in any case the rare opportunity to speak was a greater privilege. He said, “I am not so sure that Saint Ignatius was all that concerned with what was useful. A soldier can be very romantic. I think it is for that reason he is a national hero. All Spaniards are romantic, so that sometimes we take windmills for giants”.

“Windmills?”

“You know that one of our great modern philosophers compared Saint Ignatius to Don Quixote. They had a lot in common”.

“I haven’t read Cervantes since I was a boy. Too fanciful for my taste. I haven’t much time for fiction. Facts are what I like. If I could unearth one undiscovered document about Saint Ignatius I would die a happy man”.

“Fact and fiction – they are not always easy to distinguish. As you are a Catholic...” (*MQ*, 237)

The beginning of the scene is narrated through the perspective of Professor Pilbeam. He represents the inversion of everything Catholic, and this fact is highlighted in Greene’s characteristic style: a Catholic is precisely more unable than anyone to see things in the Catholic way. The lack of Catholic education is evident in Professor Pilbeam’s ill description of the picture. Osera is a Benedictine monastery so it is obvious that the painting shows Saint Benedict’s

temptation motif, when he threw himself into a thorny bush in order to avoid the devil's offering of a girl. He chose to experience the suffering of Christ and his crown of thorns. Professor Pilbeam focuses on the prosaic elements, not on the meaning. It is not a matter of fact and fiction. In Catholic terms, as Father Leopoldo suggests, they are hard to distinguish, because what one sees, as in the painting, is not what is actually being narrated.

The most relevant episode in the novel takes place at the end, where *Monsignor Quixote's* profound incarnational aesthetic culminates in the final Eucharist celebrated by Father Quixote. The Guardia Civil, pursuing Quixote and Sancho after the debacle over the procession of Our Lady, have shot out Rocinante's tyres, causing the car to crash into the wall of the monastery. Again, the pilgrims Quixote and Sancho, like in Cervantes's novel, "run into the church". Sancho is left bleeding and the semi-conscious Quixote is carried into the monastery on a mattress.

Father Quixote awakes in the early hours, still delirious, and rising from his sickbed steps out. He is discovered and followed by his apostolic trinity Sancho, Father Leopoldo and Professor Pilbeam. Father Quixote led them down into the shadows of the great church lit only by the half moon which shone through the east window. He walked firmly to the altar and began to say the words of the old Latin Mass, but it was in an oddly truncated form. He began with the response, "*Et introibo ad altare Dei, qui laetificat juventutem meam*" (MQ, 248). The mass continues and Father Quixote seems totally unaware that there is no paten, no chalice, and no Host.

He raised empty hands, “*Hoc est enim corpus meum*”, and afterwards he went steadily on without hesitation to the consecration of the non-existent wine in the non-existent chalice. Father Leopoldo and the professor had knelt from custom at the words of consecration: the Mayor remained standing. He wanted to be prepared if Father Quixote faltered.

“*Hic est enim calix sanguinis mei*”. The empty hands seemed to be fashioning a chalice out of the air. (...)

In the years which had passed since his youth at Salamanca the Mayor had forgotten most of the Mass. What remained in his head were certain key passages which had appealed to him emotionally at that distant time. Father Quixote seemed to be suffering from the same lapse of memory – perhaps in all the years of saying the Mass, almost mechanically, by heart, it was only those sentences which, like the night-lights of childhood, had lit the dark room of habit, that he was recalling now.

So it was he remembered the Our Father, and from there his memory leapt to the *Agnus Dei*. “*Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi*”. He paused and shook his head. (*MQ*, 249)

The scene shows the ambiguous position that Greene maintained with Vatican II changes. From Sancho’s point of view, a communist ex-Mayor, the mass as a sacrament is something he cannot believe, but he has the Catholic imagination to comprehend the Eucharist – in fact he had been in a seminary. In that “dark room of habit”, Greene places the beauty and appeal of Catholic aesthetics, as some mysterious memory that flows from time to time

unconsciously and unwantedly in Sancho's case. The ritualistic words of the Tridentine mass spur that imagination.

Greene takes the sacramental language of sign and symbol to the limit by the very absence of bread and wine at Quixote's dreamlike mass. After Father Quixote consecrates and consumes the imaginary bread and looks around him seeking the communicants:

He remarked the Mayor standing a few feet from him and took the non-existent Host between his fingers; he frowned as though something mystified him and then smiled, "*Compañero*", he said, "you must kneel, *compañero*". He came forward three steps with two fingers extended, and the Mayor knelt. Anything which will give him peace, he thought, anything at all. The fingers came closer. The Mayor opened his mouth and felt the fingers, like a Host, on his tongue. (*MQ*, 250)

The word *compañero* etimologically comes from late Latin words *cum* and *panis*. Its meaning, therefore, is "to share bread with" or "to eat bread with", which points out immediately to the Last Supper. In Spanish, its first occurrence can be found in the *Glosas Silenses* written about the end of eleventh century.¹¹⁶ This word encapsulates the numerous travels and occasions where the two friends have been sharing food, mostly cheese, bread and wine, throughout the roads of Spain, in picnics in the countryside, restaurants, hotels, roadsides, and finally, in the church. The Mediterranean Judeo-Christian custom of discussing during meals is perfectly described in the novel, an actual account of the travels that Greene and

¹¹⁶ See Juan Corominas's *Diccionario Crítico Etimológico de la Lengua Castellana*. Madrid: Gredos, 1954. Print. Digital edition, 20 March 2015.

Durán made during the seventies and eighties. The communion effected through conversation comes to its full manifestation in the joy and companionship of eating and drinking together. This constitutes a Liturgy of the Eucharist which points out to a process of transformation.

Transformation stands for conversion, the recurrent theme in Greene's narrative. Like Cervantes's protagonists in both *Don Quixote* and *Persiles*, Father Quixote and Sancho undergo this process of conversion through communion. Communion as communication, they "eat" each other's words, and food. Father Quixote and the ex-Mayor have been *compañeros* all the way to Osera, sharing words and food, and now in the last Eucharist, they share each other. The circulation of Baroque aesthetics is represented to the fullest. Monsignor Quixote's delirious celebration of the mass treats definitely the debate between fact and fiction. The mystery of the Transubstantiation, one of the most important issues during the Catholic Reform, is emphasised by the absence of any material bread or wine. These material absences draw the readers' attention to the priest himself who becomes, as the Whisky Priest had done before, the human sacrament, and the human sacrifice as well. Both characteristics also turn Monsignor Quixote into a Christ-like image.

The imaginary eucharist where Father Quixote gives Sancho communion represents their eating the eucharistic Host together. They become *Corpus Domini Nostri*, but in contrasting ways. Father Quixote, through the tangible absence of bread and wine, of the Host, becomes himself a kind of human sacrament, a Christ image. When the Mayor opened his mouth, he "felt the fingers, like a Host, on his

tongue”. In the same moment of communion, Father Quixote dies. However, in this precise moment, as those at Emmaus when Christ breaks the bread, Sancho realises Father Quixote’s self-emptying love, he feels God’s love through his friend’s sacrifice.

Common to many of Greene’s novels, after the death of one of his protagonists, others are left discussing aspects of the absent characters in a kind of “post-mortem” analysis. This aesthetic effect mirrors the Baroque device of emphasising the presence of an element or person precisely through their absence. This technique is very effective in religious painting when the artist wants to convey or “represent” what can only be known intuitively. A good example that links Greene’s aesthetics with the Baroque is the representation of the sacramental imagination.

Caravaggio’s *Supper at Emmaus* (1601)¹¹⁷ serves as example to show how these characteristics succeed in creating that sacramental atmosphere which the narrative of the scene implies. A sort of golden light bathes Jesus and his disciples, but Caravaggio focuses on the figure of Jesus at the precise moment when, raising his hand to bless the bread, is recognised as the Christ (Lk 24:30-31). The artist emphasises the moment of anagnorisis by means of vigorous theatrical gestures and the use of a perspective device known as foreshortening: Christ’s right arm, painted at a right angle to the picture plane, seems to project sharply outward, as if to bless us as well as the bread. In a manner similar to Cervantes, Caravaggio is conscious of the self-reflexivity of his work as well as

¹¹⁷ See appendix 15.

the idea of telling his audience an old narrative in a new fashion, since the meaning is renewed each time the action takes place. At the moment of recognition, the disciple at the right stretches his arms along a diagonal axis that draws the viewer into the composition, while the disciple at the left grips the arm of his chair as though to rise in astonishment.

The focus on the Sacrament is explicitly narrated by means of a subtle detail that Caravaggio wants the viewer to discern, once that he has made us all part of the scene. This subtle detail is what the characters are staring at. The two disciples are looking at the blessing of the bread, and Jesus Himself is also looking at the bread, while the standing innkeeper, with his face in darkness, is looking at Jesus completely oblivious of the sacramental event, the transubstantiation. Greene, in father Quixote's imaginary Eucharist, utilises all these elements in narrative terms. The absence of the Host and the story narrated as if the readers shared Sancho's point of view force the readers to "enter" the scene and take part in it. The moment Father Quixote's fingers touch Sancho's tongue is Greene's depiction of that moment of anagnorisis, not only for Sancho, but also for the readers with a Catholic imagination.

After Father Quixote's death, some influences of Vatican II can be observed in the novel. While the Whisky Priest risked his life to find some wine to consecrate, Father Quixote does not need the mystery of Transubstantiation and goes directly to the Real Presence. Discussing with Sancho about the validity of Father Quixote's Eucharist and Sancho's own communion, Father Leopoldo says:

“Do you think it’s more difficult to turn empty air into wine than wine into blood? Can our limited senses decide a thing like that? We are faced by an infinite mystery” (*MQ*, 254). The novel ends with Sancho speculating on what has happened, especially that the love that he and Father Quixote had come to have for each other.

Why is that the hate of a man – even a man like Franco – dies with his death, and yet love, the love which he had begun to feel for Father Quixote, seemed now to live and grow in spite of the final separation and the final silence – for how long, he wondered with a kind of fear, was it possible for that love of his to continue? And to what end? (*MQ*, 256)

John Desmond sees in this novel an example of Greene’s affinity for Teilhard de Chardin’s theories: “For in this novel, Greene, like Teilhard, affirms the spirituality of matter and the energy of love within matter driving creation toward convergence” (1990, 68). This interpretation, however, could be taken as a gnostic vision that opposes Father Quixote’s way of practicing the faith. His attachment to the Tridentine Liturgy and to his “books of chivalry”, Saint Augustine’s *Confessions* and the works of Saint Francis de Sales, and his horror at the vulgar desecration of a statue of the Virgin “suggest that the physical ‘stuff’ of his faith is an important component and not just a springboard to a higher spirituality” (Crowe, 51).

Greene depicts in this novel the major preoccupations of the post-Vatican II period of the Catholic Church and contrasts them with the use of Baroque

aesthetics and liturgy that pervade *Monsignor Quixote*. The sacramental imagination is based on the Eucharistic community because it depends on the participation of the Catholics as an assembly (*ecclesia*). In this sense, the Catholic Church, the community of the Catholics, is properly defined as Eucharistic “not because it *possesses* the Eucharist, but because it *is possessed by* the Eucharist” (Hancock, 30). This possession by the Eucharist is at the same time a dis-possession of self, “a complete mystical abandonment”, a risk that can never be fully avoided”. This is the same “risk”, the same absolute act of love through sheer abandonment that God undertook in the Incarnation of Christ: “the risk of death, the absolute loss of self” (11).

While theology has often sought to explain the divine *mysterion*, the work of artists has been inclined to sustain the mystery, albeit in obscured, subverted, and inverted ways. As theology tries to delineate the complex relationship between God and His creation, art, on the other hand, also seeks to explain the relationship not by delineating, but by transgressing boundaries. Interestingly enough, Regina Mara Schwartz suggests that the Reformers’ rejection of the doctrine of transubstantiation enables the sacramental to spread over the arts: “Aspects of Eucharist began showing up in the poetry of the Reformation, albeit in completely unorthodox ways” (7-8). Accordingly, that displacement of sacramental presence resulted in expressions that subverted, even scandalised, traditional orthodox understandings of the Eucharist.

Taking into account that sacraments are both signs and symbols, Saint Augustine defines the Eucharist as *sacra signum* (a sacred sign) and *verbum*

visible (a visible word) (Augustine, 1998, 31). Sacraments are not only a part of language but a language to themselves. Nathan Mitchell notes the inherent ambiguity of Augustine's metaphor and suggests that Augustine's decision to define sacrament as "a visible word" embodies a metaphoric collision, since the first quality of a word we all think of is *acoustic*, then to put *verbum* and *visible* together seems transgressive, if not a mistake. However, this metaphor enriches the concept and suggests that the sacrament is a ritual experience through which we learn to "see with our ears" and "hear with our eyes". "If the root of sacrament is metaphor, then a new possibility is opened up for us; we may perceive the audible as visible and the visible as audible" (Mitchell 2006, 198).

In *Monsignor Quixote*, Father Quixote not only mediates God's action and love but also becomes physically present when the priest touches Sancho. In perfect sacramental incarnation, Quixote, in "Christ form", touches Sancho thus becoming the Host himself, offering himself to his friend. As Bosco states, "Quixote's final Eucharist is his life, an incarnate sign of the spiritual energy of love" (152). Bosco adds that, not since *The Power and the Glory* "has Greene embodied such a profound sacramental aesthetic, now imbued with a post-Vatican II sensibility" (152).

However, Greene, like Cervantes, uses a Baroque technique to add ambiguity to the narrative and criticise some aspects of the Council. The new theological dispositions on the use of liturgy and language were seen as an "attack" on Catholic attractive and ritualistic sacred words. The twentieth century liturgical movement, culminating in the Second Vatican Council's task of

translating the liturgy from Latin into vernacular languages¹¹⁸, is an embodiment of this struggle with language, with signs and their meanings, which constantly confound us. Catholic theologian Kenan Osborne, in *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World*, provides a summary of the major contributions of the liturgical renewal, which brought about the shape of our current sacramental theology:

In official and unofficial ways, liturgical reforms were already taking place prior to Vatican II. This change in liturgy, with its call for the use of vernacular language, for more participation by the lay person, for a better understanding of the history of liturgical practices and rituals in the Christian-Catholic tradition was a tremendous catalyst for the revolutionary renewal of the church's sacramental life. (12)

These liturgical translations, according to Osborne, would mean a move of the sacramental and liturgical theology from the clergy, theologians, and academy to the practical life of the *ecclesia*. Osborn admits, nevertheless, the influence of twentieth-century philosophy upon many of the Catholic thinkers of Vatican II: “existentialism, phenomenology, process thought, Marxism, linguistics, semiotics, and postmodern philosophy” (15). The translation of the Latin rite into the vernacular languages, far from being accepted or considered as an improvement, has turned into a factor of controversy within Catholics since the Council.¹¹⁹ The

¹¹⁸ Today when one thinks of “pre-Vatican II” Catholicism, the Latin mass (Tridentine Mass) immediately comes to mind. The first official statement of the new liturgy, “The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) was published on 4th December 1963.

¹¹⁹Actually, on 7 July 2007 Pope Benedict XVI issued the Apostolic Letter “*Summorum Pontificum*” *motu proprio* permitting the Traditional Latin Mass.

Council approved the translation of the Tridentine Mass into vernacular languages with the conviction that “the rites should radiate a noble simplicity. They should be short, clear, and free from useless repetition. They should be within people’s powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Art. 34, 129-30).

Some implications which cause controversy are that the existing liturgy is not short or clear – there are multiple translations into the same vernacular language – and might even be characterised by “useless repetition”, since listening to the same formulae in one’s own language on a regular basis may be far more boring than listening to the priest in Latin. The ritualistic and poetic sound of Latin, a language that is not overused daily, would work as a catalyst again to recover that enigmatic but appealing “difference” of Catholicism.

The bone of contention, therefore, still is that the replacement of the Latin rite by the vernacular mass destroys the beauty and mystery of the liturgy. The Catholic writer Piers Paul Read, in an interview with Stuart Roland, was asked about his own assessment of the liturgical changes:

My parents had four children who were raised Catholics, and all practise the Catholic religion to this day; but they had twelve grandchildren, none of whom practises the faith. What gave me a favourable outlook was the liturgy at Ampleforth, the Benedictine-run school I attended in England. I hated the place, but the liturgy made one able to believe in the mysteries of the faith, whereas I think these rather banal post-Vatican II services bored my children to death: ugly language, no mystery and very much subject to

the personality of the priest who happened to be conducting the service. It was one of the major reasons why they lost their faith. (8)

Read's comment not only focuses on how the translation of the liturgy has stripped the mass of its beauty and, as a direct consequence, has lost its efficacy, but also on the role of the post-Vatican II priest, who overextends his performance in endless and useless repetitions putting in simple words, on most occasions unnecessarily, the vernacular liturgy. The result is the boring attempt to translate what had already been translated. However, the aim was to follow a key phrase from the council, the "full and active participation" of the faithful in the liturgy (*Sacrosanctum*, Art. 14, 124).

Catherine Pickstock is severely critical when she argues that the basic problem of the liturgical reforms of Vatican II is *precisely* the Council's effort to simplify the complex structures of the Roman liturgy that had served the Church since the Middle Ages. According to Pickstock, this effort evidences a failure on the Church's part to realise that the liturgy's "theological struggle to articulate itself", is precisely "the crisis of articulation by which liturgical expression can be seen as a critique of secular modes of language and knowledge" (177).

The real problem here is that while the priest is pronouncing the words of the liturgy in front of the congregation, the sacrament is taking place. The words then acquire a ceremonial connotation. They are in fact part of the sacrament and it is important to maintain the words in the language of the ritual, timeless and sacred – the *lingua franca* of the Catholic Church – for any Catholic at any place to understand both their meaning and the change they bring about.

Father Quixote's celebration might be considered both unrealistic and almost heretic. However, the "profanation" of the Eucharist as a symbol is inevitable as it is built into the structure of language itself. This tendency of sacramentality to exceed its ecclesial structures may well have its origin in the appearance of sacramental traces in the practices of everyday life. Milbank affirms that the modern conception of the sacred and the secular as opposing forces has to be falsely constructed or imagined. Thus this "profaning" impulse might be in the symbolism of the Eucharist itself, the complex metaphor that the fractured body of Christ represents, presence and absence, life and death, sacred and profane, divine and human, abjection and glorification. This is the fundamental mystery of the Incarnation. The sacred is profaned and the profane is sacralised.

The degraded body of Christ pours itself out even in the most mundane tasks of everyday life. Every meal might become a Eucharist. Every bath might become a baptism. The sharing of every confidence might become a confession. This tendency towards excess and proliferation precisely defines the sacramentality of the Sacraments, best encapsulated in the Eucharist. Literary explorations of the sacramentality of the body broken, the grotesque vision of the fractured Christ, explore and negotiate this sacramental imaginary in ways that Christian theology and liturgy dare not think. *Monsignor Quixote* is full of images where elements of the Catholic faith are constantly reflected and exemplified by ordinary items, especially food and wine. Sacred places, as in Cervantes's novels,

become inns, pubs, memorials, universities, the side of any road, the boot of the car, and even an adult cinema session.

The novel alternatively explains theological issues through ordinary, even low elements typical of the places Father Quixote and Sancho visit. Father Quixote even tries to explain the Holy Trinity with bottles of wine. Days after the grotesque example, Sancho mocks his companion: “They killed one bottle while they waited and a second with their meal, but when the Mayor suggested that they complete the Holy Trinity, Father Quixote refused” (MQ, 73). During the first part of the novel, comic scenes alternate or blend with serious and profound religious and political debates. Many discussions and misunderstanding abound giving the novel a comic effect. In the second part, however, events precipitate and the tone of the novel turns darker. But it is in this tragicomic scenario that Catholic imagination is fully engaged.

While Father Quixote has his doubts about Catholic theology, Sancho has his doubts about Marxist ideology. It is precisely a shared sense of doubt that unites the two men: ‘It’s odd, he [Father Quixote] thought, [...] how sharing a sense of doubt can bring men together perhaps even more than sharing a faith. The believer will fight another believer over a shade of difference: the doubter fights only with himself’ (59). According to Greene, the feeling of doubt is crucial. Greene’s emphasis on doubt harmonises well with Unamuno’s philosophy. It is therefore significant that following their visit to the tomb of Franco in the Valley of the Fallen, Sancho takes Father Quixote to Salamanca to

visit the tomb of Unamuno, who had been Sancho's professor during his time as a student there.

Unamuno was an enemy of both Communism and Fascism, as Sancho acknowledges: "In a sense he was my enemy too for he kept me in the Church for several years with that half-belief of his which for a while I could share" (MQ, 111). This statement provokes "an unaccustomed anger" (112) in Father Quixote, who mocks the Mayor: "And now you have complete belief, don't you? In the prophet Marx. You don't have to think for yourself any more" (111). Father Quixote's anger – "or was it, he wondered, envy?" (112) – represents his fear that without "sharing a sense of doubt" (59) their friendship may be illusory. Life without uncertainty, to Unamuno, is plainly unbearable, because with absolute certainty there can be no room for faith or hope. Sancho is synthesising the conclusion of a key passage from Unamuno's major work, *The Tragic Sense of Life*.

Doubt and uncertainty, according to Unamuno's interpretation, unite Sancho and Don Quixote, just as they unite Father Quixote and the Mayor, their literary descendants. Doubt is a natural fact in the process of believing which is, in short, Faith. On the one hand, we need to sense the physical presence of the Body; on the other, we need to comprehend the absence as a presence. Doubting Thomas's narrative serves as counterpart to that of Emmaus where the sacramental imagination is necessary to understand the true mystery of Christ's passion and death. It is not the body itself, but its sacrifice what is at stake.

According to both narratives, the sacramental act is the most direct way whenever we need to see, touch, communicate and/or commune with God.

Both the Whisky Priest and Father Quixote's deaths represent a Christ-like sacrifice. Both priests die having given or giving the sacraments, although the narrative aesthetics actually emphasises that their bodies become the sacrament, they both turn into Christ's body and blood. The main differences are in the tone of the narrative. *The Power* narrates the dramatic pilgrimage across the godless state of Tabasco made by the Whisky Priest and his gradual "re-conversion" from sinner to martyr. His exemplary death revives and makes possible the continuation of living faith. Father Quixote inhabits a tragicomic region, Spanish La Mancha, and his pilgrimage serves not to convert him, but his companion.

In Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, the pilgrimage is also a conversion from knight-errant to knight-saint. The knight's death also implies an example of moral integrity. The difference here is that Don Quixote's madness is not his own madness, but others'. The rest of the characters are the actual fools who cannot "realise" the purity and selfless love of the knight, a kind of errant sacrament in times of disillusionment. Don Quixote's death is really an inversion of the process of Eucharist. As soon as he regains "consciousness", he is no longer a Christ-like figure, he is no longer a sacrament, since "there are no birds this year in last year's nests" (II.54). No-one will remember Alonso Quijano el Bueno, but Don Quixote is eternal.

In Father Quixote's imaginary mass, one can observe the inversion from *The Power and the Glory*, in which the admiration for the Whisky Priest as a "sanctified sinner" is turned, in *Monsignor Quixote*, into a comic mode of celebration and joy. Father Quixote's death serves only to reveal grace in the form of love and how it sheds upon Sancho after the celebration of Eucharist, remembering the happiest event of Catholic faith, Christ's Resurrection. While the Whisky Priest dies alone, in perfect humility, surrounded by wasteland, violence and death, Father Quixote dies in the company of his friend and the rest of the guests. But neither of them really stands alone, because the reader – through the techniques of the Baroque aesthetics of the novels imbued with a Catholic imagination – has entered the scene, has become active part of the mystery of Christ. Cervantes's Don Quixote as well as Greene's Whisky Priest and Father Quixote are three images of Christ, not a symbolic Christ, but an active representation of Him, an image which, like Velázquez's *Christ Crucified*, invites the readers to see the humanity of God and the divinity of man.

Greene's process of conversion might be some sort of unfinished process, but he undoubtedly showed what many others were not able to explain through theology, dogmas, or sermons. Catholic sacramental art and, more specifically, novels with a Catholic imagination may open new perspectives and meanings thus creating tensions in order to negotiate or subvert new contexts by means of that aesthetic impulse. This complex interrelationship between belief and the arts provides a "text" that gains access to a realm of symbolic expression that is both a source of traditional faith and a true occasion of contact with the Eternal.

CONCLUSIONS

In a famous essay, Lionel Trilling proposed that the basic theme of literature in general is “the old opposition between reality and appearance, between what really is and what merely seems”, and then concludes that, “all prose fiction is a variation on the theme of *Don Quixote*” (1950, 207, 209). It might be difficult to find out who invented the theme, but, as Trilling suggests, Cervantes was the first author who brought the concept to the fore in a way no one had before and no one has since. What Don Quixote thinks are historical records that become, in reality, fictional tales; what he perceives as a castle is actually an inn; what he thinks are ladies are prostitutes; what he believes are giants are really windmills; armies are flocks of sheep; Mambrino’s helmet is a barber’s shaving basin. The apparently cruel Marcela is in fact a strong, independent, honest young woman; what appears to be a young man bathing his feet in a stream is a beautiful young woman in search of the man who betrayed her; and so on through the novel.

“Don Quixote and all other characters perceive reality through the filter of their own experiences, values, ideas, memories, and hopes”, as Howard Mancing asserts, “but this should hardly be surprising, as that is exactly what all of us do in every aspect of our daily lives” (2006, 96). The theme of reality versus

appearance has always been at the heart of literature and the human condition in general. We trace the idea back to Cervantes both because he placed it at the central core of his fiction and, from that moment on, he became the most read, admired, and imitated author in literature. In this sense, Mancing continues, the relationship between life and literature might be considered a subset of the theme of reality and appearance. Like Greene's characters, for the middle-aged hidalgo who lives in La Mancha, literature provides something much more exciting, attractive and authentic than his boring life. However, the novel complicates this relationship when Don Quixote turns his fantasies into reality. Great novels have been inspired by this transformation since then, even films or television, and in more modern times, social media on the Internet.

That inspiration is not always fiction, but also politics and religion. Even the life of all Christian saints who have imitated Christ, saints and martyrs of the past are, in an obvious way, Mancing affirms, "little different from Don Quixote" (2006, 97). In my opinion, the influence goes in the opposite direction and Cervantes's views on religion are more explicit, apparently, in *Persiles*. Nevertheless, in *Don Quixote* alone there are over a hundred citations of, or references or allusions to, the Bible. Reliable scholarship on Cervantes claims that he was a devout Catholic. However, on several occasions, he seems to take a much more reserved, even ironic, attitude towards the Church. These references might explain the Catholic impulse of his writing and the confidence he had on his contemporary readers' Catholic imagination.

Cervantes never wrote a work on aesthetics or literary theory, but there is no question that he was very familiar with both classical theory and with much of the more modern Italian and Spanish theories of his day. His works abound on discussions and digressions on aesthetics and key debates on Aristotelian literary theory, probably through his familiarity with his contemporary Spanish literary theorist Alonso López Pinciano. Another important aesthetic feature in Cervantes is the Horatian doctrine of *ut pictura poesis*, which introduced in Baroque art the idea that one can convey with words an image, or an impression, of reality in the way that a painting can. By means of embedded narrations, anamorphosis, and other technical effects used in Baroque painting, Cervantes's writing negotiated the concept of imitation. Mimesis, imitation, and verisimilitude address aspects of reproducing a kind of literary realism, which will be the turning point of the modern novel.

In line with modern reader-response theory, Bakhtin has rightly insisted that Cervantes recognises, even celebrates, the interpretative authority of the reader. Therefore, understanding is never a passive process since "understanding comes to fruition only in the response" (Bakhtin, 1981, 282). Cervantes sensed this some four centuries earlier. He experimented frequently with narrative technique and structure so it is difficult to overstate the originality of his metafictional play and the way his novels expand the possibilities of the technique of literary self-consciousness. In *Don Quixote*, this metafictional turn is especially observed in Part II, where Don Quixote himself is a less comic and more pathetic character. The effect of his archaic speech, combined with his archaic armour – an

image of the times of his great-grandfather – declines in frequency during the course of the novel and disappears after II.32. The decline in chivalric rhetoric is so dramatic, Mancing points out, that it seems Don Quixote “hardly exists as a knight-errant at all” (1982, 133).

The *Quixote* has always been notorious for the cruelty its hero is forced to suffer. In the closing chapters of Part I, he is humiliated when he is locked in a cage and carted homeward by the village priest and barber. This is the pathetic end to his complete faith in his chivalric fantasy. This fact is demonstrated on his first sally when he demands of the Toledan merchants that in order to avoid battle with him, they must confess the supremeness of Dulcinea’s beauty without seeing her. Eric Ziolkowski explains that the difference between Don Quixote and other characters in the novel is based on the dichotomy of sanity (*cordura*) and madness (*locura*): “For the sane, nothing is true unless it can be seen: *seeing is believing*. (...) In contrast, for Don Quixote *believing is seeing* (1991, 20). In Don Quixote’s opinion, as Alban Forcione infers, “belief depends on what the reader will accept as true” and “truth is always a function of belief” (1970, 108, 109). Therefore the question of whether one’s visions are “likely” (*verosímiles*) or “false” (*falsas*) must remain a mystery.

In direct relationship with Lukács’s assessment of the *Quixote*’s world as godforsaken, the knight appears theologically significant insofar as he strives to uphold faith in his chivalric fantasy in the face of reality and reason. This mirrors the struggle of the modern religious individual to sustain faith in God despite the challenge of secularity and scepticism. The problem of faith and reason, therefore,

is often raised in Cervantes's criticism, a natural issue given the time and place of his writing. Spain was, in Walter Nigg's words, "a land totally permeated by the ecclesiastical spirit, and all its manifestations of life were filled with religiosity, even those things that seemingly had little to do with [religion]" (1956, 266). Spaniards of the age would have found it impossible to separate "religious" concerns from other matters of life. To them, as Castro puts it, "the supernatural and the natural, the religious and the profane, the spiritual and the physical, the abstract and the concrete, coexisted in one and the same unit of consciousness" (1969, 153). Although Castro never denies that Cervantes was a good Catholic, he considers the writer as a "hypocrite" critical of the Church, what he labels as a "dissemblance" (*disimulo*). The hallmark of Cervantes's religious consciousness, nevertheless, is that it is, in Forcione's words, "profoundly undoctinaire", being "alive with a complex ferment of spiritual and secular tendencies" (1982, 354).

I agree with Forcione since most attempts to classify Cervantes's religious imagination have been approached exclusively from close analyses of *Don Quixote*. We should not forget that he was writing parts of his *Persiles* at the same time. The balance between both novels is what shows Cervantes's creative impulse as a whole. *Don Quixote* can be considered the first modern novel for several reasons. It is the first novel that consciously reflects on its own status as a new way of telling stories (*novelar*), and changes, rather inaugurates, the way prose fiction is going to be. However, this creative innovation was possible thanks to the new artistic impulse of the Baroque aesthetics that was being stimulated by the Catholic Reformation. In this regard, *Persiles* apparently offers more explicit

Catholic elements and plot, but *Don Quixote* invites the reader constantly to be tangled up in scenes where the Catholic imagination is often involved and without that imagination, most of the novel's episodes may be misunderstood or misinterpreted. If we admit, repeating Trilling's assertion, that "all prose fiction is a variation on the theme of *Don Quixote*", and literature itself is based on that opposition between reality and appearance that Cervantes's novel masters and consciously subverts, the novel as a genre is indeed a Catholic construct.

The assumption that the Spanish literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reflects and responds to the tensions of its age forms the basis of Anthony Cascardi's study on various works of the period in his famous collection of essays *Ideologies of History in the Spanish Golden Age*. The author is right to stress the mutual influence of literature and politics in a period in which there has been, as he states, a tendency to view literature in "purely aesthetic terms" (1997, 1).

Cervantes's innovative way of writing, addressing a personal (ideal) reader as *lector mío*, introduces in literature the differentiation between the critical reader and the passive spectator who is caught up in a mass-oriented performance, a discussion initiated in *Don Quixote* (I, 48), regarding the excess in "consuming" stories – books in *Don Quixote* or visual arts in *Persiles* – which may eventually cause a distortion of reality. Through parody and a subversive use of madness, *Don Quixote* problematizes issues of fiction and reality, presence and absence, art and life. By means of an abuse of Christian allegory, *Persiles* creates a counter-

utopian narrative, a sort of anamorphic mirror that distorts the excessive dogmatism of Counter-Reformation.

I therefore propose that the aesthetics of these first novels is based on this Catholic imagination, which operates within fiction through the sacramental emphasis of the Catholic sensibility and the Baroque artistic techniques. Baroque aesthetics makes the most of that sacramental imagination and add innovations that constantly play with the above dichotomies between reality versus appearance, presence versus absence, light versus darkness. The Baroque, then, is not seen here only as “style”, following Mieke Bal’s words, “but as a perspective, a way of thinking which first flourished during a specific period and which now functions as a meeting point whose traffic lights make us halt and stop to think about (the culture of) the present and (some elements of) the past” (1999, 16). Style, therefore, is not an aesthetic concept, but it refers to cultural attitudes and states of consciousness that encompass social, intellectual, political, and aesthetic assumptions and thoughts.

By using Baroque aesthetics, the construction of meaning is manipulated by the artist who, forcing the viewer/reader to take part in the scene, paradoxically blurs the intentional character of constructing subjective meaning. Baroque sensibility is an opening up of the distinction between representation and thing, allowing irony and self-reflection to occur. The Baroque suggests a critical recognition of literature as a type of mirror held up to life and to the Biblical passage in 1 Cor. 13:12, where St. Paul famously evokes the figure of seeing “through a glass, darkly”, highlighting the importance of temporal distance in

viewing any object more clearly. I take this temporal distancing to work in both directions simultaneously.

Thus, I have not simply examined the ways in which Cervantes's novels and Baroque painting inform my theory of the Catholic origin of the modern novel, a Catholic imagination that reproduces the underlying construction of fiction, language *as* story, narrative itself as act through the drama of the liturgy of the Eucharist. I have also explored the ways in which contemporary novels written with a Catholic imagination negotiate and circulate the themes used by Baroque artists using precisely the same techniques both at the level of content and form. The reproduction of Baroque aesthetics focuses on 'how' rather than on 'what'. In so doing, the use of *chiaroscuro* and other pictorial techniques in narrative, emphasis on the human body highlighting the realism of its physicality, and other elements that forces the reader to take part in the scenes narrated/depicted. The Catholic author manages to convey beliefs, doubts, and truths. Moreover, the Catholic author, or rather the author with a Catholic imagination, is engaged with the idea of showing what is hidden, of making present what is absent.

I have employed the concept of mirroring and reflection for two interrelated reasons. In the largest sense, the imperial culture of Baroque Spain not only marks the boundary between what Foucault calls "classical" and "modern" epistemology, but also reflects the culture of both the convulsed twentieth century, where modernist ideologies led the world to chaos, and our own contemporary culture, where the foundational cultural and moral values of the

West seem to be in danger (1994, xxii). Consequently, the Baroque imagination was created in part to put an order to a time of crisis, or rather change, but avoiding looking back to the past exclusively. It sought a renewal of the social, cultural, and religious structures of its time.

The first decades of the twentieth century also experienced a need for change and renewal and many intellectuals found in Baroque aesthetics a way to negotiate these demands. A sense of moral decline and the constant menace of conflict are elements shared by both the seventeenth and twentieth centuries in Europe. A need for re-evaluation of moral and cultural concepts grew and brought about the return of the Baroque impulse. Both epochs share an urge for ‘conversion’, which in Catholic terms implies not only the classical sense of *metanoia*, but also the physical bodily change. This moment of conversion, that ‘epiphany’ is God’s call to St. Paul, or St. Augustine’s inward and outward reading of this narrative of transformation, *lectio divina*. In short, conversion means to follow the ethics of the *imitatio Christi*.

In my research I have established a parallelism between Greene’s conversion and the need for a return to Baroque aesthetics in order to situate the modern novel as a genre compatible with the Catholic sensibility with which that genre was originated. This move would place Greene as one of those authors who show in their narrative the elements of a Catholic imagination that had been obscured in British culture, as Ackroyd laments, for more than four hundred years. In order to succeed in his process of conversion, Greene tries to write novels as a kind of therapeutic treatment. In so doing, he manages to deal with his

difficult conversion to Catholicism, a process that he depicts as a traditional transformation from sin to grace. This personal 'pilgrimage' fuels his first novels, a difficult period for a writer who cannot take the necessary distance from his own characters.

His first novels also deal with the vision of the twenties and thirties as a time that suffered from a terrible lack of moral values, especially of religious sense for Greene. He lamented the loss of the religious sense in culture and the indifference of the Anglican Church, unable to offer a spiritual shelter. Greene became obsessed about the problem of evil in the world due to his traumatic experiences in the boarding school. Evil, betrayal, and distrust define the fictional world of his first novels. He feels that the visible world as well as the spiritual have ceased to exist for many writers such as Virginia Woolf, who considered Catholicism negative for the novel and opposed to the genre conventions. Greene thought that those writers of the subjective novel had lost that important religious dimension and this had made modernist artists depict a much thinner reality since they were not concerned with eternal damnation.

Greene's characters, especially his Catholic protagonists, are aware of the possibility of damnation. They believe in Hell, but they also inhabit a world where the lack of moral values forces them to live in limit situations. Consequently, Greene creates protagonists who are sinners and the most terrible thing of all is the fact that they know they are against God's law. For Greene, Catholics are more capable of evil than any one just because they do know the risks. However, in Greene's wastelands, God's grace is always pursuing sinners and his mercy

seems to reach even those who run away from it. Critics usually place those sinners at the heart of Catholicism in the nineteenth-century French Catholic literary revival. I argue that the idea of the sinner chased by God's grace is a recurrent theme in Baroque art. The theme of conversion is widely represented in Baroque art since the impulse of the Counter-Reformation spurred precisely the idea of conversion or re-conversion from a sacramental imagination.

The writers of the French Catholic revival obviously recuperated those issues in line with Baudelaire's concept of the beauty of evil and the Romantic idea of the ruins and decay of the past. In this sense, the Gothic anti-Catholic fiction is no more, and no less, than the inversion of those Baroque elements that fuelled the Catholic imagination during the Counter-Reformation in their attempt to order a shimmering reality. The difficulty of representing in written narrative concepts as grace, mercy and even God's presence, constitutes the main achievement of Baroque aesthetics and a major difference with Gothic or Romantic narrative.

Unlike the Protestant emphasis in depicting a God absent from the world, Catholic aesthetics insist on showing his presence in the most physical way. From works of Baroque artists, I have explained how Greene's Catholic imagination solves the problem of representing the 'invisible'. Greene uses a 'narrative chiaroscuro' to depict what seems absent and makes it present not only in the reader's mind but also in the 'physical' body of the narrative *forcing* the active participation of the reader to intuit and complete the possible fate of the protagonist from the perspective of Catholic ethos.

The repetition of Catholic patterns that make their way subtly through the narrative distract the readers' attention only to focus the action on the underlying meaning of the scene. The emphasis on the physicality of the human body and the description of ritualistic places negotiate Catholic elements that stimulate the readers' imagination. However, these places can be churches, inns, amusement parks, or any other familiar places that help dramatise human actions. Greene paints these familiar scenes in realistic terms, but invites the reader into a transformed perception of such scenes through the recurrent and repetitive references to Catholic elements. This perception mirrors a Baroque aesthetic because it suggests that reality has not changed; rather, the scene depicted has been transformed by the grotesque and violent dramas that reorient the readers' perspective. Whether in the chiaroscuro paintings of Caravaggio, the violent contrasts in Velazquez's works, or the spatial synthesis and harmony of Bernini's sculptures, as well as in Greene's conversion stories, Catholic Baroque modes of expression force the reader/viewer to recognise and respond to it, or rather to take part in the scene.

The ideology of the Baroque requires conversion, an interior turning that is not merely a psychological act but a dramatic turning of the self out to the otherness of reality (which for Baroque artists and a writer like Greene ultimately means God). Conversion is thus a re-composition – in canvas, plaster, marble or paper – in which we move from the accessibly smug, comfortable versions of religious experience to a moment of excessive sensory overload. In this moment, we return to a reformulation of the promise of salvation as something in our very

proximity but made distant by our disordered sensibility. Greene, like Baroque artists, creates an aesthetic strategy that deconstructs these preconceptions of what readers with a Catholic imagination think religion is and how these readers evaluate religious experience. Greene's fiction forces one to take off the blinkers of a rationalised and distorted faith in order to see clearly the image of God in unlikely places, among unworthy, unwanted, and ungodly people. In doing so, they become Christian witnesses, taking the risk of mirroring Christ's sacrifice and, as Bosco observes, "allowing a moment of participation in the drama of salvation while still in the flesh" (2009, 61).

Greene's first novels negotiate the author's trauma of childhood, his negative experiences in the boarding school, and his process of conversion, a sort of unfinished business, which runs parallel to his attempts to get over his past. In the background, he depicts characters who live in a disenchanted world and try to escape the boredom and indifference of their society. Some of these protagonists, Chant, Chase and Crane are all journalists who travel to foreign lands in search of meaningful experience, as Greene had done and would continue to do throughout his life. These first-phase protagonists share a game of self-division that afflicts them. Their dual nature reflects Greene's process of conversion through the allegorical treatment of the theme of self-division. Aesthetically, these first novels are more interesting than at the level of plot. Greene himself lamented both his inability to take the necessary distance from his characters and their implausible and melodramatic plots. Nevertheless, the novels from *The Man Within* to

Rumour at Nightfall offer a rich source of elements to explain Greene's fiction, his aesthetics; what he called his "pattern in the carpet".

Greene's subsequent works introduce protagonists who develop from atheists, escaping from their comfortable but boring British society, indifferent and complacent to the loss of a religious sense, to Catholics, who cannot escape from the evils of that society. Greene set these novels in the wasteland of a familiar society that has forgotten his spiritual roots while the menace of impending war looms over it. Sacred and secular elements intermingle in the narrative and this fusion creates a narrative where the drama of salvation and damnation takes place. The peak of this period might be *Brighton Rock* and the way Greene's aesthetics manage to show how divine grace chases the protagonist. The reader is left on the last page discussing inside the scene whether Pinkie has been reached by God's mercy or not.

Greene's novels written after the Second World War deal more deeply with moral dilemmas that reflect the author's adulterous relationships. The concepts of Hell and sin are debated creating controversy and emphasising the sacramental imagination of the Catholic elements. In the end, they are instruments to draw the readers' attention to the centre of Catholicism: the human actions. The Baroque aesthetics of these novels consists more of dispersed elements that are linked through the narrative. Scobie's broken rosary in *The Heart of the Matter* is an example of his gradual spiritual decay.

The action does not take place in comfortable or exotic places lacking spirituality and waiting indifferently for war, but now the protagonists are

Catholics or ex-Catholics in wastelands such as anti-Catholic Mexico, the damp West Coast of Africa, or a post-war Europe in ruins. Catholicism abounds in both content and form in these fictions. This introspection in Catholic morals pushed Greene to the limit of his creativity. At the turn of the sixties he suffered great anxiety because readers, especially Catholic ones, started to consider him more than a Catholic author, rather a kind of modern theologian. This exhaustion is reflected in *A Burnt-Out Case*, where his protagonist, a 'burnt-out' author travels into the heart of Africa, parodying Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, in search of self-abandonment. However, Greene's protagonist, Querry, symbolises through the Baroque aesthetics of the pilgrimage inversion a paradox in which the farther he runs away from the source of his former belief, the nearer he gets to it.

The novel also serves as a fine hermeneutical study of Baroque aesthetics by means of the parallelism of Querry, architect of Catholic cathedrals, and Greene, writer of Catholic novels. Both authors create sacramental works because both the church and the narrative share the ritualistic sense of a sacred place for anyone imbued with a Catholic imagination. For Greene the religious sense heightened the human actions in fiction. It was a sort of vocation that an artist should maintain to keep desire alive and to continue writing.

The last part of Greene's writing career was partly influenced by the Second Vatican Council's dispositions. Ironically enough, when Greene was trying to detach from theological constructs and tendencies, the Council piqued his curiosity and he started to read avidly the works of the more influential theologians of the Council. The tone of his fictions became less dramatic and

changed to tragi-comedy. His friendship with Father Leopoldo Durán and subsequent travels through Spain made Greene to recuperate and revise elements of his Catholic imagination that keep a tight connection with Spain and the Spanish.

This is the reason why the last part of this research includes a separate chapter on Spain in Greene. I include here Greene's two novels set in Spain, *Rumour at Nightfall* and *Monsignor Quixote*, *The Confidential Agent* which is inspired by the Spanish Civil War, and *The Power and The Glory*, with a Spanish-American setting, but a novel whose aesthetics is representative of the purest Spanish Baroque. *Rumour at Nightfall* exemplifies Greene's long-lasting fascination with Spain as the place where Catholicism is lived on the 'dangerous edge'. Two English atheist journalists representing a British society lacking spiritual sense travel to Spain in order to report on an elusive rebel during the Carlist Wars.

Greene, an inexperienced writer, depicts a torrid and exotic Spain seen through the eyes of the pair of protagonists – two halves of the same self – and a too melodramatic plot. However, this subjective vision emphasises the Catholic values in a modern world that has forgotten them. The almost 'barbaric' force of the Catholic elements and the way Spaniards live that faith in extreme situations reflect the conventions of Baroque aesthetics and the way Greene will use them throughout his writing career. The scene where Chase thinks he is about to uncover Caveda's identity, one of Chase's companions, Luis Roca, is shot and seriously wounded, and his superior, Colonel Riego, has to assist his man in the

last sacraments. The reader observes the scene through the astonished and sceptical eyes of Chase. This focal point emphasises the sacramentalism of the Spaniards Catholic imagination. His lack of religious sense is highlighted by the Baroque aesthetics of the scene, with the contrast of light versus darkness, the blending of sacred and profane elements, and bloodstained contorted Christs. Spain becomes a kind of ritualistic place where Catholic faith becomes something physical, tangible. Thus, Chase likens the religious belief to walking in a “strange land”, a “region of the mind” (*RAN*, 241).

The Confidential Agent uses the political side of Greene’s Catholic ethos. However, he depicts the horrors of the Spanish Civil War to emphasise the moral indifference of his own country. The miseries of human behaviour ultimately point out to the failure of an age.

These were Greene’s first approaches to La Mancha, that tragicomic region of the mind. However, he found himself many years before in the wasteland of anti-Catholic Mexico, under the Socialist governments of Cárdenas and Calles. Like his protagonists, Greene travelled to Mexico and experienced the contrast between how he lived his faith in his Chelsea parish and how Mexican Catholics risked their lives to have the sacraments. For the first time, he experienced first-hand the effects of faith on action. The story of the Whisky Priest, an anonymous priest – representing the man and his service more than a specific character – chased by the communist Lieutenant, is the story of how the example of Christ shapes the priest’s sense of self, his relationship to his world, and his ultimate destiny.

The Power and The Glory is more than a novel itself, it is a sacred place where, through Baroque aesthetics, a literary text is able to point to the presence of the sacred. Greene had the ability to blend modernist realism with the religious dimension of a group of characters. The novel shows how the presence of God emerges through the human actions. The priest, in his continual conversion from his initial fall from grace, keeps on discovering Christ's image among the people he meets and who need him. Simultaneously, he is depicted as an *alter Christus*, he receives God's calling and becomes Christ and sacrament across the godless state of Tabasco. In typical Baroque fashion, the priest undergoes his pilgrimage which will end in his martyrdom. The structure of the novel also recalls Cervantes's fictions. The Whisky Priest, in the first part of his pilgrimage across an apparently godless wasteland, meets several characters that turn out to be occasions to feel God. In the second part, the priest meets the mestizo, this Judas-like character who turns the quixotic quest into a Christ-like narrative. Don Quixote developed from knight-errant to knight-saint. The Whisky Priest's progress from sinner to martyr emphasises the humanity of Christ, the Christ likeness of humans. The priest, therefore, becomes the sacrament, his prison becomes the church, his death becomes triumph.

Greene's last novel set in Spain is *Monsignor Quixote*, a novel that reflects the changes carried out in the Catholic Church during the Second Vatican Council. The novel is the fruit of both his interest in Spanish Catholicism and the travels he made across Spain and Portugal with his friend the Spanish priest Leopoldo Durán. The novel is very different in tone from its "Spanish"

predecessors. Although *Monsignor Quixote* never reveals the year when the story takes place, it seems to be set in Spain during the first decade of democracy after General Franco's dictatorship, a much safer place than Northern Spain during the Carlist Wars as well as the Mexican state of Tabasco, where Catholicism is forbidden and punishable by death.

Some critics from Spain, such as Cano Echevarría (2008), insist on labelling the novel as "anachronistic" oversimplifying the fact that the place, as Greene had pointed out many times before, really represented "a region of the mind". Moreover, according to Father Durán, the novel originated from their travels through Spain during the seventies and eighties. The point here is Greene's return to the origin of the modern novel, to the roots of modern Catholic fiction: Cervantes's *La Mancha*. Greene, probably influenced by the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, establishes a dialogue between Catholicism and Marxism. The narrative points to the positive intentions of communist theory, but Monsignor Quixote's remarks consistently highlight the mistakes and impossibilities of that ideology. For Monsignor Quixote, Sancho's beliefs may be valid at the level of personal intention. However, according to the narrative, Monsignor Quixote might not be sure of the existence of God, but that doubt, which for Communists would mean treason, is precisely the pillar on which his faith rests. Faith depends on doubt, and doubt is human whereas Marxism is materialistic. Catholicism is based on faith because it emphasises human action.

These dialogical exchanges imitate Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. This parodic imitation can be observed in other devices such as the pilgrimage of the two

protagonists and their absurd adventures. The coincidence in names does not work probably so effectively and it might be considered unnecessary and naïve. However, it implies one of the most important themes in Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and Baroque aesthetics' influence on the novel: the representation of fact and fiction. Father Quixote himself laments that people often compare him to his ancestor. However, he immediately concedes that it is difficult to establish a parallelism with a fictional character. Greene's novel, like Baroque art or Cervantes's work, deals with the relationship between fact and fiction, not reality and fiction. The opposite of fiction, as Cervantes reminds us above, is fact, because his writing negotiates the art of showing verisimilitude, not reality. This is an important point in Catholic aesthetics since the divine, the eternal, is intuited, but cannot be noticed in realistic terms. Every element in fictions with a Catholic imagination points out to the absent presence of God.

The last scene of *Monsignor Quixote* is precisely where this circulation of Baroque aesthetics is represented to the fullest. Monsignor Quixote's delirious celebration of the mass definitely deals with the debate between fact and fiction. The mystery of the Transubstantiation, one of the most important issues during the Catholic Reform, is emphasised by the absence of any material bread or wine. These material absences draw the readers' attention to the priest himself who becomes, as the Whisky Priest had done before, the human sacrament, and the human sacrifice as well. Both characteristics also turn Monsignor Quixote into a Christ's image.

There are obvious differences between both “human sacraments”. The Whisky Priest depicts God’s grace and our sacramental relationship with Him in the physical wasteland of godless Mexico in sheer contrast with the apathy and indifference of the West, which emphasises its lack of spirituality and moral values. *Monsignor Quixote* reflects the tensions of post-Conciliar Catholics in an ingenuous, dialogical tone. However, the novel’s critique aims at the theologians and the decisions made during the Council. The abolition of the Tridentine mass, the excessive prominence of the priest’s performance, and the “horizontal” of the ritual allowing the community to occupy the centre of the “stage”, points out to the reorientation of the importance of the narrative of the mass. Monsignor Quixote’s imaginary celebration reflects the ambiguities of post-Conciliar celebrations. Greene turns back to the origin of the modern novel, where Catholicism is seen through Baroque aesthetics, to Cervantes, in order to show how post-Conciliar Catholicism, if positive in many aspects, has stripped Catholicism of its *difference*, its beauty.

The final chapter, “How Monsignor Quixote Rejoined His Ancestor”, blends the elements of the Cervantine novel with Baroque aesthetics. The Trappist monastery of Osera is described in Baroque terms. The silent world of Osera, therefore, symbolises a sacred place where rituals take place. The monastery becomes a kind of half-way between heaven and earth. Both friends, Quixote and Sancho, end their pilgrimage abruptly when Rocinante runs into the monastery. This time, it is not the blinding light of the road to Damascus, but the stony silence of Osera, that will bring about the end of the pilgrimage, conversion. The

imaginary Eucharistic where Father Quixote gives Sancho communion represents their eating the Eucharistic Host together. They become *Corpus Domini Nostri*, but in contrasting ways. Father Quixote, through the tangible absence of bread and wine, of the Host, becomes himself a kind of human sacrament, a Christ image. When the Mayor opened his mouth, he “felt the fingers, like a Host, on his tongue”. In the same moment of communion, Father Quixote dies. However, in this precise moment, as those at Emmaus when Christ breaks the bread, Sancho realises Father Quixote’s self-emptying love, he feels God’s love through his friend’s sacrifice.

With *Monsignor Quixote*, Greene seems to close the theoretical circle of this dissertation. The modern novel as a conscious genre was originated by Cervantes. This origin can be observed in his most famous novels. First, *Don Quixote*, where the Spanish author invents a new way of writing, still imitated today. Second, *Los Trabajos de Persiles and Sigismunda* describes the how Catholicism shaped Cervantes’s art of writing novels as well as explains many issues hidden in *Don Quixote*’s complex self-reflexivity. Greene’s return to La Mancha implies an attempt to bring Cervantes’s *Quixote* to our postmodern society. The result, beyond any comparison, unfair as it would be, is that our contemporary novel continues to negotiate the same issues. In this particular case, *Monsignor Quixote* mirrors the aesthetics of Cervantes’s novel emphasising the dialogic style, the structure, and makes explicit the inherent Catholic elements.

The Cervantine interplay between fact and fiction and the use of Baroque aesthetics and the emphasis on the human body as image and symbol of union

with God from Greene's "pattern in the carpet". Greene's development of Catholic aesthetics is a valid proof that modern Catholicism has not lost his sense of mystery and of the drama of salvation. In this regard, his writing represents an excellent account of the positive and enriching relationship between Catholicism and fiction. Following the path initiated by Cervantes, Greene's Catholic aesthetic vision of the world lies at the core of this Western way of depicting truth that we call novel.

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APPENDIX

1. San Felipe y Santiago el Menor. Zaragoza. (1686, 1752)

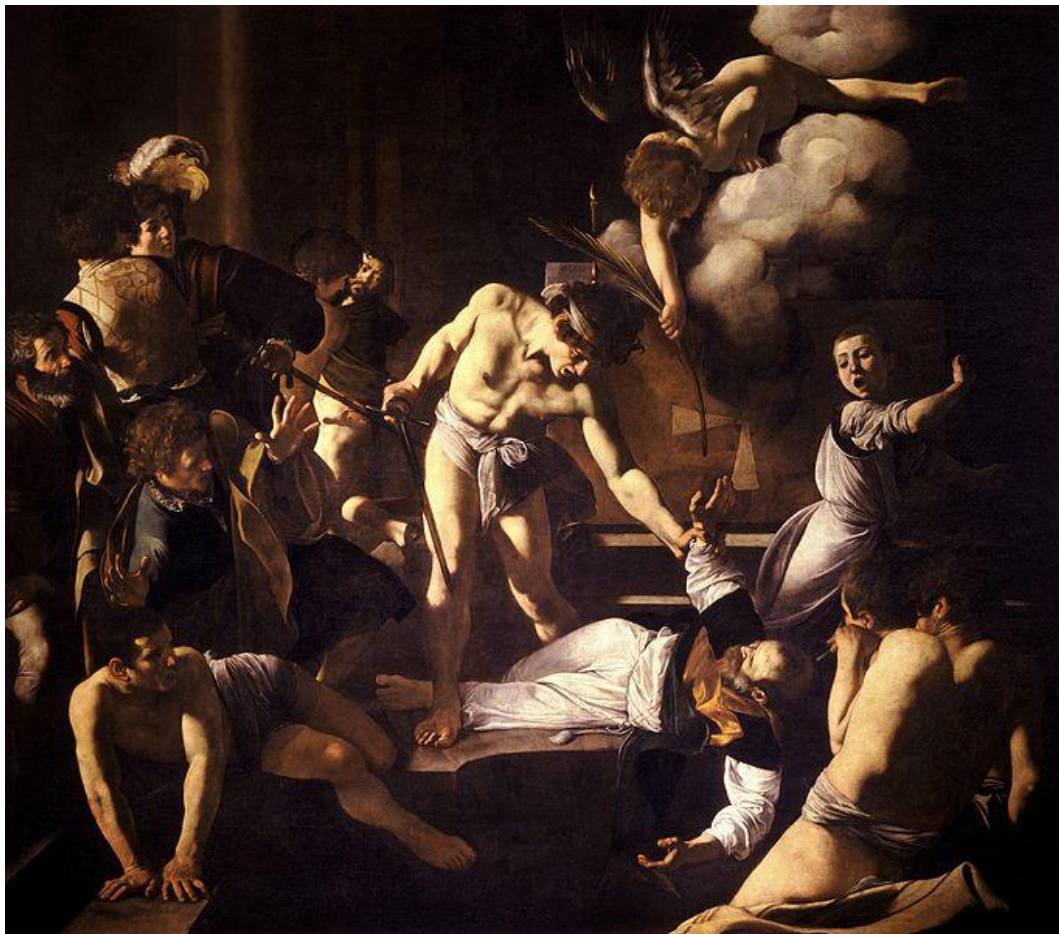
The Apostles on both sides of the central nave, representing the Catholic pilgrimage to Christ.



2. Caravaggio: *The Calling of St. Matthew* (1599-1600)



3. Caravaggio: *The Martyrdom of St. Matthew* (1599-1600)



4. Hans Holbein, the Younger: *The Ambassadors* (1533).



5. El Greco *El entierro del señor de Orgaz*. (1586-88)



6. Velázquez, *Las Meninas* (1656).



7. Holy Week in Spain. Guilds and Brotherhoods.

Logroño: Our Lady of Holy Sorrows meets Her Son, Christ (Nazareno). A.

Narvaiza and A. Rubio: *Nazareno* (1969), Navarro: *Our Lady* (1971)



Penitence Procession of *Los Picaos* in San Vicente de la Sonsierra,

It is the only display of penitence which includes flagellation, a practice that was common in many places until the 18th century. Despite the passing of time and prohibitions, this ritual has survived in the village. On their route, the “disciplinantes”, or penitents (whose identities are kept secret), dressed in white habits, masked and walking barefoot, whip their backs with esparto-grass ropes during the entire procession to the Stations of the Cross





Francisco de Goya: *Procesión de los Disciplinantes*. (ca. 1812-1819)



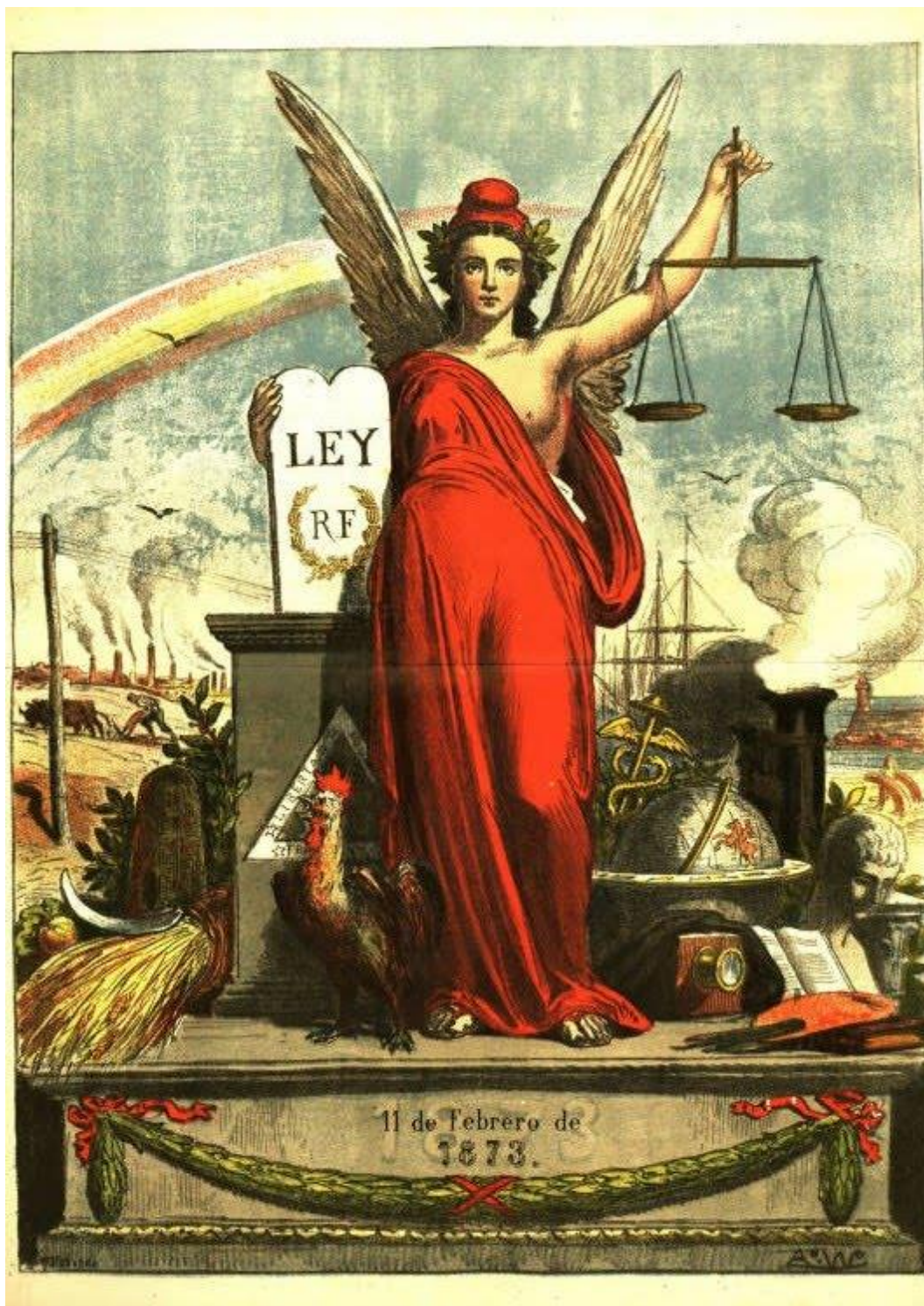
8. Velázquez: *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*. (1618)



9. Velázquez: *Christ crucified*. (ca. 1631-1632)



10. Tomás Padró Pedret: First Spanish Republic's allegory for *La Flaca* magazine. (1873).



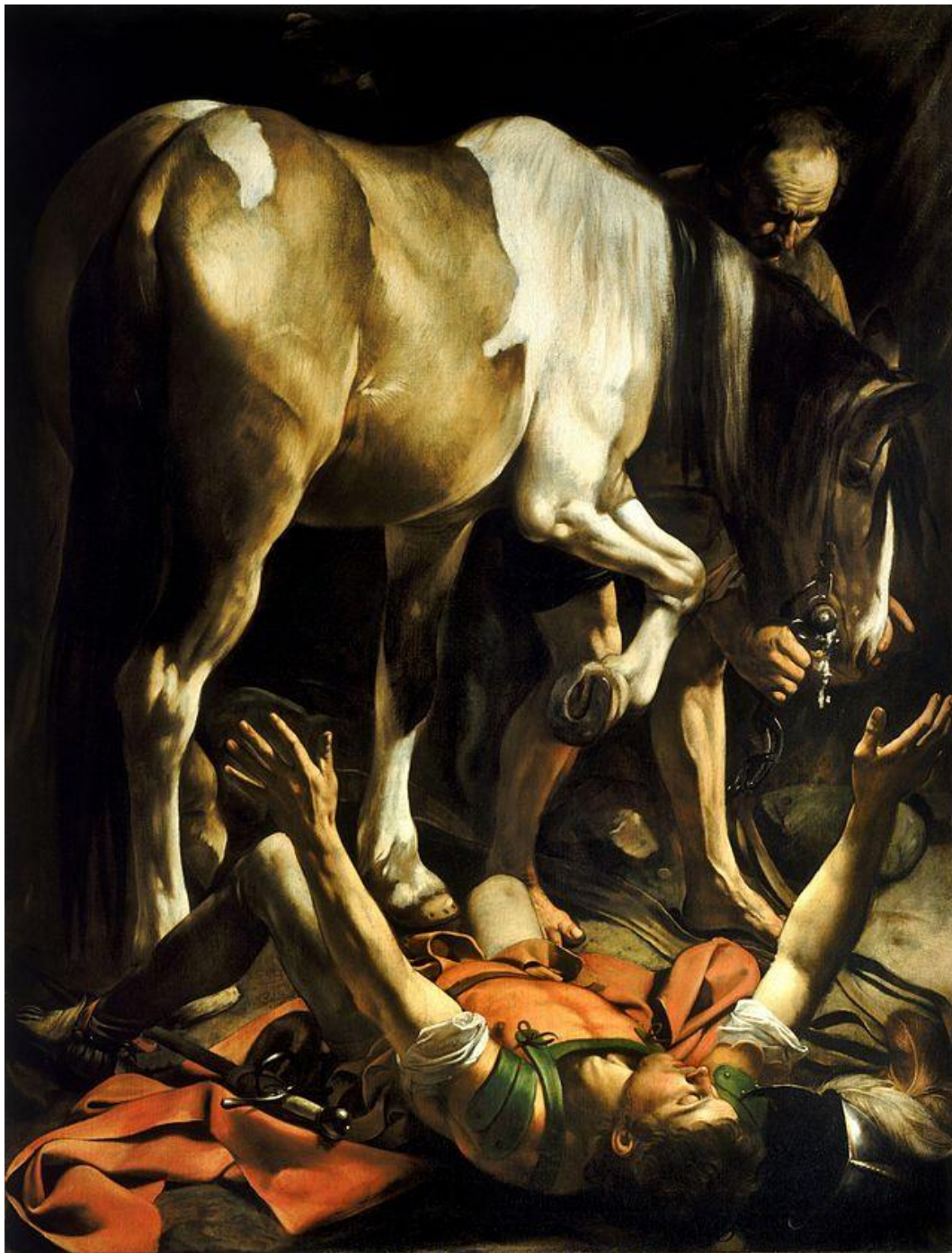
11. Durá lithography firm – Design by J. Barrera: Allegory of the Second Spanish Republic. (1931)



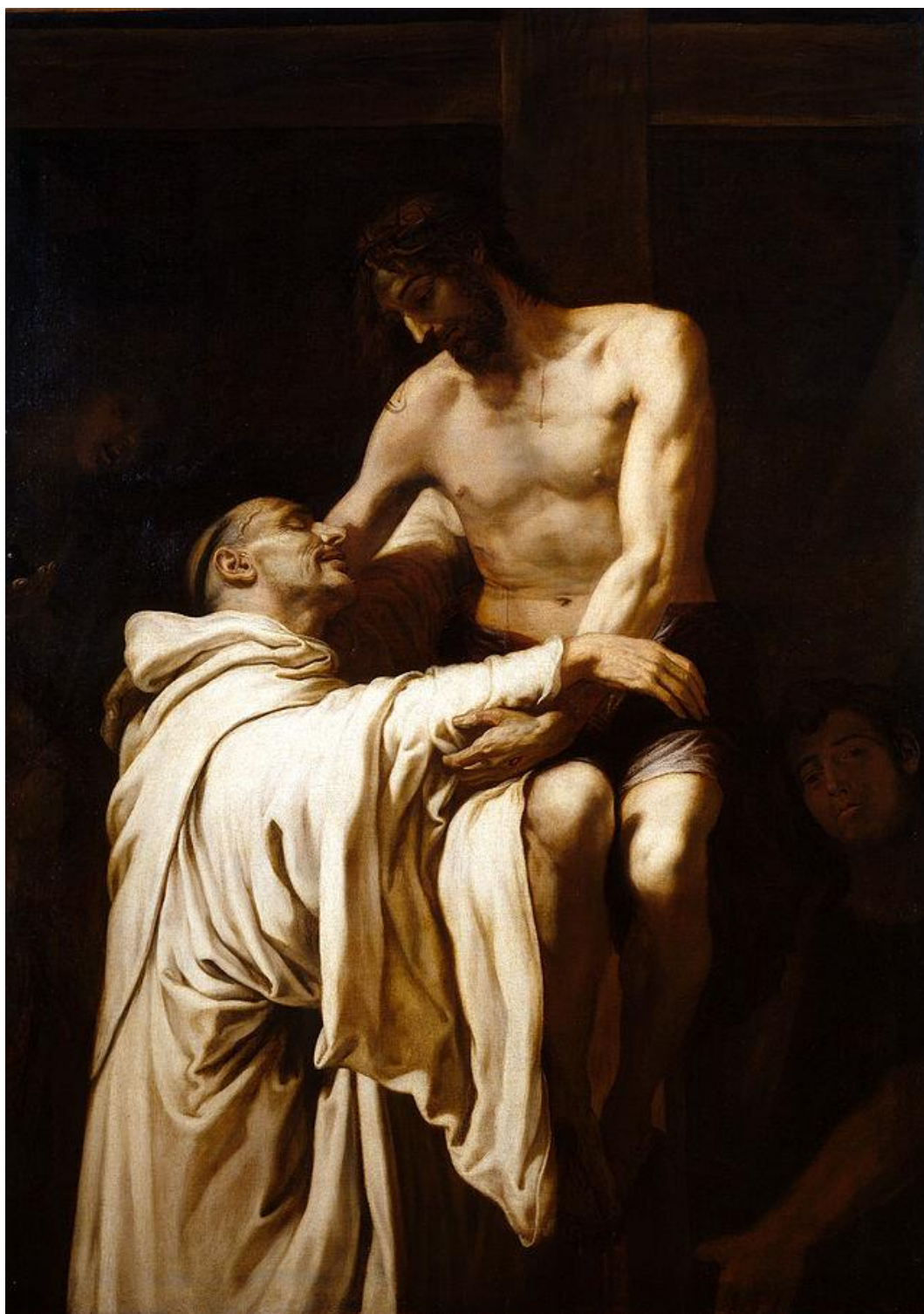
12. Gian Lorenzo Bernini: *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa de Ávila* (1647-1652).



13. Caravaggio: *Conversion of St. Paul on his way to Damascus* (1600-01)



14. Francisco Ribalta: *Christ Embracing St. Bernard*. (1625-27)



15. Caravaggio: *Supper at Emmaus* (1601).

