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Sinyard Neil, « Power without glory: Some reflections on the character of the Lieutenant in Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*, and on his relationship with the whisky priest », *Cycnos*, vol. 25.1 (Graham Green, *The Power and the Glory*), 2007, mis en ligne en mars 2010.
<http://epi-revel.univ-cotedazur.fr/publication/item/281>

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Lien du document <http://epi-revel.univ-cotedazur.fr/cycnos/281.pdf>

Cycnos, études anglophones

revue électronique éditée sur épi-Revel à Nice

ISSN 1765-3118

ISSN papier 0992-1893

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EPI-REVEL

Revue électronique de l'Université Côte d'Azur

Power without glory: Some reflections on the character of the Lieutenant in Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*, and on his relationship with the whisky priest

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Cet article s'emploie à analyser les relations entre le lieutenant et le prêtre en tentant de dépasser la simple opposition entre un homme de pouvoir sans gloire et un homme de gloire sans pouvoir. En effet, chez Greene (qui lui-même n'entretient jamais de relation univoque avec quelque sujet que ce soit), aucune relation antinomiste ne peut être réduite à une simple opposition terme à terme. Pour illustrer la complexité des relations entre les deux personnages principaux de *The Power and the Glory*, deux scènes sont examinées : la présentation initiale du lieutenant où transparaît son rapport trouble au catholicisme et à ses représentants et la partie terminale après l'arrestation du prêtre fugitif où se tissent des liens de parenté entre représentant du matérialisme et représentant du spiritualisme et où le lieutenant apparaît en fin de compte comme un prêtre manqué.

matérialisme, spiritualité, adaptations cinématographiques, personnages secondaires

Graham Greene's epigraphs to his novels were always intended as an important pointer to their meaning; and the epigraph to *The Power and the Glory* is particularly resonant. It comes from the seventeenth century English poet, John Dryden, a political satirist and also, like Greene, a later convert to Catholicism:

Th' inclosure narrow'd; the sagacious power
Of hounds and death drew nearer every hour.

The entire atmosphere of the novel is conjured up in that single couplet: of time and space running out; of the situation of someone being hounded unto death. Also the phrase "sagacious power" – that is, power used wisely – touches on many areas, both political and religious, in the novel. Put simply, one could say that the Lieutenant represents power without glory; and the priest attains glory even though powerless. The relationship has sometimes been represented as a collision of opposites, and Greene himself implied that when, in an introduction to an edition of the novel published in 1963, he described the Lieutenant as "a counter to the failed priest; the idealistic police officer who stifled life from the best possible motives; the drunken priest who continued to pass life on" (p.ix). As dramatised in the novel, the relationship between Lieutenant and priest seems to me more complex than that; and by way of contextualisation – and in the spirit of suggesting that hardly anything in Greene is as straightforward as it appears – I would like to comment on two of the most puzzling incidents of Greene's early life, in neither of which does he behave predictably or as one might have expected given his declared beliefs and apparent political sympathies. The first touches on his attitude to the police; the second relates to his attitude to politics and religion.

At the age of 21, Graham Greene had for a short time become a special constable, helping to uphold the law at the time of the General Strike in England of 1926. It was an act that in

retrospect seemed so out of character that in later life he was sometimes asked about it. To Marie-Françoise Allain, for example, who published the book-length interview with Greene, *The Other Man* (1983), he explained that it arose out of an incident where the strikers had fire-bombed the premises of *The Times* newspaper where Greene was at that time employed as a sub-editor and which was, incidentally, the only newspaper which managed to publish uninterrupted throughout the duration of the strike. Greene said he felt an obligation to defend his place of work, but there may have been family and domestic pressures too. His brother, Raymond (always a public-spirited fellow who was later to become a distinguished physician) had also become a special constable; and Greene by this time was engaged to his future wife, Vivien, a staunch Conservative, and it is unlikely he would have risked her disapproval by siding with the strikers.

According to Greene, the job did not amount to much. "I used to parade of a morning with a genuine policeman the length of Vauxhall Bridge," he was to write in his autobiography, *A Sort of Life* (1971). "There was a wonderful absence of traffic, it was a beautiful hushed London that we were not to know again until the Blitz, and there was the exciting sense of living on a frontier, close to violence.... Our two-man patrol always ceased at the south end of Vauxhall Bridge, for beyond lay the enemy streets where groups of strikers stood outside the public houses. A few years later my sympathies would have lain with them, but the great depression was still some years away: the middle class had not yet been educated by the hunger marchers" (pp.174-5). That is a very interesting passage. The phrase "the exciting sense of living on a frontier, close to violence" is a clear anticipation of the kind of novel Greene would be priming himself in the future to write (at that time he had not begun to write novels) where the image of a 'frontier close to violence' will be a pervasive one in his fiction. It might also be seen as an anticipation of the kind of life he was due to lead at the dangerous edge of things. Also he recognises that this incident really precedes his political education and awareness.

What are we to make of this episode in his life, particularly when it seems so much against the grain? His less sympathetic commentators, like Michael Sheldon, have picked up on this moment and argued that it is another example of his slipperiness and moral deviousness: a man practised in the art of deception. Is it really an aberration or is it a revelation of the real Greene as secret policeman, which he discloses to us as a double-bluff to keep us off the scent? My inclination is to see it as the former and to view Greene's commitment to law enforcement at that time as being about as serious as his membership of the Communist Party in the 1920s, which stemmed not from conviction but seemed mainly to be a ruse to secure some free foreign travel and lasted all of four weeks. I incline to think it was sincere at the time as Greene's political radicalisation came later; and to see it as an example of that tendency so nicely described by the great American poet Robert Frost in his poem 'Precaution' of 1936:

"I never dared be radical when young
For fear it would make me conservative when old."

Nevertheless, it is the one incident in his early life that does seem to run quite counter to his later proclamation of the writer's 'virtue of disloyalty' to the State: here he is a pillar of State authority, and I just wonder whether that background fact throws a slightly different light on his portrayal of the Lieutenant: he might recognise in him something of his younger, more conservative, self.

The second out-of-character incident occurred shortly before the writing of *The Power and the Glory*, by which time his political sympathies had moved substantially to the Left. 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. He definitely favoured the Republicans against Franco; but, as W.H. Auden, for example, was later to feel, he was horrified by the devastation of the churches and the murder of priests and nuns. Greene's novel, *The Confidential Agent* (1939), which he was writing at the same time as *The Power and the Glory*, touches on the Spanish situation without being very explicit; and his travel book about Mexico, *The Lawless Roads* (1939) is generally regarded as the catalyst for the novel. Yet, I have always thought that, in a surrogate 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 policeman and priest in *The Power and the Glory* is a more complicated personal, political and religious baggage than he himself acknowledged, and the relationship is much richer in characterisation as a result.

The policeman and the priest are prototypes of characters which recur in Greene: the hunter and the hunted. The hunted man at the end of his tether is a familiar Greene protagonist (one sees him, for example, in a powerful short story Greene wrote about this time in 1938, *Across the Bridge*, memorably filmed by Ken Annakin in 1957 with Rod Steiger in the leading role) and Greene's sympathies are instinctively drawn to the underdog, the anti-hero, the oppressed, those who lie outside the boundaries of State approval. It is not surprising perhaps that the really memorable characters in Greene – Pinkie in *Brighton Rock*, the whisky priest, Harry Lime in *The Third Man* – are on the wrong side of the law, clinging to their own morality or amorality in defiance of that of the society in which they move. Greene has sometimes been accused of ideological inconsistency in the distribution of his sympathies: for example, in a review of the famous 1956 Paul Scofield/Peter Brook stage production of *The Power and the Glory*, the great British drama critic Kenneth Tynan grumbled about this. "At this stage of Mr Greene's development," he wrote, referring to the late 1930s period when *The Power and the Glory* was written, "Satan had a Communist face. Now" – and here Tynan is alluding to the recent publication of Greene's *The Quiet American* (1955) – "he has an American one. Students of double-think will recognise the process" (*Curtains*, pp.124–5). But there is no inconsistency: Greene was writing on behalf of the victims of any form of State pressure or persecution, whether they be Communist or capitalist, and, as he said, the victims change. One could counter in a similar way another argument in Tynan's review that has often been made of Greene's novels: that he is indulging in a kind of special pleading for Catholics that would either alienate or be of no interest to those who were non-Catholics. As a non-Catholic myself, I can say that this is not the case and that, even if I might miss some of the nuances of the religious debate in the novel, I can still relate to what seems to me its core theme: the courageous way an individual will cling to his personal beliefs in opposition to a State power intent on ruthlessly enforcing conformity, and will insist on the freedom – even at the cost of danger to his own life – to make his own moral decisions. That theme is not Catholic but universal, and still capable of inspiring artists of our own day, as one can see even this year in that splendid German film that won the foreign film Oscar, *The Lives of Others* (2006).

In contrast to the priest in *The Power and the Glory*, one could scarcely imagine a policeman to be a central Greene protagonist. (The exception would be Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter*, but there I think his Catholicism is more important than his profession and he is too flawed and tormented to be really representative). In fact, one could hardly expect a representative of the law to be sympathetic or even interesting in a Greene novel, because he would ostensibly symbolise everything with which the author has little sympathy: a willing

submission of personality in obeisance to an unthinking loyalty to the law, to the State and to the dominant order. This does not mean that such people are bad, of course; it just means they are very dull – types whom Bernard Bergonzi in *A Study in Greene* calls “admirable examples of unimaginative integrity” (p.118). He is thinking of characters like the Assistant Commissioner in *It’s a Battlefield* (1934) and Mather in *A Gun for Sale* (1936), but, interestingly, the Lieutenant in *The Power and the Glory* does not quite fit that description: certainly a man of “integrity” but “unimaginative”? Unimaginative characters in novels do not generally dream (they don’t have enough imagination) but the Lieutenant here has a very significant final dream (p.206).

Given the nature of the material Greene invents – metaphysical quests under the guise of pursuit thrillers – it would be inevitable that policemen play a pivotal role as the pursuers, or agents of punishment and/or justice. They are sometimes the disreputable arm of a corrupt regime, most notably in *The Comedians* (1966), set in Haiti in the reign of Papa Doc who hated the novel so much that he authorised a pamphlet in response to it entitled *Graham Greene Unmasked* which accused Greene as being, among other things, a sadist, a spy, a torturer and a drug addict. (Greene was puzzled by “torturer” but otherwise flattered; it demonstrated, he thought, that his novel had “drawn blood”). Sometimes the police are just decent men negotiating their way sensitively through a legal, judicial, political and moral minefield, as exemplified by the character of Major Calloway in *The Third Man* so wonderfully played by Trevor Howard – Greene’s favourite performance in a gallery of great performances in that film. The policeman will often strike up a relationship with the main character, have philosophical conversations, even play games, as happens in *The Quiet American*, *Our Man in Havana* (1958) and *The Honorary Consul* (1973) as they cagily try to probe the hero’s motives (and alibi) under the guise of friendship. Sometimes there is the discovery of an unexpected bond. As Professor Bergonzi has noted, a recurrent situation in Greene is one in which two male characters – and they are always male – engage in intense discussion or argument in a confined space and in near or complete darkness (*A Study in Greene*, p.180): he mentions *The Honorary Consul*, but it also occurs in, for example, *The Quiet American*, *The Comedians*, *Monsignor Quixote* (1982) and in *The Power and the Glory*. The darkness not only seems to facilitate communication but foster self-disclosure, so that the two characters almost become as one, in communion with their shadow sides, as it were. It is this I want to explore now with reference to the Lieutenant: whether the priest is his opposite or, to some extent, his double.

In his comments on the novel in the 1963 edition mentioned earlier, Greene writes that his Lieutenant was untypical of the revolutionaries he had encountered in Mexico when writing *The Lawless Roads*: “as for the idealism of my lieutenant,” he writes, “it was sadly lacking among these shabby revolutionaries” (p.ix). He is a counter to the priest, he says; and this idea of contrast is perhaps reinforced structurally in an almost cinematic way by the manner in which Greene crosscuts between the two of them and even brings them together in the same frame, as it were, when the Lieutenant misses a possibility of arrest because of a failure of recognition. “If only, he thought, we had a proper photograph – he wanted to know the features of his enemy,” Greene writes (p.53); and that always strikes me as a curious detail, because he *has* a photograph – admittedly of a much earlier occasion, but his insistence that he does not have a photograph seems to draw attention to the fact that he has one but cannot decipher it properly. “He wanted to know the features of his enemy”: by the end they will have ceased to be “enemies”, the Lieutenant conceding to the priest that “you are not a bad fellow”, the priest calling the Lieutenant “a good man” on three different occasions, including one occasion when the policeman inadvertently gives him precisely the sum (a five peso piece) needed for a Mass. In describing the Lieutenant as a counter to the priest, Greene is doing less than justice perhaps to the subtle way he suggests connections and a duality in both

men. To illustrate this, I want to concentrate on two sections of the novel: our introduction to the Lieutenant in Part One, Chapter 2 entitled 'The Capital'; and the final part of the novel after the arrest.

This is how the lieutenant is first described: "The lieutenant walked in front of the men with an air of bitter distaste. He might have been chained to them unwillingly – perhaps the scar on his jaw was the relic of an escape. His gaiters were polished, and his pistol holster: his buttons were all sewn on. He had a sharp crooked nose jutting out of a lean dancer's face; his neatness gave an effect of inordinate ambition in the shabby city" (p.14). That description seems to me unusually dense and suggestive. Ostensibly what Greene is doing is simply dramatising the point that he made in his introduction: the contrast between the lieutenant and the other revolutionaries, with the "idealism" that Greene talked of reflected perhaps in his immaculate appearance and his obvious pride in the accoutrements of office – the polished gaiters and holster, the sewn buttons. And yet there is an undercurrent of disquiet. This is not the introduction of a man at peace with himself or possessed of an inner certainty. He walks in front of his men with "a bitter distaste": they do not really fulfil his ideal; the impression is of a leader with some decidedly dispiriting disciples. "He might have been chained to them unwillingly": no sense there of a shared effort or belief in what they are doing, or of a pulling together for the collective good, or as the Lieutenant as an inspirational leader of men. Indeed, I am struck by the fact that the image seems almost the wrong way round: if he is the leader, should not they be chained to him "unwillingly" and he, as it were, dragging them forward? The image here almost suggests the opposite: he is chained to them and they are, metaphorically speaking, pulling him back. (As a metaphor for what they stand for – a new Marxist millennium in Mexico – it is hardly very affirmative.) And there is an odd ironic joke tied to this: "he might have been chained to them unwillingly – perhaps the scar on his jaw was the relic of an escape" (p.14). It is a strange comment, lightly ironical, speculating that the lieutenant might perhaps have tried to escape from this motley crew and that scar on his jaw was the result. Greene never does explain that scar, but it intriguingly links the Lieutenant with other scarred characters in Greene in his fiction at that time, the gangster Pinkie in *Brighton Rock* (1938) and the gunman Raven in *A Gun for Sale* whose facial scars are the external sign of an inner emotional wound. Does the Lieutenant have an inner emotional wound, then, and if so, what could it be? Religion?

"His neatness," writes Greene, "gave an effect of inordinate ambition in the shabby city". It seems a bit incongruous, overly conspicuous, as if ostentatiously announcing his difference. His "neatness" is actually quite important. The Lieutenant *shines* – think of the polished holster and gaiters – which not only sets him apart from the "shabby city" but also contrasts him to the shabby priest he is trying to capture. Still, there is a certain irony there: isn't cleanliness, as the saying goes, supposed to be next to godliness? He seems almost *too* clean, to the point of sterility – an ascetic untouched and uncontaminated by life or human contact, and refusing to allow life to touch him. He has no need of women, we are told, and no tolerance for the weakness of human flesh; he seems celibate and his living quarters are described as "comfortless as a prison or a monastic cell" (p.19). The conclusion we are invited to draw from this is an intriguing and paradoxical one: he seems more priest-like than the priest. And if we miss the irony of this, Greene draws attention to it in a comment he makes just two pages later: "there was something of a priest in his intent observant walk – a theologian going back over the errors of the past to destroy them again" (p.18).

"Errors of the past" is an interesting phrase: in the context in which it is used, Greene is not referring to anything specific – it is just part of the extended conceit. Nevertheless, in this section we learn something of the Lieutenant's past, significantly when he is looking at that photograph of the early communion dinner which is the only visual clue he has to the priest's identity. "Something you could almost have called horror moved him when he looked at the

white muslin dresses" (p.17), Greene writes, "he remembered the smell of incense in the churches of his boyhood, the candles and the laciness and the self-esteem, the immense demands made from the altar steps by men who didn't know the meaning of sacrifice" (p.17). Was he brought up as a Catholic, then? Is the reaction of horror less that of a non-believer than a spurned lover, who has been let down by the object of his adoration? From a man who prides himself on being almost antiseptic, there is something strangely and faintly sensual about the way he evokes these things: "the smell of incense...the candles, the laciness..."; they are images which belong to his childhood but which he clearly can still vividly remember. A little later we learn: "It infuriated him to think that there were still people in the State who believed in a loving and merciful God." (p.19). It is doubtful whether even the priest believes in a "loving and merciful" God, but what intrigues me there is the Lieutenant's *fury* at people who believe this, because it hints at a question that Greene, in a very different context, is going to pursue in a later Catholic novel of his, *The End of the Affair* (1951): how can you hate something that does not exist? 'I hate You, God,' says the narrator-hero Bendrix at the end of *The End of the Affair*, 'I hate You as though You existed', and the capitalisation of "You" gives him away, for Bendrix's hatred – perhaps like the Lieutenant's fury – brings God's existence into being: if He did not exist, what would there be to hate?

There is another revealing moment in this early section when the Lieutenant puts the photo of the bank robber and homicide, James Calver, next to that newspaper photo of the first communion party years ago which shows the priest as a young man. "A man like that," thinks the Lieutenant of the robber and homicide, "does no real harm. A few men dead. We all have to die... We do more good when we catch one of these" (p.17), meaning the priest in the photograph. This is rather perverse logic from a policeman, you might think – a robber and a murderer "does no real harm" – but it goes on: "he had the dignity of an idea, standing in the little whitewashed room with his polished boots and his venom" (p.17). Again there is the emphasis on "whitewashed" and "polished" – the scrubbing out of imperfection – and a reference to "venom" which suggests again that poisonous fury in him. But I like the irony in the Lieutenant's having "the dignity of an idea". Curiously enough, this moment reminds me of a dialogue exchange in that great Hollywood biblical epic of 1959, William Wyler's *Ben-Hur* (Greene was invited to do some script doctoring on that film, incidentally, because, as the producer told him, "There's a bit of an anti-climax after the Crucifixion"): early on in the film, the new Roman commander Messala is being told of the insurrection in Judea and how they've got religion, and Messala says "Punish them, crush all rebellion" to which his predecessor replies: "But how? How do you fight an idea?" It's a similar perception to the Lieutenant's: you can fight the bandit because his criminality is obvious, but how do you fight what is in people's heads and in their hearts? How do you fight an idea? Much later in the novel, when the priest has been arrested, he returns to this point. "You're a danger," he tells the priest. "That's why we kill you. I have nothing against you, you understand, as a man [...] It's your ideas" (p.191). The Lieutenant is not afraid of other people's ideas, he insists to the priest (p.195), but there is one detail that might contradict that: this immaculate, icily controlled man – and this is the only time in the novel where this happens – is visibly sweating.

I want to move now to the final part of the novel after the priest's arrest and deal with the conversations and relationship shared between the policeman and the priest up to the latter's execution. I am not so much concerned with the substance of the argument as the curious kinship tentatively formed between them as they talk. In a broad sense, it is an argument about the conflict between materialism and spiritualism, which in turn is implicitly here about the conflict between a Communist outlook and a Catholic one. In a strange way it anticipates the book-length conversation between the Communist mayor and Monsignor Quixote in one of Greene's final works, *Monsignor Quixote* (1982), where the disagreements are still there

but now accommodated and explored in friendship, as if Greene is trying to dissolve the divisions at this latter stage of his life and find a union between Communism and Catholicism.

Critics have seen the significance of this final section of *The Power and the Glory* in fascinatingly different ways. For Greene's official biographer, Norman Sherry, the relationship between priest and Lieutenant here is in some ways analogous to that of Greene's relationship with the boy who bullied him at school, Carter, who appears in different guises throughout Greene's fiction (beware of any character called 'Carter' in a Greene novel or story – there are quite a few and they are invariably suspect) and is apparently the reason that Greene had a genuine superstition against giving any of his major characters a name beginning with the letter 'C'. Sherry sees the understanding between policeman and priest as something similar to the Greene / Carter encounter and quotes the following passage from Greene's autobiography, *A Sort of Life* to support his theory: "There was an element of reluctant admiration on both sides. I admired his ruthlessness and in an odd way he admired what he wounded in me. Between the torturer and the tortured arises a kind of relationship" (p.80). One might reinforce that connection by citing that curious moment in the conversation when the priest is asked why he stayed in Mexico when all the other priests had gone, including one who had always disapproved of him. "It felt – you'll laugh at this," he explains to the Lieutenant, who does not strike one as a character who laughs much at anything, "just as it did at school when a bully I had been afraid of – for years – got too old for any more teaching and was turned out. You see, I didn't have to think about anyone's opinion any more" (p.193).

Cedric Watts, in his book, *A Preface to Greene* (1997), sees this section somewhat differently. "At the ideological climax of *The Power and the Glory*," Watts writes, "the Marxist lieutenant is drawn to friendship with the Catholic priest who is his captive: the lieutenant is, in some respects, a priest *manqué*" (p.112). I agree with that: it ties in with all the business I mentioned earlier about his monastic more than Marxist lifestyle and surroundings. I think it might even explain why he can never seem to get a good enough look at the photograph of the priest to recognise him: he is afraid he might see something of himself. Because there is another mysterious connection between policeman and priest: neither of them is given a name (the half-caste is not given a name either, but he does not need one: we know exactly who he is; he is Judas). There has been much critical speculation on the significance of that namelessness in relation to the priest: that he is basically allegorical; that, in the demands of the story, he has to remain anonymous and conceal his identity; that he symbolises the struggle of all individuals fighting for the right to self-assertion in a society brutally enforcing obedience to State authority. But why is the Lieutenant given no name? Does it not reinforce the connection between them? These men are not opposites but twin potentials of the same personality, representing the kind of duality that you often get in the novels of Dostoyevsky. It is odd that Dostoyevsky is not talked about much in relation to Greene, yet there is a very affecting moment in a 1993 documentary about Greene that has footage of his visiting the Dostoyevsky museum in Moscow during his visit in the 1980s and being moved to tears by the occasion. *The Power and the Glory* is undoubtedly Greene's most Dostoyevskian novel, full of the Russian's similar perceptions of the duality of human nature, of the contrasts and tensions between sainthood and sensuality, the demands of politics conflicting with the pull of personality: it is like *Crime and Punishment* in the way it leads inexorably to confession and a Christian conclusion. For all his uprightness, a breach of humanity is made in the rigidity of the Lieutenant through his contact with the priest. This strictest of men breaks two rules on the priest's behalf: he tries to persuade Padre Jose to hear his confession; and he brings the priest some brandy. And his shiny spotless surface – which is so much an expression of his austere outlook – is at the end

tarnished a little by the tainted breath of humanity, as the boy's blob of spittle lands on the butt of his revolver.

The final execution is recounted as if seen in long shot. It is the Lieutenant who has to administer the final bullet – in Roger Lewis's description of that moment in his discussion of the Laurence Olivier / George C. Scott TV movie version of the novel, it is "like a matador who has respect – even love – for his foe" (*The Real Life of Laurence Olivier*, p.110). It seems almost a mercy killing, like Holly Martins administering the final bullet as he shoots his best friend, Harry Lime, with Lime's acquiescence, at the end of *The Third Man* (and if that sounds a far-fetched comparison, remember one thing that Lime and the whisky priest have in common: they both teach their closest companions – who will be their executioners – the three-card trick). There is another relevant comparison that comes to mind at this point: the ending of a Greene story written in 1940 shortly after the publication of the novel, entitled 'The Lieutenant Died Last' (which was to be made into the 1942 film, *Went the Day Well?*), which ends with the shooting of a German lieutenant who has been part of a German invasion force in England at the beginning of World War Two. His killer, an English poacher, is sure he has done the right thing, but when he searches the dead man's wallet, he discovers the photograph of a baby on a mat and it makes him feel bad, guilty, as if sensing a sudden surge of common humanity with the man he has just killed. It is a similar feeling to the one contained in that line in Wilfred Owen's great anti-war poem, *Strange Meeting*: "I am the enemy you killed, my friend." The final encounter between the priest and the Lieutenant has been a strange meeting, ending in the death of an "enemy" who has become also a "friend".

During the night before the execution, both the priest and the Lieutenant have a dream. The priest's ends on a feeling of hope; the Lieutenant's does not. "He sat at his desk," Greene says, "and fell asleep with utter weariness. He couldn't remember anything afterwards of his dreams except laughter, laughter all the time, and a long passage in which he could find no door" (p.207). That striking final image – there is a similar one in *A Sort of Life* to evoke an unhappy childhood, which Greene likens to a tunnel with no exit (p.78) – is for a character who might be still be searching for the door that will let in the future; it is a curiously dark and irresolute image for a moment where the lieutenant has supposedly succeeded at last in what he set out to do at the beginning. This should be a moment of triumph, of resolution, one would have thought, yet his mental picture in his dream state is that of a long passage with no exit. And there is the laughter, "laughter all the time", which might seem celebratory were it not for the fact that everything else seems so sombre, so claustrophobic, as if the laugh is on him. And whose laughter is it? Who is having the last laugh? Funnily enough, the reference to laughter reminds one of the priest: "You'll laugh at this", he has said to the Lieutenant. Is it the priest's? Or God's? Has the encounter with the priest awoken in him, I wonder, a memory of a lost childhood, of a road not taken? Thinking of the Lieutenant's state of mind in the night before the execution – and thinking back to his boyhood, his memories of the church, his fascination with that photograph of the communion party that he can never quite decipher, maybe, like the priest, having a ghostly sense of having missed happiness by seconds at an appointed place – I am drawn again to a couplet of the poet Robert Frost. This is from his poem, 'Cluster of Faith' of 1962 and might be the kind of thing running through the mind of the Lieutenant – this priest *manqué* – at the end of this extraordinary physical and psychological quest:

Forgive, O Lord, my little jokes on Thee,
And I'll forgive Thy great big one on me.

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