



Immanence and transcendence in *The Power and the Glory*. Graham Greene and Joseph Conrad

Delmas Catherine

Pour citer cet article

Delmas Catherine, « Immanence and transcendence in *The Power and the Glory*. Graham Greene and Joseph Conrad », *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/302>

Lien vers la notice <http://epi-revel.univ-cotedazur.fr/publication/item/302>

Lien du document <http://epi-revel.univ-cotedazur.fr/cycnos/302.pdf>

Cycnos, études anglophones

revue électronique éditée sur épi-Revel à Nice

ISSN 1765-3118

ISSN papier 0992-1893

AVERTISSEMENT

Les publications déposées sur la plate-forme épi-revel sont protégées par les dispositions générales du Code de la propriété intellectuelle.
Conditions d'utilisation : respect du droit d'auteur et de la propriété intellectuelle.

L'accès aux références bibliographiques, au texte intégral, aux outils de recherche, au feuilletage de l'ensemble des revues est libre, cependant article, recension et autre contribution sont couvertes par le droit d'auteur et sont la propriété de leurs auteurs. Les utilisateurs doivent toujours associer à toute unité documentaire les éléments bibliographiques permettant de l'identifier correctement, notamment toujours faire mention du nom de l'auteur, du titre de l'article, de la revue et du site épi-revel. Ces mentions apparaissent sur la page de garde des documents sauvegardés ou imprimés par les utilisateurs. L'université Côte d'Azur est l'éditeur du portail épi-revel et à ce titre détient la propriété intellectuelle et les droits d'exploitation du site. L'exploitation du site à des fins commerciales ou publicitaires est interdite ainsi que toute diffusion massive du contenu ou modification des données sans l'accord des auteurs et de l'équipe d'épi-revel.

EPI-REVEL

Revue électronique de l'Université Côte d'Azur

*Immanence and transcendence in The Power and The Glory.
Graham Greene and Joseph Conrad*

Catherine Delmas

Catherine Delmas is a professor of English literature at Stendhal University in Grenoble. Her PhD defended at University Paris IV-Sorbonne and her post-doctoral research are about the representation of the East in English literature, more particularly in novels and travel books published in the 19th and 20th centuries. Her fields of interest focus on orientalist and (anti)imperialist discourse, aesthetics, representation and ethics, modernism and postmodernism. She has published various articles about Joseph Conrad, T.E. Lawrence, Kipling, E.M. Forster, Lawrence Durrell, Michael Ondaatje or J.M. Coetzee in French university periodicals and a book, entitled *Ecritures du désert : voyageurs et romanciers anglophones XIX^e-XX^e siècles* (*Writing the Desert in the 19th and 20th centuries : from Burton to Ondaatje*).

Les deux concepts opposés d'immanence et de transcendance créent une tension qui nourrit le débat religieux et le questionnement métaphysique dans *The Power and the Glory* et tisse des liens thématiques et intertextuels entre Greene et Conrad. Bien que les deux écrivains aient souhaité dépeindre la corruption et le mal inhérents à la nature humaine et aient mené leurs lecteurs au « cœur des Ténèbres », ils offrent deux réponses différentes à l'angoisse existentielle, néanmoins illustrée par des images cosmiques similaires. Greene résout le paradoxe entre immanence et transcendance par le concept de Felix Culpa tandis que la vision imaginaire d'un vide métaphysique chez Conrad ne laisse aucune place à la transcendance.

*immanence, transcendance, métaphysique, intertextualité,
Felix Culpa*

Immanence and transcendence are two different philosophical concepts. Immanence, from the latin etymology *in-manere* ("remain or dwell in"), means in a religious sense defined by Spinoza that God is present in everything, that the effect remains in the cause, and the cause "dwells" in the subject; transcendence, on the other hand, refers to the existence of a superior reality, or deity, independent of and incommensurable with the universe.¹ If fusion and interdependence are at the core of the concept of immanence, transcendence implies a gap separating the material world from God, a gap often illustrated by man's incomprehension of God's mysterious designs.

In *The Power and the Glory*, the two concepts seem to be paradoxically at work in the diegesis. The presence of evil and corruption, immanent in human nature and represented by realistic images, similes and metonymies, is counterbalanced by the possibility of grace and redemption for the sinner.

¹ *Dictionnaire de philosophie*, dir. Jean-Pierre Zarader (Paris : Ellipses, 2007).

Transcendence is conveyed by symbols and allegory which refer to an extratextual reality and another level of reading.

Immanence and transcendence may also be considered on the level of textual interactions and influences, too. Intertextuality, marked by the presence of hypotexts and paratexts, both religious and Conradian, which is antinomic as Joseph Conrad was more of an atheist or an agnostic, can be taken as a literal meaning of the concept of immanence – “to dwell in” – whereas transcendence, as Paul Ricœur explains in *Temps et récit III*, refers to the completion of the text by the act of reading which eventually contributes to its configuration and refiguration.²

Tension and ambivalence arise from the two concepts of immanence and transcendence at work in *The Power and the Glory*, an ambivalence which is a saving grace for a text which, like Conrad’s work, is imbued with metaphysical questioning, and which avoids didacticism.

Graham Greene seems to have been obsessed by the all-pervading presence of Joseph Conrad, yielding to what Harold Bloom called the anxiety of influence, and indebtedness.³ In an interview with Marie-Françoise Allain, Graham Greene acknowledged the fact and declared he had stopped reading Conrad’s novels because Conrad’s influence was disastrous as it led him to plagiarism.⁴ His desire to break free from his precursor and literary father-figure, and become a full-fledged writer corresponds to what Bloom calls “*Kenosis*”, or “liberating discontinuity”, “[a] revisionary ratio [which has] the same function in intra-poetic relations that defense mechanisms have in our psychic life” (Bloom, 88). Influence, Bloom explains, comes from “inflow”, “emanation or force coming in upon mankind from the stars,” i.e. an outer reality. Influence, revealed by intertextuality, is thus for Bloom a form of transcendence, or transtextuality. Paradoxically, it is also a form of immanence when the text cannot fully liberate itself from the father’s haunting presence and bears the marks or traces of the precursor’s work, as a form of survival,⁵ in spite of the desired rupture as the following examples show.

The artificial Eden where the Lehrs live recalls the precarious paradise of Samburan where Axel Heyst and Lena have taken refuge in *Victory* and which is disturbed and destroyed by “envoys of the outer world”,⁶ not emissaries of faith like the small boy appearing in a ray of light at the end of the first chapter of *The Power and the Glory*, but “the embodied evil of the world” (*Victory* 243). The Fellows’s banana plantation, the Central American Banana Company, bears the same bombastic name as the Tropical Belt Coal Company in *Victory*, signalled by a “flagstaff without a flag” (37) which clearly evokes “a flagpost without a flag” in *The Power and the Glory* (27). Borrowing verges on plagiarism when Conrad’s enigmatic presentation of Lord Jim’s past – “His incognito, which had as many holes as a sieve ...”⁷ - applies to the Mestizo’s dubious version of Calver’s story: “the story had as many holes in it as a sieve” (PG 177).

The Heart of the Matter, *A Burnt-out Case*, which take place in African colonies, and *The Power and the Glory* reproduce the same seedy and derelict places, muddy rivers and swamps, the same depressing, stifling atmosphere of boredom and desolation, and the same jaded characters who try to find or no longer find meaning in life as in Joseph Conrad’s Malay novels (*Almayer’s Folly*, *An Outcast of the Islands*, *Lord Jim*, *Victory*, *The Rescue*). Both Conrad and Greene deconstruct exoticism. Dogs, snakes and beetles snarl, creep or crawl in their novels and convey the seediness of space and atmosphere, in a symbolical or realistic manner. The exotic setting and the orientalist tableau are deconstructed by the representation of filth, chaos, neglect, ruin and desertion, of human wrecks or to quote Catherine Lanone, “the fallen cyphers of a lost world,”⁸ by means of irony, parody, deflation, the absurd and the grotesque.

² “Le monde du texte reste une transcendance dans l’immanence. Son statut ontologique reste en suspens : en excès par rapport à la structure, en attente de lecture. C’est seulement dans la lecture que le dynamisme de configuration achève son parcours. Et c’est au-delà de la lecture, dans l’action effective, instruite par les œuvres reçues, que la configuration du texte se transmet en refiguration.” Paul Ricœur, *Temps et récit III*, 230.

³ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1973) 5.

⁴ Marie-Françoise Allain, *L’Autre et son double* (Paris : Belfond, 1981) 286.

⁵ I refer here to Georges Didi Huberman’s work, *L’image survivante. Histoire de l’art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg* (Paris : Editions de Minuit, 2002).

⁶ Joseph Conrad, *Victory* (1915. London : Penguin Modern Classics, 1978) 266 .

⁷ Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (1900. London : Penguin Books, 1986) 46.

⁸ Catherine Lanone, *The Power and the Glory, Graham Greene* (Paris: Armand Colin, CNED, 2006) 53.

In his *Lost Childhood and Other Essays*,⁹ Graham Greene retraces his filiation with Marjorie Bowen (*The Viper of Milan*), Henry James and Joseph Conrad, and shares with his precursors his awareness of evil and corruption at the core of human nature. He says about *The Viper of Milan* that “the pattern was already there – perfect evil walking the world where perfect good can never walk again, and only the pendulum ensures that after all in the end justice is done” (17). Like James and Conrad, Graham Greene wanted to “render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe”¹⁰ by drawing the portrait of corrupt, evil or treacherous characters, or rather “black and grey” characters faced with borderline situations and divided loyalties in a seedy environment, recalling Marlow’s interest in “men with soft spots, with hard spots, with hidden plague spots” (Conrad, *Lord Jim*, 68). Those “spots” are the marks or symptoms of evil, treachery, or mere weakness inherent in human nature, in the same way as “evil was overwhelmingly part of [James’s] visible universe.”¹¹ Greene’s characters are far from being spotless, and exhibit a wide variety of sins, ranging from betrayal of faith to greed, corruption, alcoholism, pride or despair; even a child like Brigitta bears the mark of the original sin – “like the small spot of decay in a fruit” (78); her physical appearance – “the child’s snigger and the first mortal sin lay together more closely than two blinks of the eye” (64) – creates the uncanny impression that innocence is tainted with the knowledge of good and evil as she laughs “knowingly” (65).

Such 'spots' can also be considered metaphorically as textual traces left at the surface of the narrative, webs of signifiers which weave a thread through Joseph Conrad’s novels, or recurrent images punctuating *The Power and the Glory*: beetles, rats, mosquitoes, vultures are both the repulsive creatures which evoke seediness and partake of the corrupt, derelict environment in the diegesis, a symbolic bestiary referring to evil in the world, and textual repetitions which create echoes in *The Power and the Glory* and resonance between *The Power and the Glory* and *The Heart of the Matter* or *A Burnt-out Case*. Such textual spots are repeated with lexical differences – “the beetles detonated” / “exploded” (19) – or syntactic variations as shown by the six occurrences of the “rats in the maize” (38-40). They also combine in similes such as “vultures like indigestion spots” (11), or “strong teeth like tombs” (131), or in isomorphism or analogy between carious teeth and sins, spiritual desertion and toothache or nausea. Such spots weave thematic links between the characters, for instance between Tench’s spitting, Jose’s belching (24), or the Mestizo’s logorrhea compared to an oil-gusher (94); between the Lieutenant and the Priest, standing or sitting “like a black / little dark question mark” (9, 30), without mentioning the mirror effect created by the Lieutenant’s ascetic ideal and monastic life; a chiasmus unites the Priest’s “despair, the unforgivable sin” (57) and Padre Jose’s “unforgivable sin, despair” (45), paronomasia (God/Gold, Crucible/crucifix, [9]) opposes Tench’s atheism and the Priest’s faith; the “tainted” or “withered” rose in the girl’s and the woman’s songs (13, 40) evokes Blake’s “Sick Rose”, and becomes a sign of corruption immanent in the world. Such 'spots' contribute to creating the visible surface of Greene’s universe, like emblems in heraldry, and reveal the author’s obsession or fascination with evil.

James, Conrad and Greene wanted to “render the highest justice to corruption” (*Lost childhood*, 24); Greene’s quest for the truth was certainly similar to Conrad’s desire to “bring [...] to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying [...] every aspect [of the visible universe]”¹² but the means used to achieve such a quest differ: Greene prefers repetition to Conrad’s “suggestiveness”, the minimalist style of the journalist and a cinematographic approach to Conrad’s “perfect blending of form and substance”, the “shape and ring of sentences” aspiring to “the plasticity of sculpture”, “the colour of painting”, “the magic suggestiveness of music.” Yet both Greene and Conrad descend into the heart of darkness to make their readers see or catch a glimpse of evil, immanent in human nature, echoing *St Matthew*, “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man” (15, 17-20).

The Whisky Priest’s labyrinthine journey, “diving into mahogany darkness” (56), as if “in a mine shaft, going down into the earth to bury himself” (156), or in “the landscape of terror and lust” (62) turns out to be circular and recalls Dante’s and Virgil’s descent along the circles of Hell, through various layers of sins; his circular journey through diegetic space, between the sea, impassable

⁹ Graham Greene, *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays* (London : Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1951).

¹⁰ Joseph Conrad, *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, Preface, p. xlvii (1897. Penguin Books, 1987) quoted by Graham Greene, *Lost Childhood*, 21.

¹¹ ‘Henry James, The Private Universe,’ *Lost Childhood*, 24.

¹² Conrad, *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, Preface, xlix.

swamps, mountains and borders, along paths and rivers which peter out, going west, east and north (56), is mirrored by topography (the circular piazza, the prison cell) and textual framing (the structure of the novel itself, framed by part I-IV, and the motifs of the sand and the grave in the first and last chapters). Diegetic space also narrows to focus on graves and coffins, the confessional, the Priest's attache case or various packing cases, then the human body, mouths and carious teeth. Circularity is of course emphasized by the repetitions and echoes which punctuate the text and bring the reader back to the core of the story, like the rain "[...] driving nails into a coffin lid" (113). Greene compared the "pure novel", "in the tradition founded by Flaubert and reaching its magnificent tortuous climax in England in the work of Henry James" to a maze in which "the reader begins at the center and has to find his way to the gate."¹³ Such was not the case with Conrad's narrative technique, though, as illustrated by Marlow's narrative strategy in *Heart of Darkness*: "[...] to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine."¹⁴ Graham Greene does begin at the "gate" and the structural frame of the novel, the bystanders, the priest's journey from the Port to the interior, and the signifiers guide our reading to the core of the story. He brings us into "the heart of darkness," a metaphor for Africa in *A Burnt-out Case*, and to "the Heart of the Matter."

At the bottom of the pit resides the cause, the "aboriginal calamity" which was for Cardinal Newman, and certainly Greene himself, the "truth underlying the visible surface of the universe", "a vision to dizzy and appal", and the cause dwelling in the subject:

To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various history, the many races of man, their starts, their fortunes, their mutual alienation, their conflicts ; and then their ways, habits, governments, forms of worship ; their enterprise, their aimless courses, their random achievements and requirements, the impotent conclusion of long-standing facts, the tokens, so faint and broken, of a superintending design, the blind evolution of what turn out to be great powers or truth, the progress of things, as if from unreasoning elements, not towards final causes, the greatness and littleness of man, his far-reaching aims, his short duration, the curtain hung over his futurity, the disappointments of life, 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 ; and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution.

What shall be said to this heart-piercing, reason-bewildering fact. I can only answer, that either there is no Creator, or this living society of men is in a true sense discarded from His presence.... *if* there be a God, *since* there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity. (*Apologia pro Vita Sua*)

Immanence in *The Power and the Glory* is conveyed by images of enclosure, announced by the epigraph – "Th'inclosure narrow'd" – and paralysis as the "stranded" boat (2), the recurrence of the verb "peter out", and the swamps suggest. The Jefe's toothache, Tench's nausea caused by worms, dysentery (2) or "the bloody land" (4), or Mrs Fellows' headaches are the physical symptoms of existential angst, the fear of death, the lack of faith and despair.

Immanence is represented by a kind of unavoidable determinism ruling over the human condition: the pretty girl on board the General Obregon is bound to be "fat and stupid like all the rest" (5), in the same way as Tench's life was determined by his finding a cast in a wastepaper basket when he was a child: "Fate had struck ... The hot wet river-port and the vultures lay in the wastepaper basket, and he picked them out" (6). For Tench, one's condition is the result of chance (being born or living in one place for the girl and himself) and the lack of choice and responsibility ("one can't pick and choose" [7]). Tench's denial is proved wrong by the text as the recurrence and displacement of the signifier (the verb "pick" applying to Tench's dentistry) ironically show .

¹³ 'François Mauriac', *Lost Childhood*, 70.

¹⁴ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Signet Classics, 1983, 68.

For the Lieutenant, causes are material and today's poverty and misery are due to the power and corruption of the church in the past. Historical materialism combines with personal circumstances – “all his life had lain there” (18) – and psychological trauma, similar to what triggered the Priest's choices also due to poverty during his childhood. The characters bear the mark of their condition: the Lieutenant's scars, Brigitta's metaphorical “tuberculosis”, Jose “branded” by “forty years of priesthood” (23) or the Priest's faith, “like a birthmark” (36).

The apparent impossibility of escape from one's condition is represented by the vulture's vain flight leading nowhere except to another predator, the sharks. The comparison of the vulture to “the black hand of a clock” (3) sends man back to his own mortality, as the biblical image, although distorted, suggests: “mud slowly revert[ing] to mud” (14). The references to “carrion”, “death [...] in his carious mouth already” (8) at the outset of the novel are both a prophecy announcing the Whisky Priest's death in a state where priests are persecuted, and a fact of life, “you were born, your parents died, you grew old, you died yourself” (10). Death is what terrifies Mrs Fellows: “The real thing was taboo – death coming nearer every year in the strange place” (28). Death is a recurrent motif, both an ordinary event in the diegesis as the death of adults and children shows (Tench's boy, Anita the 5 year-old girl [44], Coral, the Indian baby) and a trope – “the shoreline buried in darkness as deeply as any mummy in a tomb” (13), “teeth like tombs” (131).

God seems to be absent from the human world and most of the characters suffer from a recurrent feeling of desertion, exemplifying Christ's words on the Cross: “God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Tench feels deserted in the “huge abandonment” (13), like the pious mother's husband who “knew the extent of their abandonment” (22) and feels “deserted”, too (48). The knowledge of death and desertion combines in the Lieutenant's vision of a “vacant”, “dying, cooling world” (54, 19) and recalls Conrad's metaphysical vision of nothingness in a letter to Cunninghame Graham :

we, living, are out of life – utterly out of it. The mysteries of a universe made of drops of fire and clods of mud do not concern us in the least. The fate of humanity condemned ultimately to perish from cold is not worth troubling about. If you take it to heart, it becomes an unendurable tragedy. If you believe in improvement you must weep, for the attained perfection must end in cold, darkness, and silence.¹⁵

Graham Greene might not have read Conrad's letters to Cunninghame Graham but he certainly borrowed from him the cosmic imagery present in *The Power and the Glory*: the comparison of the world to an abandoned ship in Padre Jose's vision – “[the world] would roll heavily in space under its fog like a burning and abandoned ship. The whole globe was blanketed with his own sin” (23), “the whole abandoned star” (25) – recalls similar cosmic imagery in either *The Shadow Line* – “a planet flying vertiginously on its appointed path in a space of infinite silence” (74) – or in *The Rescue* – “the blazing suns lost in [space] are only like sparks, like pin-pricks of fire” (130). Fire seems to be at the origin of things in the Priest's vision in *The Power and the Glory*: “it was as if this part of the world had never been dried in the flame when the world spun off into space: it had absorbed only the mist and cloud of those awful regions” (13). And the vertiginous course of the planet can be set in parallel with the representation of the Fellows, “carried like children in a coach through the huge spaces without any knowledge of their destination” (34). Ether, which connects Tench's activities and the Lieutenant's cosmic vision of “the cold empty ether spaces” (19) is also reminiscent of Conrad's vision of the Patna in *Lord Jim*: “as though she had been a crowded planet speeding through the dark spaces of ether behind the swarm of suns...” (59). Marlow's vision in *Heart of Darkness* – “we were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet” (105) – condenses the motifs of the wanderer with his suitcase, prehistory and ignorance in *The Power and the Glory* (6,7). Such borrowings, if they are not mere coincidences, fall into the category of Apophrades in Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* or the return of the dead, “as though the later poet himself had written the precursor's characteristic work” (16).

Although Conrad and Greene share the shame consciousness of evil, and present a similar vision of the cosmic void, their paths diverge in their interpretation. Conrad was an agnostic, even at times an atheist for whom “faith is a myth and beliefs shift like mists on the shore” (*Letters to C. Graham*, 65); Greene claimed he was not a Catholic writer but a writer who happened to be a Catholic (Allain, 211), but faith and religion are main thematic issues in *Brighton Rock*, *The Heart of the Matter*, *The End of the Affair* and *A Burnt out Case*. For Conrad “there is no morality, no knowledge,

¹⁵ Joseph Conrad, *Letters to Cunninghame Graham*, ed. C.T.Watts (Cambridge University Press, 1969), 14 Jan. 1898, 65.

no hope" (*Letters to C. Graham*, 71), only the immanence of evil in man, a wicked animal ("un animal méchant") living in an essentially criminal society (*Letters to C. Graham*, 117)¹⁶; although evil prevails in the derelict and criminal Mexican state, hope is nevertheless embodied by the Priest's salvation, and true faith fills in the vacancy of empty signifiers – "ora pro nobis" which is an ordinary expression for Tench –, and gives meaning to the "hollow"(6) man 's journey and to the pious mother's tale of Juan's martyrdom.

The title itself and the Whisky Priest's progress towards salvation evoke the possibility of transcendence. The truncated quote from the doxology to the Lord's prayer – "Thine is the power and the glory..." – testifies to the existence of a superior reality from which man is separated ("Thine is"), i.e. God's kingdom. However, the Priest explains to the villagers that "heaven is here: this is part of heaven just as pain is a part of pleasure" and suffering is "the preparation" (66). Grace eventually touches the sinner, and the Priest's death, accepted out of pity and love for his fellow beings, even for Calver and the Mestizo, turns him into a martyr and possibly a saint. The epigraph to *The Heart of the Matter*, a quote from Péguy, explains that the sinner is at the heart of christendom.¹⁷ The notion of *Felix culpa* solves the paradox of grace and explains both the immanence of evil, due to the "aboriginal calamity", and the possibility of salvation and transcendence, a duality that may be illustrated by the image of the crystal among the carious teeth (214). Catholic faith holds that man was created in God's image, even if he is a sinner: "But at the centre of [the priest's] own faith, there always stood the convincing mystery – that we were made in God's image. God was the parent, but He was also the policeman, the criminal, the priest, the maniac and the judge" (98); the sinner is even closer to God, and worthier of Grace.

Transcendence, or the belief in the existence of God's superior kingdom and glory, and the mystery of His designs, are conveyed by the parallel set between the Whisky Priest's journey and Christ's Passion, and the allegorical dimension of the novel. The Priest first seems to obey God's voice when he is "summoned" by the child "to an occasion he couldn't pass by." "It always seems to happen" (11) as if social determinism and historical materialism could be transcended by a superior form of determinism when the Priest responds to the call of God's envoys: "it seemed as if God were deciding" (134). The episode finds a counterpart at the end of the novel with the arrival of the new priest whose "name is Father – " (220). The bystanders are the witnesses of the Priest's journey to Calvary; the Mestizo and Calver, whose photo is pinned on the Jefe's wall, next to the Priest's, evoke more or less explicitly biblical figures: Judas and Barrabas. The villagers who are reluctant to welcome the Priest recall the people who give up Jesus to the Romans: "it's your job to give me up... It's my job not to be caught" (75). The priest's agony begins at daybreak (70) – and the cock crows three times, an echo to Peter denying Christ three times before the cockcrow (Matthew, 26,75). Biblical images and episodes are reinforced by symbols like the bleeding fish (220) and the priest's bleeding feet (86, 98), the carpenter's bench (12), the wound ("he alone carried a wound" [66]), and symbolic names like Calver. If metonymies and similes refer to the diegetic space of the novel, symbolism is a form of transcendence as the signifier refers to another level of meaning. When the child enters Tench's office in chapter 1, the "white hot bar" is that of the glaring sun in the diegesis but may also refer to a superior reality.

The rupture between immanence and transcendence, and its resolution in the novel by the Priest's salvation and the absence of his grave, like Christ's empty grave, could be illustrated by the gap introduced by allegory between two levels of reading: the priest's persecution in a Catholic state in what reads like a thriller, and the implicit comparison of the Priest's journey to Christ's Passion. However, more than a gap between two levels of reading, Greene manages to blend different genres, the thriller, the thesis novel, allegory, realism and symbolism, a plurality which is the hallmark of the novel for Mikhail Bakhtin in *Aesthetics and Theory of the Novel*. The Priest remains an ambivalent figure, both a Christic figure, Everyman, and a weeping and giggling weak human being crippled by fear, guilty of hubris, and tormented by doubt and questioning.

Immanence and the possibility of transcendence in Greene, or its absence for Conrad, convey the same metaphysical questioning with a different response, and perhaps the same feeling of anguish, mirroring the Zeitgeist of the early 20th Century as Christian Gutleben explains in his book on *The*

¹⁶ "L'ignoble boule roulera toujours portant des êtres infimes et méchants dans un univers qui ne se comprends [sic] pas lui-même", *Letters to Cunningham Graham*, 11 June 1898, 87.

¹⁷ "Le Pêcheur est au cœur même de la chrétienté ... Nul n'est aussi compétent que le pêcheur en matière de chrétienté. Nul, si ce n'est le saint."

Power and the Glory. Paul Ricoeur distinguishes four types of anguish in *Histoire et Vérité*,¹⁸ which all seem to converge in *The Power and the Glory* and in Conrad's novels : narcissistic anguish due to a gap between the self ideal and the self, existential anguish due to the contingency of life and the vision of death, historical anguish, due to "absurdity, the discrepancy between reason and existence, war and massive destruction triggering off the anguish of death" (my translation) – and anguish due to guilt and the consciousness of sin.

For Greene, faith was not the only answer to existential angst ; writing was a form of therapy, as he explained in *Ways of Escape*, (1980, 9) quoted by François Gallix in *Le Credo de Graham Greene*: "Writing is a sort 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." But for Conrad, always in quest of the right word and image, often terrified by the white page, and paralysed by writer's block, writing was one more source of anguish and depression.

Works cited

- Conrad, Joseph. *Victory*. 1915. Penguin Books, 1975.
 ---. *Heart of Darkness*. 1899. New York: Signet Classics, 1983.
 ---. *Lord Jim*. 1900. London : Penguin Books, 1986.
 ---. *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, Preface, 1897. Penguin Books, 1987.
 ---. *Letters to Cunninghame Graham*. Ed. C.T.Watts. Cambridge University Press, 1969.
 Greene, Graham. *The Power and the Glory*. 1940. London : Vintage, 2005.
 ---. *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays*. London : Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1951.
 Allain, Marie-Françoise. *L'Autre et son double*. Paris: Belfond, 1981. *The Other Man. Conversations with Graham Greene* by Marie-Françoise Allain. London : The Bodley Head, 1983.
 Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Aesthetics and Theory of the Novel. Esthétique et théorie du roman*. Trad. Daria Olivier. Paris : Gallimard, 1975.
 Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1973.
 Didi Huberman, Georges. *L'image survivante. Histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg*. Paris : Editions de Minuit, 2002.
 Gallix, François. *The Power and the Glory. Le Credo de Graham Greene*. Paris: Ellipses, 2006.
 Gutleben, Christian. *Graham Greene. The Power and the Glory*. Clefs concours. Atlande, 2007.
 Lanone, Catherine. *The Power and the Glory. Graham Greene*. Paris: Armand Colin, CNED, 2006.
 Ricoeur, Paul. *Histoire et Vérité*. Paris: Seuil, 1955.
 ---. *Temps et récit III. Le temps raconté*. Paris : Seuil, 1985.
 Zarader, Jean-Pierre, dir. *Dictionnaire de philosophie*. Paris : Ellipses, 2007

¹⁸

Paul Ricoeur, *Histoire et Vérité* (Paris: Seuil, 1955) 317.