

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the images Graham Greene creates of Mexico and its culture in *The Lawless Roads* to show the way a devout English Catholic sees his religion when it becomes a target for repression under a Socialist government in Mexico in the 1930s. The ideology behind Greene's work will likewise be revealed, and his claim for an urgent need of Catholicism in 1930s Mexico examined.

KEY WORDS: Graham Greene, *The Lawless Road*, religion, ideology.

GRAHAM GREENE: A TRAVELER'S NARRATIVE AND THE PARADOX

Luis Alfredo Fernandes de Assis*

RESUMO

Neste artigo, analiso as imagens construídas por Graham Greene acerca do México e da cultura mexicana em *The Lawless Road* para mostrar como um devotado católico inglês vê a religião em um período do século vinte, quando o México esteve submetido a um processo de repressão por um governo socialista na década de 1930. Pretendo mostrar como a ideologia de Greene transparece em sua obra e como o Catolicismo tornou-se uma necessidade no México daquela época.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Graham Greene, *The Lawless Road*, religião, ideologia.

* PHD in PhD in Literature at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
E-mail: lassis2@yahoo.com.br

*'What made the change? The hills and towers
Stood otherwise than they should stand,
And without fear the lawless roads
Ran wrong through all the land.*

Edwin Muir

INTRODUCTION

When Graham Greene visited Mexico in 1938, the Church was just emerging from a decade of state persecution that had lasted for a decade. In 1939, Greene's observations about this trip were published in England under the title of *The Lawless Roads*, which in my text will be quoted as *TLR*. Greene took the title from a poem by the Scottish poet Edwin Muir, and it conveys the tone of Greene's reactions while traveling in Mexico.

In this paper, I will analyze the images that Greene, as a representative of a First World country, creates of Mexico and its culture in a literary text to show the way a devout Catholic from England sees his religion in a period of the twentieth century when it underwent a process of law enforcement by the socialist government in the 1930s. I will show Greene's ideology behind his work and the claim for an urgent need of Catholicism in the Mexico of the 1930s. The author produces his narrative favoring his religion over the policies that President Cárdenas was taking to improve the social and economic situation in his country. Greene narrates his process of identification with the Catholics in Mexico as he constructs a discourse that shows what he considers to be true about the other culture. He excludes statements that he characterizes as false. For Foucault, this practice represents someone who sees himself in a certain position of power and is able to speak the truth. Greene intends to write a type of propaganda in favor of the Catholics as he narrates his "harsh" physical experience as he travels in and through Mexico to show that the lawless roads of that country did not provide any compassion for the people of his religion.

Greene traveled to Mexico on an assignment, and he did not intend to delve into Mexican culture. As a traveler, it becomes almost impossible because there has to be certain aspects of the different culture that will somehow appeal to this same traveler. This encounter between Greene and Mexican culture makes the author find himself in many situations in which he inevitably describes Mexico and Mexicans as "others" in relation to Great Britain. However, Greene's purpose is to create statements of Mexico only concerned about the way Catholics were "suffering" at the hands of the president. In his discourse, the author avoids the fact that the State and the

Church at the end of the 1930s were in the process of reconciliation. By doing this, Greene shows that he has the authority to appropriate the truths of a discourse as his own and to omit parts that are essential for the understanding of the conflict between those two institutions in Mexico.

Religion is the aspect that permeates most of Greene's literary works. For this purpose, I will discuss why Greene decided to renounce his former religion, Anglicanism, and convert to Catholicism in order to show that believing in only one religion is more complex than it seems, and that faith is not a monolithic thing and therefore can be changed. Greene's switching religions was very important in his career for two reasons: 1) because his religious feelings shaped his development as a fiction writer as he began to write his novels related to Catholicism, and 2) because he gathered much of his material on the way people dealt with Catholicism in exotic settings, such as Africa and Mexico. As Ian Ker (2003) notes: "For Greene it was the heroism of the persecuted Mexican Church which inspired the most Catholic period of his life, as well as his fictional masterpiece [*The Power and the Glory*]" (KER, 2003, p. 110). During this period Greene gathered many ideas for a short story entitled "Across the Bridge" (1938), and his most acclaimed novel, *The Power and the Glory* (1940). Both stories are based on Greene's experiences in Mexico, and their plots are revolved around religion. The author identified with Mexico because he found in that country a setting where he could use his religion as a form of salvation for the Catholics who, in his eyes, were seen as people hunted by the predatory government and society.

THE MODERNIST TRAVELER AND HIS WRITING

Modernism, the distinctive literary movement of the first half of the twentieth century, was created in the years that preceded World War I. The Modernist ideas culminated in a period called "high" Modernism of British writers in the 1920s and 1930s with its notions of abstraction, stream-of-consciousness narrative in the novel, and the absence of rhymes in poetry. Those Modernists adopted the ideas of anachronism, circular structures, and the time-shift technique in their narratives. They also relied on cyclic views of the past. Louise Blakeney Williams (2002), points out that

their [the Modernists'] abandonment of progress and adoption of a cyclic sense of past went well beyond technique alone. The Modernists formulated their views of the universal structure of history as a result of a complex emotional and intellectual response both to the tradition in which they had been brought up, and to the important conflicts and changes of the Edwardian age. (WILLIAMS, 2002, p. 2)

This very notion of cyclical experience in a narrative is present in Greene's *TLR* inasmuch as the narrator himself creates a kind of cycle by opening his story talking about part of his childhood and the dichotomy between the safety of the domestic environment and the rigid rules of the school he attended. In other words, a cycle is present in the alternation between two opposite states: safety and strictness. Later, the narrator skips to the present, when he is visiting his hometown in England. After that, he begins to narrate his trip to Mexico in 1938. At the end, Greene briefly mentions his return to London and his reaction to what was going to become the biggest conflict Europe would ever face, World War II.

Greene, an early Modernist, also made use of the notion of the cyclic sense to have a better perception of world reality. The notion of discovering order in the face of the political and social disorder that preceded the War together with this innovative feature in their artistic writings made the Modernists hope for a better future. In *TLR*, Greene's cyclical narrative also makes the reader have a notion of how the author perceived the world around him. Greene narrates the horrors of the rigidity of the Anglican Church when was living in Berkhamsted. Even as a child he found symbols to compare and contrast with the images of heaven and hell: the metaphors for the instability and impermanence in his life. In 1926 Greene became a Catholic and adopted other symbols of human suffering that gave him a sense of reality just before the War. In Mexico, Greene found out that Catholics were undergoing a type of law enforcement, which made him think of Mexico as another type of hell. Back to London, the author answered himself as Mephistopheles: "Why, this is Hell, nor are we out of it" (GREENE, 1955, p. 14). Greene's cycle motif in *TLR* recurs with the fact that the author found solace in Catholicism as a convert, with his quest for religious comfort in his childhood, then in Mexico, where, despite starvation and violence, he witnessed people living under the shadow of religion and fighting for the right to perform their religion freely, and finally back in England, when he realized that the hope he left in Mexico was over with the beginning of the War. Europe would become another type of hell. Greene's cyclic narrative makes the reader notice the identification of the author with Mexico through religion. His discourse embraces the Catholics and omits the intentions of the government of improving the country because Greene was not sympathetic to it.

Greene realized that the conflict between the State and the Church represented his own inner battle when he was in school. His two major journeys, one to Africa and the other to Mexico (described in *TLR*) had been more than mere sightseeing trips. They represent, as George Woodcock (1989) notes, "the writer's comprehension of the universal battle for the soul

of man” (WOODCOCK, 1989, p. 30). In Mexico, Greene saw a conflict of interests between the Church and the State, but also a struggle for the individual conscience against a rigid order of a dictator State. For Greene, rigidity (school) and freedom (Catholicism) were in a constant fight inside his mind. Despite all the criticism he made about Mexico, one can notice that Greene is ambivalent sometimes when he writes about this image of good and evil that was so present in his life. Thus, for Greene, Mexico became the quintessence of the worldwide conflict between good (the Church) and evil (the State).

Another central idea that was used by the Modernists was the one of taking risks. Especially for the British, was based on the literature they read while they were growing up. All the excitement and adventures the heroes in the novels went through in exotic landscapes had an impact on the British writers of the 1930s. According to Neil McEwan (1988),

[f]oreign backgrounds were more of a risk because the novels set in England show the manners, talk and culture of the 1930s – songs, advertisements, anecdotes, headlines and slang – persuasively and with a greater social breadth than most British novelists attempted. (MCEWAN, 1988, p. 66)

British Modernists traveled to faraway places in order to escape the routine of their lives in England and because they wanted to attempt something new in different settings. It was important to take risks, especially when one wanted to show something different or similar to his culture. The English writers of the 1930s tried to be bolder and decided to travel to see and experience different things.

In order to portray another culture through their writing, novelists traveled abroad in search of sample material. Mexico was a place where several British and American writers visited because they expected to find the exotic. English Modernist writers, such as Malcolm Lowry, D.H. Lawrence, Evelyn Waugh, and Graham Greene wrote novels based on their experiences in Mexico. Woodcock argues that “the reader who has not visited Mexico tends often to accept the pictures which these writers evoke as the actuality of Mexican existence” (WOODCOCK, 1989, p. 21). One must agree with Woodcock since the images these authors create about Mexico are the ones in which the readers will mostly trust. According to Foucault, the division between true and false is excluded in the order of the discourse. The author selects his ideas and makes statements about what he considers to be true. His objective is to show his readers that he is the “expert” about a certain topic, therefore, he can speak the truth. The reader believes in the travel writer for there is the first hand experience (1972).

The narrator describes what he has seen in his trip to tell it to his readers. Woodcock goes on to express the feeling that these authors have when they are in touch with another culture, in this case, Mexico:

Thus, what each writer says about Mexico becomes in a sense the quintessence of his general attitude towards life, and if we examine the writing of Huxley, Lawrence and Greene, we shall see that in each case the author has projected on to the country he visited the state of mind he dreads most, and then, out of this horror, has drawn the opposing and consoling virtue which, like a serum produced from the killing virus, provides salvation. (WOODCOCK, 1989, p. 23)

In Greene's cycle sense, everything he experiences in Mexico becomes a stain that will also stay with him for years. He constructs his narrative about Mexico based on the dichotomy between good and evil. Religion, for him, is the practice that saves the mortal soul, especially if someone is suffering in a place where there is the "absence" of God. As Ker points out:

Catholicism [to Greene] both affirmed and explained the existence of absolute evil; but it was not until 1938, when he went to Mexico to report on the religious persecution raging there, that he 'discovered some emotional belief' in Catholicism. (KER, 2003, p. 110)

The idea of salvation and sanctification of the human being permeates Greene's works to show that Catholicism is the remedy for all evils. *The Power and the Glory* offers the best example of such an idea. The novel is based on Greene's visit to a place that he himself calls the Godless country. Greene later confirmed in Mexico that only Catholics, as "sinners", are capable of committing "evil". What Greene narrates to his readers functions as his own credo: evil exist; therefore good (and God) must exist as well. Catholicism keeps recurring in Greene's narrative in a cyclical movement. His ideology plays a key role in his narrative as a form of constraint on information. Terry Eagleton, in *Ideology: An Introduction* (1991), sums up a possible relation between ideology and discourse, and gives an example that fits Greene's observations:

It may help to view ideology less as a particular set of effects *within* discourses. What is 'bourgeois' about this mixed bunch of idioms is less the kind of languages they are than the effects they produce: effects for example of closure whereby certain forms of signification are silently excluded, and certain signifiers 'fixed' in a commanding position. (EAGLETON, 1991, p. 194, emphasis in original)

Greene fabricates his discourse within a paradox. The author stressed the fact that he did not feel at home with the Mexicans because they either disgusted him physically or intrigued him but later disappointed him, like General Cedillo. On the other hand, telling stories of priests being killed years before, or about secret masses provided positive qualities for the Church and its followers. Greene supported Catholicism in Mexico because it gave him a sense of understanding his own past and his decision of switching religions. He thought that Catholicism provided a type of salvation that he could not find in Anglicanism. Greene traveled to Mexico with very little intention to find the exotic because his main concern was individualistic and ideological in only observing the religious issue of the time.

THE IDEOLOGY OF AN ENGLISH CATHOLIC

English literature and religion have kept recurring throughout the centuries. Catholic literature achieved its peak during the Victorian period, and later during Modernism. Some believed that Catholicism had been abolished from literary texts. John Henry Newman's *The Idea of a University* (1873) argues that English literature is essentially composed of Protestant texts (KER, 2003, p. 1). Newman thought that Catholics did not produce enough literary texts. Ker disagrees with Newman's pessimism and notes that "the Victorian period, one of the richest apart from the Elizabethan in English literature, was less than halfway through" (KER, 2003, p. 2) by the time of Newman's statement. George Eliot had not published a single book, Charles Dickens was still getting some attention, and Anthony Trollope was at the beginning of his Barchester novels about religion. Newman could not predict the wave of writers that would later discuss religion in their works, especially in the twentieth century. Graham Greene was one of those authors who devoted most of his time and pages to religion after his conversion to Catholicism in the mid-1920s. *The Power and the Glory*, his masterpiece, and *TLR* are considered works that deal with Catholicism from the first to the last page, and the contrast between good and evil is always present. Therefore, Greene is an example that themes revolving around Catholicism were not forgotten in English literature in Modernism.

Greene's trip to Mexico is sometimes characterized by an ill-humored tone, since almost nothing seemed to appeal to the author while he was there. Some critics, such as Julia Llewellyn Smith, call *TLR* one of the most "bilious travel books ever written" (SMITH, 2001, p. 20). Mexicans could not appreciate the book due to Greene's bad treatment of their country, therefore it was published there as *Un otro México* and in the U.S. as *Another Mexico* in that same year. That is, what is implied in these other titles of Greene's work is

that there is a good Mexico, just as there is “Another Mexico” that is the bad one, or that has shown its ugly side to a particular traveler (Greene). This “other” Mexico is, indeed, an ambiguous way of referring to the Latin American country: just as it may indicate that there are two different Mexicos, another interpretation is that there is a false Mexico and a true Mexico. The Mexicans did not like the fact that Greene looked at their country with selective glasses in such a subjective manner. For them, it was Greene who created a “false” Mexico, when the author created a different country as soon as he arrived there; it was not the Mexico to which they themselves were accustomed.

Greene’s ideology in writing his narrative indicates the type of culture he intends to write with the purpose of connecting himself at least with one aspect of it. As Judith Adamson (1990) argues, Greene’s “purpose in observing Catholic persecution was straightforward and individualistic. Persecution was unacceptable, so he exposed it” (ADAMSON, 1990, p. 55). Greene’s images of the country make people be unwilling to visit there for they show unpleasant people and places. This is the true and dreadful Mexico for Greene. In his eyes, the Catholic Church was the only institution that fought against the “evil” and totalitarian Socialist government. Ruth Mulvey Harmer, in “Greene World of Mexico: The Birth of a Novelist” (1963), points out that Greene explained, with a note to the third edition of *TLR* in 1950, that “he might be excused for neglecting the more permanent sides of Mexican life and dwelling on religious conditions because he had been commissioned to do just that” (HARMER, 1963, p. 171). Greene’s intention to create a statement that seemed true to him is determined by different criteria of his own discourse. Ideologically, the author neglected other aspects of Mexican life, especially politics, because 1) he did not feel interested in showing and knowing, and 2) because he wanted to be focused on religious matters for working purposes.

Greene also wanted to show his strong identification with Catholicism and that this religion had always been permeating his life as a form of deliverance. The images, from the beginning to the end, represent a cycle in Greene’s life as he attempts to try to find himself. Greene asks himself what “made the change” in him after all this. Was it “the hills and towers” that are not standing anymore? He would find the answer to this question later when he realized that “a world like this end[s] in anything but war” (GREENE, 1955, p. 288). *TLR* starts with the author reminiscing about his childhood in England and revealing it through the images he recalls from the past. The cyclic motif is still in movement: Greene traveled to Mexico to go through new experiences, and, finally, he returned to England and witnesses the very beginning of a war that would change the world forever. Europe on the brink

of war is a form of continuation of Mexico as a metaphor for hell, or a Godless land to Greene.

The process of looking for salvation from the divided world, between the private and the public, Greene had as a child because of religious matters starting early in his life in his hometown. He always feared and hated life as a child. At school, he met both adolescents and adults (teachers) who “bore about them the genuine quality of evil” (GREENE, 1955, p. 14). Every day the young Greene would escape this world for an hour and go to the other side of the border, the garden that divided his school and a courtyard. In that spot, instead of listening to the school orchestra play Mendelssohn, he would rest and listen to the rabbits chewing grass. It was a time when the young Greene could escape from the rigidity of “the other world”. This world had a negative atmosphere for Greene for he did not feel comfortable with the rules that were imposed at school. In the first part of the Prologue to *TLR*, Greene narrates his experience with religion as a child. He was raised in an Anglican family, but he always had the idea that he lived in two different worlds.

In *TLR* Greene constructs his truth about both religions in his life. His discourse concerning religion is composed of statements about how traumatic his experience with Anglicanism was, and how Catholicism came to “save” his life. Greene begins his narrative with a flashback to when he was thirteen years old in the garden of the school to which he went in Berkhamsted. His first look at the town was filtered through memory image by image. From the garden, a more peaceful and natural spot with rabbits and flowers everywhere, Greene could see the Victorian buildings that composed his school. Greene was “an inhabitant of both countries” (GREENE, 1955, p. 13). For him, life is on a border and “you are pulled by different ties of hate and love” (GREENE, 1955, p. 13). Adamson points out that even “in childhood he [Greene] experienced that perplexity at border crossings he would later employ in his fiction with such metaphorical power” (GREENE, 1955, p. 2). This border separated his two worlds: home and school, the private and the public. This is period when Greene starts to be aware of God in his life, and the religious cycle in search of salvation from Anglicanism begins. “I began to believe in heaven because I believed in hell”, he says (GREENE, 1955, p. 14) — a quotation which is taken from the fire and brimstone sermon in James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Joyce was also a Catholic, and related Catholicism to salvation of the soul in his novels. His Stephen Dedalus exposes his feeling towards life as he grows up into manhood. Before “crossing the border,” the images Dedalus had at school were always related to hell. The Anglican Church was responsible for giving him the torments that the “damned” must suffer if they do not follow the strict laws of that religion.

As for Greene, he realized that he needed to look for peaceful images that were more related to salvation and forgiveness, and try to escape a world that gave him nothing but oppression. He understood that while he was in his mother's bedroom he felt somewhat protected: "the world smelt differently: books and fruit and eau-de-Cologne" (GREENE, 1955, p. 13). Greene could also look down the quad, the halls, and the classrooms. When he opened the door, he could see his father's study. Entering this room, he would smell the iodine and ink everywhere. This world, for Greene, represents images that are related to a harsher kind of religious system. The author associated images from this world to a harsher and stricter religious system, namely Anglicanism. Catholicism is associated in his writing to a practice that is able to free the soul. Greene sees evil in one religion and good in the other, just like he reads the State and the Church in Mexico. His radical construction of what is true and what is false depends on his religious beliefs: anti-Anglicanism and pro-Catholicism.

Going to Mexico represented an opportunity for Greene to use his assumed position of authority and write propaganda in favor of Catholicism. The author truly wanted to make this trip, and Julia Llewellyn Smith (2001) explains why: "Shirley Temple was suing him for a review of her film *Wee Willie Winkie*, in which he concluded that the star's 'well-shaped and desirable little body' was displayed in too provocative a manner for a nine-year-old" (SMITH, 2001, p. 18). Greene feared all the problems he had to face in court and could not find a better opportunity to leave England for a while to do his research on persecution in an important Catholic country for the British Catholic newspaper *The Tablet*.

Besides, Europe was on the verge of going to war for the second time. The Old Continent was in conflict between the ideologies of Fascism and Communism. Traveling to Mexico with a job assignment served well Greene's purpose of writing his thoughts about his religion to expose the "sufferings" Catholics were undergoing in Mexico. Greene had learned about the religious persecution that started after the Revolution of 1910 in Mexico, and thought that going to that country he was going to witness the atrocities there.

In the later 1920s, a wave of persecution started by President Plutarco Calles brought to its height the long lasting and bitter struggle between the Church and the State that had begun in Mexico in the nineteenth century. Calles enforced several anti-clerical articles in the 1917 Mexican Constitution. Many priests were arrested because they had not registered in Mexico City and the churches stayed closed until 1929. In the 1930s the pressure on young British writers to side with socialism was common. Smith points out that "Greene, although he claimed to dislike [Francisco] Franco, said he was unhappy about the left's persecution of the church" (SMITH, 2001, p. 18). Smith

explains how ironic it is that Greene's purpose of reporting the atrocities that went on in Mexico against the Catholics during the dictatorship never materialized, "although the persecution on the clergy continued and the churches remained closed, thanks largely to the state's extreme isolation" (SMITH, 2001, p. 23).

The author never wrote or published that article for any newspaper, but decided to write an entire book about his impressions and criticism on religious matters in Mexico with his personal experiences during the period of law enforcement against the Catholics of Mexico. Greene uses the term "persecution" and exaggerates the actions of the government toward the Church. In fact, President Cárdenas attempted to appease the conflict between the radical section of the Catholics and the State. One notices how Greene manufactures his writing. He omits important political facts and makes Cárdenas appear as a president who wished harm to the Church.

At first, the author was interested in what Socialist Mexico was doing in favor of or against Catholicism at that time. Greene decided to interview Saturnino Cedillo, the general who had been appointed to President Lázaro Cárdenas's cabinet as a concession to Mexican rightists because of his solid support of capitalism and Catholicism. Greene could not tell anyone the reason he was in Mexico so that he would not be asked to leave the country. While interviewing Cedillo, the author had to be somewhat subtle in terms of his religious and political concerns. President Cárdenas's government lasted from 1934 to 1940. As he consolidated his powers, however, the President had eased Cedillo out of office. After that, the general returned to his home state, San Luis Potosí, which he then ruled as a feudal king. In *The Course of Mexican History* (2003), Michael Meyer explains that "although Cedillo had the strong backing and financial support of conservative interests, both domestic and foreign, Cárdenas's army remained loyal and quelled the rebellion within a matter of weeks" (MEYER, 2003, p. 575). Greene's political purpose in *TLR* is to make people feel less indifferent about the religious situation in Mexico. He was not successful with Cedillo. At the interview, the author found out that Cedillo "hated the whole business; you could see he didn't think in our terms at all" (MEYER, 2003, p. 57). Cedillo was neither a Catholic nor a Socialist. This is the reason why Greene writes "our terms"; however, the General was not totally against Cárdenas's ideas of building Socialist schools all over the country and the Agrarian Reform, which proposed the break-up of large land-holdings that were to be divided among the Indians. On the other hand, he did wish "to exchange even the harsh laws of Cárdenas for his corrupt administration" (MEYER, 2003, p. 58). Cedillo also said that he respected all kinds of religion, although he thought that some of the secular school teachers were trying to serve "mean political

interests” (MEYER, 2003, p. 57). These political interests, according to Cedillo, pertained to the Fascists and the Communists. Greene liked this piece of information because it made sense to his purpose to fabricate the idea that certain parts of Mexican society and the government rejected the Catholics.

Religion has always been an integral part of Mexican society. Almost every aspect in life of Aztec society held some religious meaning. The Aztecs believed and worshiped a pantheon of gods and built several temples to them. They feared the deities as well. This atmosphere of superstition facilitated the Spaniards’ conquest of Mexico, since Europeans were considered gods who had come to save the Aztecs. The Aztec emperor Montezuma II was very powerful, although a powerful leader was affected by the foreboding about the future of his people. Hernán Cortés (1485-1547) took advantage of this situation to get information about the gold he was searching for the Spanish Crown.

Greene can be seen as someone equivalent to the Spanish conquistadors. They arrived in Mexico looking for information on how to find as much gold as possible. Greene, however, wanted some information, mainly because of the assignment he was supposed to write about the religious situation in Mexico. In fact, it was dangerous to be a foreigner at that time and to show interest in anything but the traditional monuments that attracted tourists. The author acted as if he were a mere tourist, granted him a certain degree of safety needed to accomplish his task. Greene explains that if he “had shown any particular interest in politics or religion, it would have been simple enough to thirty-three me [him]” (GREENE, 1955, p. 67). “Thirty-three” is an expression related to the Clause 33 of the Constitution that allows the deportation of any foreigner deemed undesirable, without giving cause, on twenty-four hours’ notice. Greene had to be careful and act like a spy would in that circumstance. The risk of being deported and this position of spying probably challenged Greene, as an adventurous traveler, to stay in Mexico and continue his assignment on behalf of Catholicism.

Greene did not take much interest in the Mexicans themselves; he did not want to become attached to anyone there. When Greene arrived in Chiapas by plane the view of the mountains resembling a prison wall represented a kind of warning that his way would be blocked and that he was to have difficulty communicating with people, which turned true in a way since no one spoke English. He confesses that “for the first time I was hopelessly at a loss because of my poverty of Spanish” (GREENE, 1955, p. 143). He did not feel the need of learning Spanish before leaving for Mexico. He probably thought that since he spoke English, communication there would be very easy. This attitude shows a degree of imperialist thought. He should have known that most of the population of Mexico at that time did not have

easy access to school, and tourism was not yet a very common practice. Thus, most Mexicans would not communicate with him in English. Then, Greene began to look for a guide, or an interpreter, just like Cortés did during the conquest of Mexico. Greene did not speak Spanish, and Cortés could not talk to the Aztecs because he did not speak their language. Greene needed a native so that he could travel in the countryside, and by himself it would have been quite difficult just as Europeans generally moved into the heart of the new world and other colonies with the help of a local inhabitant. History, thus, repeats itself in Greene's account of his travels in Mexico.

The notion of paradox in Greene's behavior in Mexico is present throughout his narrative. In order to get information about Catholics or something "against" the Church, Greene took the position of a Catholic spy as well. His intention was to be informed and then fabricate his statements in order to protect Catholicism's reputation, and to make Cárdenas look guilty. A spy has the same active position as a colonizer, or an imperialist, who acts superior and takes advantage of the people he visits. The spy must be subtle to find information about what interests him or her. Thus, little by little Greene gathered the material that was to be used for his assignment, as he constructed his discourse.

Espionage is central to most of Greene's fictional works. Greene suggests that the novelist must be a spy when writing adventure prose. Greene shares with his readers all his "secrets" while in Mexico in order for these readers to understand how those secrets had been withheld during the author's mission. His "secrets" are related to his ideology in favor of his religion. Greene acted as a spy of God on his trip to Mexico because most of the images he creates are connected with religion. The authority of God and the authority of the novelist spy are the same. In his fiction, the characters act like spies because they investigate the problems, and, at the same time, Greene acts like an omniscient presence; he also knows how the destinies of the characters are going to be shaped. In *TLR*, Greene is not a God, but His disciple. He believed that he was an instrument of God on earth, thus he felt the necessity of spying so that he could report later.

The notion of cycle and identification with Catholicism returns to his narrative. The torments he underwent before converting into a Catholic reached an end as he was "saved" by Catholic faith. Greene thought that Catholicism was corrective. He thought that this religion would change people's attitudes and restore order without violence and class conflicts. The author witnessed the religious conflicts as a secret agent who is assigned to report on the Mexican religious conflicts when he gets back to England. This is part of Greene's ideology: he stresses the idea of writing to investigate about the corruption, fraudulence, and subversion that take place in the world.

Greene's image of Mexico is of a Godless country that lives under a turmoil of "who loses and who wins". Obviously, under God's eyes, the losers are not the ones who own lands and dictate laws against the Church, but the ones who suffer and pray every day for a democratic world. Greene's identification with Mexico becomes clear as he consciously writes about how he witnessed Catholics suffering because of the government and all the indifference toward them.

Greene recalls the time when he was confused about his previous religion and associated it with images of hell and damnation. Only Catholicism could save him from those thoughts and he could achieve peace of mind. During his trip, he and his guide pass a village called Tenahape. It is the first time Greene feels a peaceful atmosphere while he was in Mexico. He describes it as if it was "like a scene from the past before the human race had bred its millions – England of the Conquest before the forests had been cut, a herd called Sweyn, the wattle huts, the world of *Ivanhoe*" (GREENE, 1955, p. 170). Greene romanticizes Mexico for the first time and even compares this "hideous" place to his native land before it was "tainted" by the Norman conquerors of 1066. He associates Mexico with goodness through religious objects, such as a grove of crosses he sees along the way. These crosses suggest Christianity. At this moment, in this distant piece of Mexico, Greene feels protected from the politicians around the country. For Greene, the politicians and part of Mexican society represented the enemy of the Church. At that place, where he found the physical objects of Christianity, the author had a sense of integration with Mexico because he also related that spot with the symbols of the crosses as elements of Catholic faith.

Another symbolic aspect that Greene mentions about his religion is an association of Mexico, because of the conflict between the Church and the government, with the religious persecution of the Catholics during the Elizabethan period in England. The 1930s in Mexico, for Greene, are similar to the period of the rise of Reformation in sixteenth-century Europe. In that period, the Old Continent underwent the religious revolution of Christianity, the Reformation. This religious movement, which ended the supremacy of the pope in Western Europe, led to the establishment of the Protestant churches. Eventually the Catholics would react against this new reformation and created the Counter Reformation, which sought to revitalize the church and oppose Protestantism. Conquering souls became as essential as acquiring new lands. A major instrument of the Counter Reformation was the establishment of the Inquisition. In Spain, the Inquisition became an instrument of the Crown and was used by King Philip II to guarantee the orthodoxy of his subjects and to suppress both political and religious dissent. Comparing England in the sixteenth century and Mexico in the 1930s, Greene

thought that the Cárdenas and the State represented the Protestants and Catholics the ones who were against the acts of the government, thus they would be persecuted.

In the second part of the prologue of *TLR*, Greene, explains the current political and religious situation in Mexico selectively. He tells his readers that "President [Plutarco Elías] Calles had begun the fiercest persecution of religion anywhere since the reign of Elizabeth" (GREENE, 1955, p. 19). Greene's comment never goes any further than this. He just mentions it but does not give more information about his comparison.

King Henry VIII (1491-1547) ruled England for almost four decades in the sixteenth century and decided to cast off papal authority and create his own form of Catholicism. After his death, his daughter, Mary I (1516-58), took over and reestablished Roman Catholicism in 1555. Her persecution of Protestants earned her the nickname "Bloody Mary". Adrian Morey (1978) explains that "some 273 people, chiefly of humble status including women, had been executed" (MOREY, 1978, p. 18). The burning of heretics was commanded by Queen Mary and it took place mostly in London. Soon after Mary I died, Henry VIII's daughter with Anne Boleyn (1507-36), Elizabeth I (1533-1603), began her seventy-year reign in England. She accomplished many things for her country and won many battles. In terms of religion, Queen Elizabeth's Protestant upbringing led her to oppose Catholicism and condemn the Catholics that were against the return of Protestantism as the official religion in England.

Greene mentions the fact that in England, a First World country, persecution had also taken place. Even in Europe this act was extremely severe. His discourse oscillates as he implies that people who look up to the English as a quiet and peaceful people should consider that in the past this barbarian act was done. The author considers his own people barbarian and blames on the Protestants, not the Catholics. He blindly fabricates his statements and does not realize that Mary I, a Catholic, was the most barbaric monarch, not Elizabeth, a Protestant. Centuries later Greene observed a similar violent process as he witnessed the religious conflicts taking place in some Mexican states, especially in Chiapas and Tabasco. Can Greene be implying that England is as barbarian as Mexico? He may mean the opposite: Mexico should not be considered barbarian or inferior because of the religious persecution, since even England, that is considered a civilized nation, had also had religious persecution in the past.

Greene sees President Calles as the Mexican Elizabeth I as far as religious persecution is concerned. In fact, Calles should be associated with Mary I because of the fierce persecution practiced by both rulers. Calles was a political activist and governed Mexico from 1924 to 1928. During his

government, a Jesuit, Father Miguel Pro, was captured and executed. In *The Power and the Glory* Greene created the character of a priest based on the image of Father Pro, the fictional priest who tried to find salvation for himself. P.B. Lamba, in *Graham Greene: His Mind and Heart* (1987), argues that in *TLR* Greene “makes his sympathies clear and shows the desirability of Catholicism” (LAMB, 1987, p. 57). His ideology in this book is to show the positive side of Catholicism and contrast this religious denomination with the “tyrannical” government in Mexico in the first decades of the twentieth century. Greene makes the Church to be seen as the institution of the good and suffering people, and the politicians are the villains.

Greene fervently endorses the humanity of the Catholic Church against the inhumanity of atheists. The author thinks that people who object to spending money on churches or making donations to the church is a false notion. He compares going to the movies and attending Mass and thinks they are different. For him, in a movie theater, there is no democracy for “you pay more and you get more; but in a church the democracy is absolute. The rich man and the poor man kneel side by side for Communion; the rich man must wait his turn at the confessional” (GREENE, 1955, p. 41). Although this kind of image that Greene intends to show to his readers can stress the idea that in spite of the ruthless government, Mexico still had the “population of heaven” who devoted themselves to God and never let dictatorship take religion away from them. In my opinion, Mexican government was, for Greene, false and corrupt. The true leader was God. This is another proof that he felt close to the Mexicans that suffered the punishment for being Catholics. The author saw himself mirrored in the sheep of God from Mexico.

Greene’s attitude toward Mexico changed from beginning to end. Before arriving there, he had a different impression of the country. He relates that he “was ready to think of Mexico in terms of quiet and gentleness and devotion” (GREENE, 1955, p. 42). During his trip, the images of the world Greene saw in Mexico are of a country of desolation, cruelty, and corruption (“This is Hell, nor are we out of it” [GREENE, 1955: p.30]), although the poor and suffering people he saw there represent the best people in the world, for their “happiness was born out of their pain” (LAMB, 1987, p. 58). The traveler Greene had been moved by the sight of these peasants assuming the attitude of the crucifixion. In Mexico the underdogs were the Catholics. While Greene sees these “best people in the world,” he creates an image for them, based on his faith:

This is the atmosphere of the stigmata, and you realize suddenly that perhaps *this* is the population of heaven – these aged, painful, and ignorant faces: they are human goodness...You would say that life itself for these

was mortification enough, but like saints they seek the only happiness in their lives and squeeze out from it a further pain. (GREENE, 1955, p. 44, emphasis in original)

Greene wants to tell his readers all about this world of sin and suffering that himself and the protagonist of *The Power and the Glory* undergo to achieve sanctification. The prime need of Catholicism for the poor and Greene himself is seen in *TLR* and *The Power and the Glory* as a sort of salvation from a sterile civilization that is populated with ignorance and materialism. Later, Greene conveys his interpretation of Mexico at the beginning of his trip:

After Mexico I shall always associate balconies and politicians – plump men with blue chins wearing soft hats and guns on their hips. They look down from the official balcony in every city all day long with nothing to do but stare, with the expression of men keeping an eye on a good thing. (GREENE, 1955, p. 45)

The priests and the pilots were the only class of men Greene liked in Mexico. He was impressed by the latter since he found a sense of modernity and newness in Mexico in them. Greene liked the pilots because they were hardworking and serious men who never drank or smoked. The politicians have the image of the villains in Greene's eye, due to the fact that at that specific time in Mexican history they were against religion, especially Catholicism. Greene wanted social change although he was opposed to the Left and suspicious of any intervention of the State. As a representative of a First World country and a devout Catholic, Greene feels superior sometimes while he is in Mexico, especially towards politics, and writes about a country that "needed" political and even religious intervention. The author feels closer, though, to the Catholics who dedicated themselves to the Church. According to Woodcock,

Mexico became a screen on which they [the English authors] saw not only their world but also themselves projected – or rather, perhaps, a mirror which for them showed not its real substance, but the image of their own concerns, a mirror that in each case revealed a climatic truth. (WOODCOCK, 1989, p. 32)

One can notice in Greene's observations and descriptions a tension between the reporter who wants to get everything right and the fiction-writer who is good at getting the reader's attention. Adamson notes that *TLR* "is a personalized truth in which Mexico has become an extension of pre-war England" (ADAMSON, 1990, p. 68). When Greene returned home to London,

he realized that he would undergo the same “hell” he had in Mexico, with Europe on the brink of World War II.

Greene’s ideology plays an important role in his narrative with the images he creates about Mexico and its political and religious conflicts in the 1930s. These images act as propaganda made by the author. Greene, acting like a God’s messenger, went to Mexico and painted it as a land of sin that needed to be saved from poverty and evil. He portrays society as indifferent and the Government as evil and against the Catholics, who were immaculate people. Greene did not want to know about the progress Cárdenas was willing to make during his term as President.

GREENE’S DISCOURSE: RELIGION VS. THE OTHERS

As I have discussed before in this study, religion is the central purpose for Greene’s observations on this trip. It is through religion that he feels connected with the Catholics in Mexico. Society in general along with the State became the “other” to him. Greene’s assumed position of authority enables him to speak blindly of the other institutions in Mexico as they were bluntly against Catholicism. He makes use of the power of language to create statements favoring the fanatics of his religion.

Once again, the construction of the truth is present in Greene’s narrative as he writes of how he perceives the “other.” The importance of Foucault’s enunciative conscience in literary and cultural studies is that it discusses the notion of truth and falsehood in a text. For instance, historical texts tend to be privileged for telling the truth; autobiographies are supposed to be texts that correspond to reality. In fictional texts, the author is free to write his mind and is not necessarily bound to the values of truth.

Foucault (1972) argues that “literature is the contestation of philology...it leads back from grammar to the naked power of speech, and there it encounters the untamed, imperious being of words” (FOUCAULT, 1972, p. 300). Here Foucault talks about the certain freedom the word (literature) gives to the writer, especially in fiction. The author is a selective figure, since he can write about what he wants. In the case of Greene’s travelogue, he includes and excludes facts according to his position of authority. His discourse about Mexico is supported by what he intends his readers to know in terms of evil *versus* good, or the politicians against the Catholics. Greene also classifies Mexicans as a people without any knowledge and having a bad physical appearance. Discourse is based on the author’s ideology. In *TLR*, Greene makes propaganda in favor of his religion for he wants to represent Catholicism as a good thing and that anything else that goes against it is considered evil.

Prejudice is present in Greene's observations about almost everything on his trip as he stereotypes the "other". According to Charles Ramírez Berg (2002), stereotyping is a form of categorizing the other. Greene's main interest in Mexico is to see and know about everything that was related to religion, especially the problems Catholicism was undergoing with the dictatorship. Since it was his one and only trip to Mexico, many things there had a great effect on the writer. He points out that the Romantics would have loved the Mexican scene as "sublime" and "awe-inspiring" (2002). He arrived in Mexico City and could not connect the city with the small farms and the Indians in the hills. Everything was big and luxurious. Greene could not understand the contrast between the small towns in the interior and Mexico City. The author categorizes the food as being bad: "if it isn't hot with sauces, it's nothing at all, just a multitude of plates plonked down on the table simultaneously, so that five are getting cold while you eat the sixth" (GREENE, 1955, p. 35). Mexican food could not satisfy Greene, because he compares it to European food. He could have skipped that comment on the food, but since he wanted to let the readers know about it and avoid eating local dishes if they went to Mexico, Greene made sure to include this fact in his text.

The notion of paradox keeps recurring in Greene's narrative. Sometimes the author acts like a tourist who always compares his culture with a different one and thinks his has better qualities. On the other hand, Greene, with a sense of justice, talks about everything that was being done to maintain Catholicism, such as the Catholic Action that was under way: "women typewriting, men waiting for a conference" (GREENE, 1955, p. 72). Greene met some Catholics in Mexico City who did things on the sly so that they could say what the government was doing against them and their religion.

The author contrasts religion and other Mexican institutions as a form of self-exposure or propaganda favoring Catholicism over the entire culture. His statements function as tools to provide grandeur to himself and his religion. As V.S. Pritchett wrote in *The London Mercury* his review of *TLR* in 1939, Greene "writes about himself; the book [*TLR*] is as much a self-exposure as an exposure of a various and terrifying country" (PRITCHETT, 1939, p. 64). Almost every image Greene produces about Mexico is related to something negative, except for Catholic matters. He hated the capital of Mexico. He was glad to leave it for the "shops [were] full of tourist junk, silver filigree and gourds and rugs and dead fleas dressed up as little people inside walnuts, all the fake smartness and gaiety" (GREENE, 1955, p. 91). Besides food, Greene complains about the monuments in that country that "are to violent deaths" (GREENE, 1955, p. 80) and the people who appear to him as hideous creatures, because of their degraded condition. As an early twentieth-century Englishman, Greene has a touch of colonialism in his heart – an apparent ill-

disguised dislike of cultures, not as advanced as he sees his own. Greene makes a confession:

How one begins to hate these people - the intense slowness of that monolithic black -clothed old woman with the grey straggly hair... the hideous inexpressiveness of brown eyes... People never seem to help each other in small ways, removing a parcel from a seat, making room with their legs. They just sit about. (GREENE, 1955, p. 199)

Besides being slow, in Greene's eyes, Mexicans are also unhelpful towards others. The author goes further and confesses that "if Spain is like this, I understand the temptation to massacre" (GREENE, 1955, p. 199). Most images he created of the Mexicans were the worst ones possible. He keeps a distance from the culture and uses negative adjectives to describe the people in Mexico. At times the reader gets confused as he reads Greene's statements because of his oscillating gaze at Mexico. One must be aware of the meaning behind Greene's confessions. What he is saying is that despite all the negativity he felt about Mexico in general, he was able to share his ideas with the ones of the Catholics in that country.

The people he met on the journey did not appeal to him, unless they were Catholics who were suffering because of the Federal law enforcement against the Church. Despite his other frailties, Greene was the one who could see with the bemused distance so precious to the English visitor, and through *his* eyes and representations the reader gets to see the aftermath of a nation, still recovering from a bloody ten-year civil war. In Villahermosa, Greene drank a lot to avoid the heat and found the food "unspeakable," worse than anything he had eaten in Mexico. He learned that there were other Greenses there but they were Mexican not English. He was to meet those people later that day. He was interested in meeting them because he thought that since they shared his surname he hoped they could have something in common, including the support for Catholicism. The other Greenses did not appear so Greene only stayed there observing the place. He describes the place: "dirty whitewashed walls, the greasy hammocks, and the animal faces of the men" (GREENE, 1955, p. 143). He conveys the smell and taste of not only the cities, but also of the rural and poor south. The images of decadence appear in Greene's narrative to stress the striking difference between the Third and his own (First) world.

At times Greene compared Mexico and England and New York; or rather a poor country in contrast with other rich ones. At this point, he was in Chiapas, one of the fiercest states in Mexico. The author observed that "[there was] no hope anywhere: I have never been in a country where you are more aware all the time of hate" (GREENE, 1955, p. 157). Greene could not

seem to escape the hatred he felt in Mexico. For this matter, the author starts longing for home. In his hotel room he started thinking about what one should read while traveling to remind him of his own roots. He recalled the time when he was in West Africa and had taken Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) with him. The book matched the mood of the journey, and he realized that what he really needed was something to contrast with the "sad" and "depressing" reality of the place. For the trip to Mexico, he knew better and brought Anthony Trollope's *Barchester Towers* (1857) with its descriptions of English landscapes and customs; however, the book made him feel even more homesick. Greene felt a type of nostalgia for home, for his "mother-tongue"; for the particulars that signify the experience of the familiar once it was far from him. He wanted to escape from the situation of being in a place where he could only see the worst of things. His hatred for Mexico never seemed to leave him, so he lay in a hammock and longed for the luxuries of New York that are offered to rich tourists. Greene constantly recalled past experiences he had had in New York in wintertime with the "Rockefeller Plaza rose in icicles of steel towards a cold sky; the ice-skaters moved in the small square under the stars; I thought of tea at the Waldorf, the little saucers of cinnamon sticks and cherries" (GREENE, 1955, p. 146).

Then the author concluded that "this [Mexico] didn't seem to be the same world" (GREENE, 1955, p. 146). What Greene saw as a tourist in a more refreshing weather in New York was quite different from what he was going through in Mexico. His position paradoxically seems to vary now: from a traveler with a mission of finding out about religion persecution and the longing for comfort that a tourist would have in New York with money in his pockets. Greene's thoughts oscillate throughout the trip. At times, he finds Mexicans inferior and helpless, however, the Catholics, or the ones that celebrated Holy Week, they were a "different" kind of Mexicans. Greene felt closer to them because of the reflex of his own inner conflict. He seems to be caught between two worlds: the religious and the secular. The discomfiting situation on the lawless roads of Mexico due to its government's privation of the people made Greene wish for hotels and fancy food from the First World.

Greene's discourse about Mexico keeps changing as he moves from one state to the other. The only place in Mexico that pleased Greene was Las Casas. He wrote, "I began to regard the city of Las Casas hidden there in the mountains, at the end of a mule back, with one only rough road running south, as the real object of my journey" (GREENE, 1955, p. 169). He got there in time for Holy Week. Greene confesses that he

loathed Mexico – but there were times when it seemed as if there were worse places. Here were idolatry and oppression, starvation and casual

violence, but you lived under the shadow of religion – of God or the Devil. ‘Rating for Dating’ – it wasn’t evil, it wasn’t anything at all, it was just the drugstore and the Coca-Cola, the hamburger, the sinless empty graceless chromium world. (GREENE, 1955, p. 184)

Greene liked Las Casas the most for it was there that he could spend Holy Week and see his religion being celebrated. For him, Mexico was a bad place, although there were worse places where there was no trace of religion. At least in Mexico, despite all the violence and starvation, there was religion. And although Catholicism was going through a difficult phase under the dictatorship and the whole influence of American products of which he disapproved, there still were people who devoted their lives to the Church, and this was important to Greene. During the festivities, he looked for a miracle, something that would make him like Mexico a little. In this case, Mexican stereotype seems to go away. The only thing that called Greene’s attention was the “truest” faith that Mexicans had in Catholicism and God. He did say anything negative about Las Casas because it was the most Catholic state, and Holy Week was taking place there without any problems from the government. After Holy Week, Greene recovered his faith since all he did was complain about almost everything in Mexico.

Greene, as a thriller and adventure writer, must deliver up villains and heroes, even in a travel book. His bias is clear here: the villains are obviously those who are against Catholicism. The heroes are the few expatriates, whom he met in Chiapas, and who live in an unforgiving, hot, sultry, disease-ridden country where English speakers are an endangered species (they were living at the time of the expropriation of the oil fields, and thus all gringos were looked on as possible spies). Greene himself was afraid that the government might think he was a spy and send him home. He tried to be as subtle as possible when getting information on the situation of Catholicism and the problems with the dictatorial government.

Greene explored Mexico as a traveling writer with a mission. He intended to expose the problems that were happening to the Catholics in the Mexico of the 1930s. Smith notes that “the atrocities Greene hoped to report on never materialized, although persecution of the clergy continued and the churches remained closed, thanks largely to the state’s extreme isolation” (SMITH, 2001, p. 23). *The Power and the Glory*, the novel based on his trip to Mexico, succeeds due to Greene’s loathing for a place he does not understand. It is a place of strange people speaking in strange tongues with strange thoughts, living a strange peace. As Adamson notes:

The bias of *The Lawless Roads* is so strong that it colours the book’s language where everything to do with the state is set in an atmosphere of violence

and hopelessness while the stories about the Church are shaded in gentleness and excuse. (ADAMSON, 1990, p. 52)

For Greene the strangeness he found in Mexico was about the politicians who did not agree with Catholics and their fanaticism. He felt some sort of a connection with those who were “persecuted” by the state. Greene’s paradoxical way of thinking is that the identification with Mexico grew through religion. He realized he was different from the Mexicans in general; however, he felt more connected with those who practiced Catholicism.

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