

CLIFFS NOTES on

U.S. \$4.95

**GREENE'S THE POWER
AND THE GLORY**



Cliffs[®]
NOTES^{INC.}

YOUR KEY TO THE CLASSICS

Graham Greene's
**The Power
and The Glory**

by Edward A. Kopper, Jr., Ph.D.

Editor: Gary Carey, M.A., University of Colorado

Consulting Editor: James L. Roberts, Ph.D., Department of English, University of Nebraska

CliffsNotes™ The Power and the Glory

Published by:

Hungry Minds, Inc.

909 Third Avenue

New York, NY 10022

www.hungryminds.com (Hungry Minds Web site)

www.cliffsnotes.com (CliffsNotes Web site)

Copyright© 1986 Hungry Minds, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this book, including interior design, cover design, and icons, may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, by any means (electronic, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the publisher.

ISBN: 0-8220-1071-2

Printed in the United States of America

Distributed in the United States by Hungry Minds, Inc.

Distributed by CDG Books Canada Inc. for Canada; by Transworld Publishers Limited in the United Kingdom; by IDG Norge Books for Norway; by IDG Sweden Books for Sweden; by IDG Books Australia Publishing Corporation Pty. Ltd. for Australia and New Zealand; by TransQuest Publishers Pte Ltd. for Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and Hong Kong; by Gotop Information Inc. for Taiwan; by ICG Muse, Inc. for Japan; by Norma Comunicaciones S.A. for Columbia; by Intersoft for South Africa; by Eyrolles for France; by International Thomson Publishing for Germany, Austria and Switzerland; by Distribuidora Cuspide for Argentina; by LR International for Brazil; by Galileo Libros for Chile; by Ediciones ZETA S.C.R. Ltda. for Peru; by WS Computer Publishing Corporation, Inc., for the Philippines; by Contemporanea de Ediciones for Venezuela; by Express Computer Distributors for the Caribbean and West Indies; by Micronesia Media Distributor, Inc. for Micronesia; by Grupo Editorial Norma S.A. for Guatemala; by Chips Computadoras S.A. de C.V. for Mexico; by Editorial Norma de Panama S.A. for Panama; by American Bookshops for Finland. Authorized Sales Agent: Anthony Rudkin Associates for the Middle East and North Africa.

For general information on Hungry Minds' products and services please contact our Customer Care department; within the U.S. at **800-762-2974**, outside the U.S. at **317-572-3993** or fax **317-572-4002**.

For sales inquiries and resellers information, including discounts, premium and bulk quantity sales and foreign language translations please contact our Customer Care department at **800-434-3422**, fax **317-572-4002** or write to Hungry Minds, Inc., Attn: Customer Care department, 10475 Crosspoint Boulevard, Indianapolis, IN 46256.

For information on licensing foreign or domestic rights, please contact our Sub-Rights Customer Care department at **650-653-7098**.

For information on using Hungry Minds' products and services in the classroom or for ordering examination copies, please contact our Educational Sales department at **800-434-2086** or fax **317-572-4005**.

Please contact our Public Relations department at **212-884-5163** for press review copies or **212-884-5000** for author interviews and other publicity information or fax **212-884-5400**.

For authorization to photocopy items for corporate, personal, or educational use, please contact Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, or fax 978-750-4470.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: THE PUBLISHER AND AUTHOR HAVE USED THEIR BEST EFFORTS IN PREPARING THIS BOOK. THE PUBLISHER AND AUTHOR MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOOK AND SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. THERE ARE NO WARRANTIES WHICH EXTEND BEYOND THE DESCRIPTIONS CONTAINED IN THIS PARAGRAPH. NO WARRANTY MAY BE CREATED OR EXTENDED BY SALES REPRESENTATIVES OR WRITTEN SALES MATERIALS. THE ACCURACY AND COMPLETENESS OF THE INFORMATION PROVIDED HEREIN AND THE OPINIONS STATED HEREIN ARE NOT GUARANTEED OR WARRANTED TO PRODUCE ANY PARTICULAR RESULTS, AND THE ADVICE AND STRATEGIES CONTAINED HEREIN MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR EVERY INDIVIDUAL. NEITHER THE PUBLISHER NOR AUTHOR SHALL BE LIABLE FOR ANY LOSS OF PROFIT OR ANY OTHER COMMERCIAL DAMAGES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO SPECIAL, INCIDENTAL, CONSEQUENTIAL, OR OTHER DAMAGES. FULFILLMENT OF EACH COUPON OFFER IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE OFFEROR.

Trademarks: Cliffs, CliffsNotes, the CliffsNotes logo, CliffsAP, CliffsComplete, CliffsTestPrep, CliffsQuickReview, CliffsNote-a-Day and all related logos and trade dress are registered trademarks or trademarks of Hungry Minds, Inc., in the United States and other countries. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners. Hungry Minds, Inc., is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

CONTENTS

Life and Background

List of Characters

Introduction to the Novel

Critical Commentaries

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

Part 4

Structural Devices

The Communion Theme

The Confession Theme

False Fathers

The Lieutenant and the Priest

The Young Juan Story

Motifs

The Biblical Motif

Animal Imagery

The Decay Motif

**Study Questions and Essay
Topics**

Selected Bibliography

LIFE AND BACKGROUND

Graham Greene describes his boyhood traumas in *A Sort of Life* (1971), the first volume of his autobiography. He was born in 1904, attended a public school, of which his father was headmaster, and later he studied at Oxford. The unhappiness of his home and school life led him to attempt suicide through a variation of Russian roulette and brought about his treatment by a psychoanalyst.

Graham became a Catholic in 1926, his faith stemming in part from his deep conviction of evil in the world. Much of his life up to that point had been a nightmare, and no doubt because he has long kept dream journals, many of the characters in his novels incur horrifying dreams. The novels also reflect Greene's experiences with the seamy side of life. His protagonists' experiences, for example, often parallel his labors as a journalist (for a Nottingham paper), his government work, and his travels through totalitarian Mexico.

Greene maintains that his works fall into two categories, novels and "entertainments," though often the latter are quite serious in parts. *The Honorary Consul* (1973) is "entertaining," but it is also a profound view of terrorism and the military state in Argentina. Greene's novels are frequently characterized by their focus on (1) a hunted man as the protagonist; on (2) the discrepancy between the outer man and the inner man—in fact, his first novel is entitled *The Man Within* (1929); on (3) multi points-of-view and vivid metaphysical detail; and (4) on a nineteenth-century method of storytelling which is more reminiscent of Robert Louis Stevenson than, say, of a modern writer such as James Joyce. Setting also plays a pronounced role in Greene's novels, whether it is an abandoned section of Africa, as in *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), or a leper colony, as in *A Burnt-Out Case* (1961).

Many of his works focus upon religious themes, and the protagonist is almost always the sinner, the spiritual outcast. Greene's milieu is the fallen world, and he has been criticized for focusing on the eccentric believer, rather than on the conventional believer, and for combining theological strictures with somewhat lurid, perhaps overly personal, views of sex. *The End of the Affair* (1951), for example, is as much a study of hate as it is a study of

triangular love.

Greene died April 3, 1991, at La Providence Hospital in Vevey, Switzerland. He was 86. *Lord of the Flies* author William Golding commented, "The best of his novels will be remembered as literary perfection." Novelist John Le Carre described Green as his "guiding star."

During his lifetime, Greene was honored by Queen Elizabeth II, but never won a Nobel Prize despite several nominations by colleagues. He was fond of traveling all over the world, seeking out such trouble spots as Vietnam, Israel, Chile, and South Africa. "I like to keep my eye on world politics," he said.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Anita

A dead five-year-old girl, at whose grave Padre Jose refuses to pray.

Beckley, Henry

The director of the correspondence school who sends Coral Fellows packets of school lessons that are far more elementary than her chronological potential.

Brigitta

The illegitimate daughter of the fugitive priest-protagonist.

Calver, James

An American bank robber and murderer pursued by the Mexican police throughout the novel; he is finally killed.

Father _____

The new priest who arrives at the end of the novel to replace the executed priest-protagonist.

Fellows, Captain Charles

The operator of the Central American Banana Company.

Fellows, Coral

The Fellowses' precocious daughter.

Fellows, Mrs. Trix (Trixy)

Fellows' wife.

The Half-Caste

A mestizo; the Judas who betrays the priest.

An Indian Woman

Her child is shot by either Calver or by the soldiers who are pursuing Calver.

The Jefe

The lieutenant's superior.

Mr. Lehr

A Protestant living in one of the less vehemently anti-religious Mexican states.

Miss Lehr

His shortsighted sister.

The Lieutenant

Out of a sense of duty, he stalks the priest-protagonist from the beginning of the novel until its end; finally he captures him.

Lopez

A hostage who was executed (before the action of the novel begins) for helping priests escape.

Luis

A fourteen-year-old Mexican boy; he rebels against the sentimentality of his mother's stories about young Juan.

Luis' Father

A cynical, disillusioned man who believes that his wife's Catholic faith is futile, naive folly.

Luis' Mother

She fervently and dramatically reads to Luis and his two sisters from the Holy Book.

Maria

The mother of Brigitta, the priest-protagonist's daughter.

Miguel

He is taken as a hostage and is beaten by the police.

Montez, Pedro

The hostage killed at Concepción; the priest-protagonist calls himself "Montez" afterward.

Padre Jose

He is a priest who was forced to marry by state regulations and, thus, he was excommunicated.

Padre Jose's Wife

A fat and bossy shrew.

The Priest (alias Montez)

The protagonist, or main character of the novel; the only active priest still in Mexico.

A Pious Woman

She condemns the priest-protagonist for his bad spirituality during their night in jail.

Mr. Tench

A dentist who is trapped in Mexico because of the economy.

Tench, Sylvia

His estranged wife.

Young Juan

A perfect little boy in a religious story, who will become, we assume, a "plaster saint." Luis' mother reads stories in the Holy Book about him to her children.

INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVEL

In *The Power and the Glory*, Greene examines the bases of sin and salvation by focusing on the final months in the life of a man who is the last priest still practicing his calling in Mexico. In his treatment of the fugitive, Greene offers two possible views of the protagonist's plight, and he allows his readers to form their own conclusions concerning the priest's fate in eternity.

The first view sees the priest's holiness as almost a truism. The clergyman has lived in the most dire conditions for years in Mexico—half-starved, assaulted by fever and the police—simply to carry out God's will. Even his death is caused by his sense of duty: he could have stayed across the mountains in safety, but he chose instead to administer Last Rites to the dying outlaw, Calver, although he sensed that he would be wasting his time and that the message summoning him was almost assuredly a police trick. We discover, however, that Calver *did* write the note.

The second view is expressed by the pious woman incarcerated with the priest. She condemns him. In her eyes, the priest is merely a drunk, a lecher, a jester at Church precepts, and, above all, a sinner who will not repent.

The novel alternates between these two positions, focusing on the priest's own ruminations concerning the state of his soul. Greene has chosen a most complex man to carry the burden of his theological ideas. But the priest has the capacity—and the opportunity—to analyze theological problems that have always troubled humankind.

The nameless priest becomes Everyman, picking his way through the labyrinths of Mexico's mountain ranges and swamps in his attempt to do God's will, even though his spiritual situation is unnecessarily complicated by issues that would bother no one but the priest himself.

Greene's priest has a tender conscience and a tendency to see only the evil in his actions and to exaggerate his blemishes. To such a man, virtues become vices and, added to valid guilt, they almost overpower him. Greene's priest, however, does have reason to repent. He was pompous in the early days of his priesthood; he subjugated emotions and concern for others to intellectual gymnastics; he did commit adultery; and he does drink

far too much and might well be an alcoholic.

But his *imagined* crimes, he feels, are much worse. He feels guilty because he loves the offspring of his sin, Brigitta; he suspects that his refusal to leave Mexico stems merely from pride; he broods over taking a lump of sugar from a dead child and snatching a bone from a dying dog -even though he himself is starving. He concerns himself unduly for enjoying a few days of rest at the Lehrs' home, and while there, he is immediately conscious of his tendency to return to his old, stilted ways, so sensitized is his conscience to any possible rumblings of sin.

The priest, then, is a fully drawn character; but he is also a spokesman for Greene's view of the continuity of the Catholic Church. As a sensitive and thoughtful person, the protagonist is scarcely expendable; yet he is only a small part of a large spiritual organization—the Roman Catholic Church. In his debate with the lieutenant, the priest states that the totalitarian state is based upon personalities. When its leaders die, he says, the government will probably fall, consumed by corruption. The Church, he argues, does *not* depend on any one person, and the appearance of the new priest at the end of the novel manifests Greene's thesis.

But even the Church must work through people, and the novel traces the protagonist's growing awareness of the need for *compassion* and *acceptance* of the faults of others. Without charity (benevolence and loving forbearance), the Church would be as cold and as brittle as the totalitarian state. The lieutenant can erase caricatures from the walls that might ridicule the government, but the Church must be more tolerant, while all the time retaining its sanctifying missions. Starting with his dreadful night in the jail cell and ending with his kindness to the half-caste as they approach Calver, the priest's quest has been an effort to become totally human.

CRITICAL COMMENTARIES

Part One

Chapter 1: *The Port*

The first chapter of *The Power and the Glory* centers upon the meeting between Mr. Tench, the English dentist who is living in Mexico, and the priest-protagonist, who presents himself to Tench as a "quack." The priest secretly plans to escape further religious persecution by sailing to Vera Cruz (a Mexican seaport city) on the *General Obregon*, which is harbored at the quay, even though he is told by Tench that a man named Lopez, who has helped other priests escape, was shot by the police some weeks ago.

Tench and the priest then retreat to Tench's office, where they drink brandy together. They are interrupted by a boy (later, we discover that he is Luis, a Mexican boy who will play a key, symbolic role in the novel) who says that his mother is dying and that she needs a doctor (obviously a euphemism for a priest, who can administer Last Rites to the dying). The priest follows the boy, and in the distance, the *General Obregon* pulls away from the river bank. By chance, the priest inadvertently leaves his breviary behind, disguised inside the covers of a sleazy novel, *La Eterna Martir*.

One of the first things one should notice in this first chapter are Greene's many references to decay; they prefigure symbolism which will occur throughout the rest of the book. For example, consider the thirty-yard-long *General Obregon*. It looks as if it will soon sink; at best, the ship will probably survive no more than two or three years, or less if she meets a severe storm. Her leaving on time is thoroughly *unexpected*.

Moreover, Tench's first memory is of a discarded clay cast of a mouth, thrown away by his dentist-father into a wastebasket; Tench's life is "rootless," as he readily admits, remarking that in his profession, he "cast[s] in sand," and, thus, not surprisingly, when he takes down two glasses for the brandy, he must wipe sand out of them.

As Tench walks down toward the dock to see whether or not his ether cylinder, with its symbolic sleep-inducing gas, has arrived, he is shaken with nausea and frequently forgets the

purpose of his errand. Tench is constantly clearing phlegm from his throat and spitting bile into the blank and melancholy streets. His days are futile, for no one will come to his dentist's parlor before five o'clock, and his advice to the priest is as worthless as his dentistry practice.

Tench's decay, however, is only a small part of the disintegration of a self-important historical movement in a totalitarian state which is continually being absorbed into history. The more pompous the Red Shirts become, the more ephemeral their state seems. Sentries either sit sleeping or glare silently beside walls and empty crates; the statues of dead generals are already mildewing; the water causes dysentery; in the rainy season, the village is engulfed in mud, and then the sun turns the streets into long strips of searing stone for the barefooted peasants.

Disarmingly, just as we applaud the priest's hopefully life-giving decision to go to the sick woman, an act which symbolically surpasses the sterile ethic of the Mexican state, we discover that the roots of the disreputable Tench go even deeper than those of the Mexican Red Shirt zealots. Tench's dentist-father's cast of a mouth set in clay resembles an archeological discovery unearthed in Dorset, perhaps Neanderthal or Pithecanthropus, and as he stands in his workshop, he is described as a benighted and confused caveman among fossils. Even the priest, too, in Greene's description, takes on a totemic importance in his case, that of a West African king, one who is virtually indentured to his tribe.

Greene's abundant animal imagery in this chapter correlates the central image of decay with pictures of other types of decay. There are buzzards, turkeys pompously strutting around, hungry sharks just offshore, and ants which crawl like disciplined soldiers through the priest's spilled brandy.

As the buzzards flap overhead, they foreshadow—literally as well as symbolically—the death that will soon blacken the peace of this tiny plaza. One of these relentless creatures is seen as the black hand of a clock; another, as a cold, impartial observer. The deceiving buzzards resemble domesticated fowls, but, like their counterparts among the Mexican leaders, they are really parasites.

Few spots of real worth remain in this world of false values

and artificiality. No one cares if the *General Obregon* sinks, since all the passengers are insured. Tench lies to a customs official, promising to have the officer's set of false teeth ready by nightfall. He takes pride in his battered-up dentistry shop. When the priest states that at least Mexico had God before the Red Shirts, Tench answers, "There's no difference in the teeth." To Tench, money is all-important, a cash down payment for promised dental work.

None of the characters in the novel is morally fit to receive the Eucharist, and, accordingly, allusions to physical mouths and teeth throughout the book suggest the characters' spiritual corruption. Even the priest's teeth are carious since he too is spiritually unfit for the Sacrament. Later, Greene calls attention to the "fangs" of the half-caste and to the police chiefs swollen jaw. In addition, Tench's mouth frequently hangs open.

Tench and the priest are more similar than would at first be supposed. The men meet as Tench ogles a girl aboard the *General Obregon*, and, although the priest censoriously points out the girl's youth to Tench, he too is sinful, having committed, while a priest, an illicit sex act with Maria.

In Tench's shop, the dentist plays the symbolic part of the Mass celebrant. He pours the "wine" and urges the priest to "drink up"—that is, to receive. As the priest sips the brandy, the drink is like an "indulgence," a gift of God's grace. In a turnabout of roles, the priest asks Tench for advice about whether or not to accompany young Luis to the boy's dying mother.

The priest's spiritual death, from which he must resurrect himself in the novel, is perhaps best represented by his deathlike appearance. The disheveled, gaunt, unshaven little man, carrying a small attache case and a breviary hidden under the covers of a pornographic book, wears a suit which suggests a coffin to Tench. The priest is a mystery, a question mark, and, above all, a hollow man.

La Eterna Martir, the title of the pornographic book, suggests the priest's resemblance to the cruel lover at whose feet the Edwardian woman crawls and begs. At present, the priest cannot accept Maria or his own daughter because she was conceived in sin.

Another feature of this chapter concerns the exposition, which is provided in a dialogue between Tench and the priest. In answer

to the taciturn stranger's question, Tench explains that the *General Obregon* is bound for Vera Cruz; consider, at this time, that, symbolically, the priest's "true cross" (his *vera cruz*) is still to be found in the aggressively anti-Catholic Mexican state if he is to spiritually resurrect himself. The city of Vera Cruz is safer for priests than this village is, but an escape to safety would prevent the priest from progressing spiritually. Tench, of course, does not know that the priest is a priest; all he knows is that the man has said that he was a "quack" and that he inquired about the destination of the *General Obregon*. Thus, Tench says, without realizing the impact it will have on the priest, that Lopez, the man whom the priest inquired about, was shot by the police some time ago for helping "undesirables" (meaning priests) escape from the country.

Tench does not realize that the darkly dressed stranger cannot leave the country easily. He assumes that the stranger doesn't have his capital tied up in this part of Mexico, but remember that Tench doesn't know that a priest's "capital" is found in the souls of his countrymen.

Chapter 2: *The Capital*

In this chapter, the Chief of Police (the jefe) informs the lieutenant that he has heard that there is still a priest practicing in Mexico and that this priest attempted to "get away last week to Vera Cruz." The pink and flabby jefe complains that the Governor is pressuring him to capture the priest, although he has no idea what he looks like, and the only photograph of him is one taken years before at a First Communion party.

The lieutenant looks at the aged newspaper photo of the youngish priest, looking plump and harmless, and then he contrasts it with a picture of the bank robber and murderer James Calver, a "true man" in the lieutenant's eyes. The lieutenant, of course, does not realize that the priest has -undergone a dramatic physical change since his days as pastor of Concepción.

Meanwhile, young Luis' mother (now recovered) reads a pious book to her family and expresses disgust when Luis questions her about Padre Jose, the priest who disgraced himself by marrying to escape persecution. She feels more kindly about the priest who came to her while she was ill—the one who, according to the smallest daughter, "smelt funny." Without a doubt, the priest-protagonist is a "whiskey priest"—that is, an alcoholic.

About this same time, in another part of town, Padre Jose, a fat, disillusioned man, a married priest, is called to bed by his nagging, overbearing wife. And he is also mocked unmercifully by the neighbor children outside, imitating perfectly the nasal whine of Padre Jose's wife.

Note also in this chapter that the lieutenant, who gazes with dislike at the newspaper photograph of the priest, shares several attributes of this very priest whom he will soon be hunting. The lieutenant's unwilling and ragged soldiers are members of *his* "parish," the parish to which he is inescapably chained, and note that he walks disdainfully ahead of his sloppily attired and ill-disciplined men. In another parallel, like the priest's clothes in Concepción, the officer's crisp, neat uniform distinguishes him from the rabble. Also, the lieutenant is as fanatical as an ardent theologian would be: he feels that he could easily sacrifice sex in order to build a perfect state. Indeed, says Greene, there is "something of a priest in his intent observant walk."

But the lieutenant's religion is one of vacuity, and, when he looks beyond the evidence of his senses, he pictures the peaceful cold of outer space. His theology reflects the Darwinian theory of evolution, but he brings to it his own brand of nihilism. To the lieutenant, the world is a cold, broken piece of earth which is populated with beings who have evolved from animals for no ultimate purpose at all.

The lieutenant has been deeply influenced by the deprivations of his childhood; the scar on his face and his crooked nose reflect close "escapes," both symbolic and actual. His "religion"—that is, his code of behavior—is spare, menacing, and well-honed, and it reflects his desire to cut from the body politic the institutions that caused him (as a child) and other children much pain. His lean, dancer-like body and his neatness mirror his ardent, almost religious desire to purge the "dross" elements of religion from Mexico. This dapper officer is in direct contrast to his slovenly superior, the jefe.

The jefe, the Chief of Police, is an awkward, flabby, uncommitted bureaucrat, a man who is more concerned with having his tooth extracted or filled than with ridding Mexico of its "last priest." He possesses a tolerance and a passivity that evade his subordinate, the lieutenant. The Chief of Police shares traits with the fat, ineffectual Padre Jose, and he also shares traits with

the fatalistic father of young Luis. But the jefe is dangerous, for he simply carries out orders of his superiors—without demur or judgment.

Insights are rare for the Chief of Police, but once in awhile he does reveal a wisdom which shows him to be very much a part of the old, folk-oriented Mexico. For example, he finds some virtue in this "last priest," whom he calls "devilishly cunning" to escape capture for years.

Usually, the Chief of Police plays the buffoon. When he reaches into his pocket to find a pain alleviator for his toothache, his holster gets in the way. In the new, sterile state of Mexico, the jefe remains the stereotype of the ineffectual police officer often portrayed in American movies about Mexico. Thus, the lieutenant's task is a nearly impossible one, for incompetence and corruption are always above him in rank, as well as below him.

The lieutenant's "religion" is ephemeral, and this chapter symbolically shows the beginning erosion of the Mexican totalitarian state: plaster chips from walls expose mud; the soldiers are undisciplined and lazy despite the zeal of their leader; the life of the "liberated" peasant is sterile; and at 9:30 each night, the lights in the plaza go out. Even the children's swings are like gallows on the site of the cathedral.

Antagonism to the anti-religious, cold state (which divides head from heart, which demands order at the cost of passion) is deeply rooted in the nature of the Mexican peasants—especially in their customs and gestures. The occupants of the small, hilltop plaza must have light, and so makeshift globes are strung up over the trees; the remnants of churches still abound throughout Mexico; people still take their early evening walks, "women in one direction, men in the other," acting out their ritual of chaste separation; and in the police station, the peasants sit in archetypal postures with their hands between their knees.

External nature conspires against the state. Note that the plaza is like a small "island," surrounded by swamps and rivers and mountains, where unimpressed vultures (with "moron" faces) stare at the custodians of order, especially at the piglike jefe, whose clothes—his wide hat and flagrant cartridge belt—ironically and unintentionally resemble a bandit's (although he is a police officer).

Young Luis' father, in his resigned wit and in his ability to accept persons as they are, is "of the people." He is a vivid contrast to his wife, who wants to change human nature as much as the lieutenant does. Luis' father accepts the whiskey priest because at least the whiskey priest "carries on." And, then too, he feels that one cannot literally believe the Holy Books since all men are frail, even the saints. Besides, he reasons, if the whiskey priest had been reported and shot, his wife (Luis' mother) would now be reading about the whiskey priest to their son. Luis' father, manifests the splendid ability of the Mexican peasants to penetrate myths—whether they are religious or antireligious myths.

Neither the inner world *nor* the outside world can be completely expunged from Mexico. One prisoner has hidden a sacred medal under his shirt, and the lieutenant fines him five pesos; Holy Books are smuggled in regularly from Mexico City. And the lieutenant hears a radio blaring out music which might be emanating from Mexico City, or even London or New York. Such remnants of the old society are as difficult to eradicate as the jefe's tooth is to extract. This tooth, incidentally, is finally treated—at the end of the novel, just as the priest-protagonist is being executed.

The picture of the murderer and bank robber, James Calver, stares out from the police station wall, as if in judgment, at the newly mounted (but old) photograph of the plump, complacent priest at a First Communion party of long ago. However, note that we never see the priest really "communicating" with his parishioners until he joins them in physical degradation. Ironically, the lieutenant spends his time hating what the priest was, not what he is *now*. Symbolically, as well as literally, the priest left Concepción years ago, although he retains traces of his morally smug past.

This idea of "purity" (which the lieutenant hates) first appeared in the initial chapter of the novel, when Tench was surprised by the expression on the priest's face when he (Tench) mentioned Lopez's former girl friend, now cohabiting with the Chief of Police. The priest's shocked facial expression was caused by his moral code and also because of the unexpected news that Lopez was the man whom he hoped would help him escape, the man who had helped other priests escape.

Before his "rebirth," later in the novel, the priest's pietism is a

dramatic contrast to the pietism of Luis' mother, especially her sentimentalized account of the boy martyr, young Juan. The story of young Juan is repugnantly *artificial* from start to finish, and it becomes the scroll upon which the *realistic* martyrdom of the unnamed, murdered priest will be engraved. Young Juan accepts even unjust rebuke with gratitude, and, in contrast, the priest thinks cynically of his bishop, who is safe from persecution. Young Juan will bravely cry out, "Long live Christ the King" at his execution, while the priest will be farridden when his own death is imminent. The little play about the persecution of the early Christians, which young Juan acts in before his bishop, is in marked contrast to the priest's dramatic struggle; his own bishop, he is sure, does not even know he is alive. Juan's unthinking morality is unquestionably destructive of true piety, and thus Greene awards him the part of Nero in the skit.

The theme of abandonment is taken up in this section, with the word itself used several times. Luis' father forgives the unnamed whiskey priest and Padre Jose for their lapses. All men are human, all abandoned in a seemingly God-forsaken Mexico.

Other key points in the chapter include the following: first, the lieutenant, in his desire to execute hostages until the last priest is found, reflects the totalitarian commonplace that the end justifies the means, *whatever* the means.

Second, Padre Jose is being "crucified" daily; his tedious existence with an overbearing wife is a daily martyrdom. (The sixty-two-year-old priest has been forced to marry because of state regulations.) As the chapter ends, he is called to bed by his shrewish wife, while a group of street children ridicule him. Padre Jose is a parody of St. Joseph, the patron saint of a happy family.

Third, the priest's drunken mistake of baptizing a boy "Brigitta," instead of "Pedro," probably (and symbolically) indicates his guilt—Pedro, or Peter, being the first head of the Church.

Finally, the drunken prisoner who cannot pay the five-peso fine and who is told to wash out the lavatories foreshadows the circumstances of the priest's later arrest and imprisonment.

Chapter 3: *The River*

The scene changes: Captain Fellows, the director of the Central American Banana Company, is greeted by his wife, Trix,

as he returns home from a business trip upriver. She informs him that a policeman (the lieutenant) is talking with their daughter, Coral, who arranged for the officer to sleep overnight on the veranda. Now, the officer is waiting to talk with Fellows.

Finding out nothing from Captain Fellows about the hunted "last priest," the lieutenant leaves the Fellowses, and Coral tells her shocked father that the priest whom the lieutenant is hunting is hiding in the barn. Coral saved the priest's life by refusing to give the lieutenant permission to search the premises. Later in the chapter, Coral brings the priest some food and a beer, and she promises to be his protector, always. In the barn, the priest explains to Coral that his attempted escape to Vera Cruz occurred a month ago. He wants to show the girl a card trick, but Coral doesn't have any cards. The priest then leaves the plantation and stumbles into a village, where, although exhausted, he is compelled to hear confessions because the people there have not been visited by a priest in five years.

In this chapter, then, we see that Captain Fellows is, like the priest, also "abandoned," but, in his placidity and moral obtuseness, he is *a happy man*. In contrast, the priest is not a happy man; he is sure that the bishop in Mexico City doesn't even know, or care, that he is alive. Unlike the priest, Fellows is irresponsible, and, despite his family's tenuous situation, he sings in his boat and savors the taste of his sandwich, a taste which is heightened by the open air. His eyes are blue and unreflecting, and his memory is porous.

Fellows is a Pilate-figure; he backs away from any human involvement. He warns Coral not to aid the priest since he fears the authorities, at whose sufferance he is living in Mexico. He speaks as Pilate might have done when deciding Christ's fate: "We've no business interfering in their politics." Fellows then pompously censures the priest's request for brandy.

With eyes like lakes at the top of a mountain, Captain Fellows is momentarily serene in his aloneness. He turns his problems away before they can affect him; to him, predatory alligators become mere trout in his song. He sings loudly to himself and, except for the sound of his motorboat, he is completely alone as he reminisces about his wartime experiences. He is unable to understand the subtleties of psychological fears, even though he was, apparently, a good soldier, especially when danger was