

Sacrificing the Self for the Other: Themes and Narrative Techniques in Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*

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Abstract

This study is to deal with Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* (1957, 1st published 1948) as a narrative with the aim of concentrating on the way the narration is carried out in this novel in addition to highlighting the narrative techniques employed in it. Besides, this study is to give a close reading to this novel with the aim of underscoring its main themes and how they are developed in the novel to convey a main message, namely that we are human beings who can be good or bad, not angels in a fallen world. Thus, this study is to start with a brief introduction about the novel and the novelist. Then, by means of detailed analysis, it deals with the main themes. Finally, it concludes by studying the method of narration and the main narrative techniques that are employed in the novel and shedding light on their function in the novel.

Keywords: Sacrificing, self, other, themes, narration, narrative techniques, good, evil, human heart, human knowledge, fallen creatures, God's mercy.

I. Introduction

The Heart of the Matter is one of the best novels in English literature written by Graham Greene (for notes on Greene's life and his literary career, see Neil Sinyard's book on Greene's literary life 2003), published in 1948. Though written and published after the Second World War, it deals with the depressing atmosphere created by this war and prevailed during it, which led to a climate of disappointment and despair which eventually brings about the damnation of man.

I.1. Fallen Creatures in a Fallen World:

In Saul Bellow's *Dangling Man* (1944), Joseph, the narrator-protagonist of the novel, points out that man is not totally good nor totally evil, he is a composite of both; for Joseph, "the world is both [good and malevolent], and therefore it is neither" (*Dangling Man* 29), i.e. the world consists of both and that neither of them can exist without the existence of the other.

Besides, we, as human beings, cannot be aware of the presence of either without their being in our life side by side. Taking into consideration Joseph's remark while reading Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), Greene seems to be providing us with a verification, a carrying out, of this statement, and by the end of the novel, one comes to realize that we, as human beings, are somewhere between good and evil. By the end of the novel and the end of the story of Scobie, the protagonist of the novel, we, the readers, come to realize that we cannot be just good or just evil. Even when we intend to do something quite good, like sacrificing the self for the other, as Scobie's story shows, we come to commit a sin, i.e. commit something evil, in the process of doing this good. Yet, as Greene proves by the end of the novel, it is not for us to judge our human acts, it is up to God to decide and judge our actions since we are in the end merely human beings who can be good or evil; we are only given the option to choose between them. Brian Lindsay Thomson correctly points out, "the novel suspends definitive judgments and leaves the reader free to determine the merits and flaws of Scobie's decision" (2009, 75). In a conversation between Father Rank and Louise, Scobie's widow by this time, he remarks, "For goodness's sake, Mrs. Scobie, don't imagine you—or I—know a thing about God's mercy." When she objects and refers to what the Church says, he interrupts her and concludes, "I know the Church says. The Church knows all the rules. But it doesn't know what goes on in a single human heart" (*The Heart of the Matter* 333). In short, what he means is that we are not Gods; we are human beings who are fallen creatures who have their own limits and limitations. In other words, we are limited by the limits of our limited knowledge and that is why we should not give ourselves the right to judge the deeds of other human beings.

I.2. Responsibility of Human Beings for their Sins:

All of us are responsible human beings. The history of humanity indicates that we are born with a sense of responsibility, even if we are not aware of it. Adam, our forefather, was created carrying this sense of responsibility, whether for himself or for his spouse, Eve, and that is why he is punished by being sent away from paradise when he violates this sense of responsibility by eating from the prohibited tree. A similar case like this one occurs in *The Heart of the Matter*. Still this responsibility necessitates that man should have knowledge to be judged according to which. Man is tested according to this knowledge. When God created Adam, He provided him with knowledge and cautioned him that he is to be judged according to it. Thus, it is knowledge that establishes man's responsibility for whatever he does. First, God taught him the names of Angels and then asked him to tell them of their names, which he does successfully. Next, God warned him against eating from the forbidden tree, a test that he fails. The significance of this incident is that human beings are to be judged according to their knowledge, which can be a light in the darkness of their life or a source of damnation. Acting against his knowledge, Adam eats from the forbidden tree and suffers for it; he is damned and dismissed from paradise. Later, he is forgiven by God's mercy, but he is never returned to paradise.¹ In this way, the distance between Man's creation and eternity – staying in paradise for ever – or loss of eternity – by being sent to hell – is filled by man's deeds and God's mercy, whose knowledge is solely up to Him.

The epigraph with which Graham Greene introduces *The Heart of the Matter* attests to this maxim. At the outset of the novel, Greene quotes the French Catholic poet Charles Péguy: "Le pécheur est au Coeur même de chrétienté.... Nul n'est aussi compétent que le pécheur en matière de chrétienté. Nul, si ce n'est le saint" [The sinner is at the heart of Christianity. Nobody is as competent as the sinner in matters of Christianity. Nobody, except the saint.] (Unpaged). The sinner is compared to the saint since both possess knowledge according to which they are supposed to act: the saint is saved by his knowledge while the sinner is damned because of it. In an interior monologue that Scobie has while driving to the church to make his confession to Father Rank, he meditates as follows: "The trouble is... we know the answers—we Catholics are damned by our knowledge" (264, ellipsis mine). This is what

Scobie as well as other Catholic characters keep reiterating in the novel, which accounts for Scobie's belief that he is to lose "eternity" (282) due to his sin of adultery and his mortal sin against God. As a Catholic, Scobie is supposed to know "all the answers" and for this reason he comes to believe that "no prayer was effective in a state of mortal sin." His contemplation leads him to conclude: "This was what human love had done to him – it had robbed him of love for eternity" (315).

I.3. Sacrificing the Self for the Other:

In Part One of Book Three of *The Heart of the Matter*, after his wife Louise returns from South Africa, and during the ritual of the Mass in the church, Scobie has a meditation in which he comes to talk to God, which occurs due to his feeling of regret that he is sinning against God by attending this Mass and Communion without actually absolving himself of the sin of adultery. During this contemplation, he has an interior monologue in which he addresses himself to God (269-270). This interior monologue highlights the theme of responsibility as well as Scobie's sense of responsibility. Besides, it underlies another issue, that of sacrificing the self for the other. Scobie sets himself an impossible task, that of acting in an imitation of God who survives the daily suffering for the good of human beings, i.e. the others. Yet, still at this moment which signifies Scobie's awareness of what he does, it is this same moment that announces his damnation since he comes to sin with his eyes wide open. Anyway, before going further and before discussing these themes, one has to go back to the beginning of the novel, and start dealing with other themes that develop in *The Heart of the Matter* and thematically lead to this point of damnation, which is the other side of the sacrifice of the self for the other.

II. Themes

This section of the study aims to deal with the main themes in the novel. It treats the following themes: loneliness, alienation and exile; responsibility and pity; love versus pity; despair and damnation; disintegration of character and faith; and finally sacrificing the self for the other. One observes that Greene develops the themes in the novel toward the last theme of sacrificing the self for the other, as will be shown in this segment of the research.

II.1. Loneliness, Alienation and Exile:

The theme of loneliness, alienation and exile is one of the major themes that has prevailed in modern and contemporary literature, whether during or after the Second World War. *The Heart of the Matter* opens with Wilson, who is a spy, as we, the readers, later on, find out, sitting "on the balcony of the Bedford Hotel" (1) and following, without showing any interest, whatever goes on in the street. He is a new-comer to this place, a colony in West Africa. Having sat alone and being a new-comer, "he felt almost intolerably lonely" (1). However, it is not merely Wilson who has this feeling of loneliness. Once we see Harris, "a cable censor" (3), who has been "eighteen bloody months" in this place, as he dubs them (3), we realize that he shares with Wilson the same feeling of loneliness in addition to a feeling of being alienated and exiled; he hates his "job" as well as the "place," and if given a choice to leave this place, he will do it without much thinking and go "home," his country, and never return to it again (3). This is what Harris tells Wilson of and adds, "I hate the place. I hate the people. I hate the bloody niggers" (4). In short, he hates this place and everything relating to it. Elleke Boehmer correctly finds in this colony "a metaphor for human seediness, a place of moral degradation and spiritual dereliction, where even the (white) man of integrity is corrupted" (2005, 156). This is a place in which corruption, slander and lying grow and evolve as weed on a cultivated land resulting in the destruction of whatever is good and in the demolition of the reputation of innocent people like Scobie, as the talk between Harris and Wilson reveals. Though this is the first time they see one another, Harris does not hesitate to refer to, and even

spread, the rumours that are said about Scobie, the deputy-commissioner, in this colony; Harris refers to Scobie's sleeping with black girls (4) and to his suspicion that Scobie is "probably in the pay of the Syrians" (5) – later we discover that both allegations are not real (10, 18, 19). As for Wilson, though he is a lover of poetry (2), he lies to Harris and claims that he does not "read poetry" (4). Besides, even the poetry that is produced by people who come to live in this place is "poems on exile" (5), which reveals how much they feel lonely and alienated.

Later on, we find out that out of loneliness Harris invents a game in which he hunts cockroaches and kills them; he even invites Wilson to join him in this funny game (74-5). They even talk about having "a monthly prize" and a "Cockroach Championship" (80). In this way, they come to spend some time hunting cockroaches, a hunt that ends up by having a quarrel. After quarrelling with Harris about the rules of this game and after, angrily, going to his room, Wilson comes to be afraid of the "loneliness" that replaces his "anger" (82), and for this reason he has an interior monologue – "I was crazy, he thought. What made me fly out like that? I've lost a friend" (83) – which indicates the conflict that goes on inside him due to his fear that he could lose a friend and thus suffer loneliness. This situation upsets him and makes him unable to sleep, and even when he sleeps, he dreams "that he had committed a crime." When he wakes up, he still has a "sense of guilt," which leads him to apologize to Harris, an apology that Harris immediately accepts (83). This situation highlights the fact that each of them needs the other as a friend in order to escape the feeling of loneliness.

The novel is set in a colony in West Africa, a colony which is not given a name, yet it is, as Harris dubs it at the beginning of the novel, "the original Tower of Babel" (5). It is a melting pot in which one finds people of different nationalities: "West Indians, Africans, real Indians, Syrians, Englishmen, Scotsmen in the Office of Works. Irish priests, French priests, Alsatian priests" (5). It is as if it is a place to which men are sent to be tested and only men of integrity can survive this test. Also, it is a place in which man's faith is tested, as if man is submitted to the allurements of life, whether to fail or survive this test is up to man himself. One may even say that it is similar to the land to which our forefather Adam was driven after his failure to abstain from eating from the forbidden tree. This may account for the feeling of loneliness and alienation that people acquire once they are in this place.

An event that underlines this theme without any allusion that what happened has occurred because of the loneliness and alienation that the people involved in it suffered from them and failed the test of this place. This event foreshadows what will happen to Scobie by the end of the novel, though for different reasons. The incident that I refer to here is the one in which Pemberton, a young District Commissioner of Bamba, a town in this colony, commits suicide and Scobie is sent to inspect his death and what has led to it. Once Scobie is there, he finds out that Pemberton committed suicide by hanging himself (94), but more importantly that he suffered from "loneliness" (95), and so did Father Clay, the priest of this town. From the conversation that goes on between Scobie and Father Clay, we deduce how much this Father and the dead Pemberton suffered from both loneliness and alienation:

"How often do you get down to the port?" Scobie asked.
 "I was there for a night nine months ago. Why?"
 "Everybody needs a change. Have you many converts here?"
 "Fifteen. I try to persuade myself that young Pemberton had time—
 time, you know, while he died to realise..."
 ...
 "Have you any idea why he did it?"
 "I didn't know him well enough. We didn't get on together."
 "The only white men here. It seems a pity." (95-96, ellipsis mine)

Scobie's comment, "The only white men here. It seems a pity," points out how much he is aware, and how much he is sorry, that both Father Clay and Pemberton, "the only white men" in this town, suffered from loneliness and alienation, which has led them to be isolated as well as alienated from one another and become ignorant of whatever happens to the other. One further point is that Pemberton, a police officer, fails the test of this place and ends up by committing suicide, which is an unforgivable sin that "puts a man outside [the] mercy [of God]" (95), as Father Clay remarks.

Moreover, this is a place to which the Europeans, whom Scobie sees as "patients" (5), are sent to spend a certain period in the service of their countries during the Second World War, and if they survive this period they are "sent home" (6). Yet, what characterizes this place is the "meanness and injustice"ⁱⁱⁱ committed by some of those who come to live in it, which results in the "lack of liberty" (6) and in the prevalence of corruption that has "the smell of a zoo" even inside the police station in which Scobie has worked for fifteen years.

Besides, it is a place in which the good are not rewarded for their goodness and their justice; contrary to what is expected, "Scobie the Just" (10), as the Commissioner calls him, is slandered and is even passed over for promotion, which is "unfair" (9). This incident has a destructive impact on Scobie's life and that of his wife. Scobie comes to think of the years he spent in this colony as "fifteen wasted years" (13). Still, he is the only one who admits that he likes the place (9), as he tells the Commissioner. Contrary to most characters in the novel, he does not suffer from the loneliness that plagues this place and the people who come to live in it; the "loneliness" of the place even satisfies him and makes him "happy" (93). After his wife travels to South Africa, the silence and the loneliness of the place lead him to feel "contentment" (118); loneliness makes him feel free, happy and satisfied.

As for his wife Louise, she comes to feel alienated and humiliated, which leads her to lose the courage to confront others. Once she makes certain of Scobie's being passed over for promotion, she tells Scobie, "'I'll never be able to show my face at the club again'" (17). What Louise says indicates how much she feels alienated in this community; Scobie's being passed over for promotion enhances Louise's feeling of alienation and leads her to exile herself, whether spiritually or physically. After a short talk with Scobie, she reveals to him her wish to leave to South Africa; she tells him, "'If only we could go to South Africa. I can't bear the people here'"ⁱⁱⁱⁱ (18). Symbolically what Louise says here reflects how alienated she is, which results in her internal desire to exile herself physically from this place. Louise comes to think in such a way because she believes that "they don't like" her and that she has not "got any friends"^v (23), a belief that Scobie argues against though he is aware of "her loss of friends" (29). Besides, what Harris, earlier, mentions to Wilson that "She's the city intellectual. She likes art, poetry" (5) and what Fraser, a police officer, later, characterizes her as "literary Louise" to his friends (29), highlight the fact that she is not liked by people in this town, which accounts for her feeling of loneliness and alienation and her wish to exile herself from this place. Later on, when Scobie's character and faith start to disintegrate because of his sinful relationship with Helen and because of his lying, Scobie comes to have a "sense of exile" (256), even though he is among other people attending the rituals of the Communion superintended by Father Rank at the church and even though he is someone who finds his "peace" and his happiness in his work and in "loneliness" (65, 93).

Scobie's feeling of loneliness and alienation deepens especially after he fails to make his confession to Father Rank and consequently fails to absolve himself of his sin of adultery and be forgiven (265-7), a failure that leads him to lose "hope" and to "despair" (267), which eventually lands him in "damnation" and loss of "eternity" (272, 282). In this way, Scobie, though living with his wife in the same house and having a mistress in the neighbourhood, ends up living in total loneliness, to which he comes to talk and tell what he cannot to his wife or to any other living body (285-9). Because of his sin and because of denying himself pity he ends up in exile: "Even self-pity was denied him because he knew so exactly the extent of his

guilt. He felt as though he had exiled himself so deeply in the desert that his skin had taken on the colour of the sand” (286). In short, loneliness and exile become an indispensable part of his being, which leaves him nothing to do except ending his life for the sake of the people he loves and for God, whom he loves but has never trusted (316). Out of a feeling of responsibility for the guilt he has committed and out of a wish to stop “insulting” God (317), he comes to end his life by committing suicide (325-6), which lands him in absolute loneliness and exiles him from this mundane world forever.

II.2. Responsibility and Pity:

Responsibility is one of the major themes in *The Heart of the Matter*. In Book Two of the novel, Scobie, while he is at Pende to meet the survivors of a torpedoed ship, comes to meditate on how one comes to have “the terrible impotent feeling of responsibility and pity”: “If one knew, he wondered, the facts, would one have to feel pity even for the planets? If one reached what they called the heart of the matter?” (141). One’s knowledge of the facts leads one to have a sense of responsibility, which results in another sense of pity. In fact knowledge is the main condition as well as the main force that confronts us with the core of things, a knowledge that establishes our responsibility towards whatever happens in this world. This knowledge may deprive us of happiness, but in the end makes us responsible human beings. This realization is what makes Scobie, and Greene as well, directly address the reader as follows, “Point me out the happy man and I will point you out either egotism, evil—or else an absolute ignorance” (141). Thus, it is knowledge that makes us responsible human beings, who, in consequence, come to sympathize with other human beings and even pity them.

From the outset of the novel, once we see and hear the protagonist of the novel, Henry Scobie, we realize that we are introduced to a man who has an extra sense of responsibility and who does his best to be just and to achieve justice in the community in which he lives. He is even given the name “Scobie the Just” (10), as the Commissioner calls him. Scobie’s sense of responsibility is highlighted from the onset of the novel. This sense makes him feel responsible for any change that has occurred to his wife throughout the years of their marriage. He believes that he has formed her and her experiences:

Fifteen years form a face, gentleness ebbs with experience, and he was always aware of his own responsibility. He had led the way: the experience that had come to her [his wife] was the experience selected by himself. He had formed her face. (7)

He even comes to meditate that what she is in the present is his own making, “This is my doing. This is what I’ve made of her. She wasn’t always like this” (29). That is why when the Commissioner tells him that he is passed over for promotion he comes to feel guilty for having failed to achieve a better life for her instead of feeling sorry for himself for having been dealt with in an “unfair” way by his superiors (9). What is more is that since he does not have the same love he had for his wife at the beginning of their relationship and their married life, he feels more responsible for her happiness; “The less he needed Louise the more conscious he became of his responsibility for her happiness” (14). He is worried about how she is to receive the news of his not being promoted expecting “the tide of her melancholy, dissatisfaction and disappointment” (14). Thus, at the moment, instead of still keeping the same intensity of love for her because of various reasons, among them the death of their only daughter, Catherine, and Louise’s gradual loss of her beauty, he feels responsible for whatever concerns her: “These were the times of ugliness when he loved her, when pity and responsibility reached the intensity of passion” (15). This feeling of pity and responsibility leads him to promise to “arrange a passage for” her to South Africa when she makes it clear that she cannot bear the place and the people and wants to travel to South Africa (18). Scobie acts like this out of a feeling of “responsibility to maintain happiness in those he loved” (20),

specially his wife, not out of a deep feeling of love. It is this same feeling that leads him to go to the bank manager and ask him to lend him money or give him an overdraft, but the manager refuses him both requests (45-6). Besides, it is this same feeling of responsibility that leads him to undervalue himself after being refused by the bank manager; he comes to feel and to meditate as follows: “He felt as though he had been detected in a mean action—he had asked for money and had been refused. Louise had deserved better of him. It seemed to him that he must have failed in some way in manhood” (48). This incident shows that he is a man who is willing to subject himself to humiliation for the sake of those whom he wants to maintain their happiness.

However, Louise is not totally devoid of the sense of responsibility. In a conversation between her and Scobie, which occurs after he comes back from investigating Pemberton’s suicide in Bamba, Louise surprises him when she expresses her sympathy with him due to his inability to arrange for her passage to South Africa, which greatly affects him:

“Poor dear,” she said, “don’t worry,” and put her hand against his cheek. “You’re tired. You’ve had fever. I’m not going to bait you now.” Her hand, her words broke through every defence: he had expected tears, but he found them now in his own eyes. (108)

Louise’s words and behaviour indicate that she, similar to Scobie, is capable of pity and kindness and that she is a responsible individual. What she says and what she does here make Scobie feel that she still loves him, a feeling that escaped him for years, especially after the death of their daughter. This feeling makes him contemplate as follows: “Poor dear, she loved him: she was someone of human stature with her own sense of responsibility, not simply the object of his care and kindness” (108). This way of thinking deepens his “sense of failure” (108) for having disappointed her. For this reason, once he, later, finds out that she mutely weeps since she is not to travel and leave the place she cannot bear, he comes to change his mind and decide to borrow the money from Yusef though he knows that he should not do this. When she asks him “not to worry any more” about the passage since he “can’t raise the money,” he, contrary to what is expected, insists on her going telling her, ““I know where I can borrow the money”” (110). In this way, Scobie comes to take this destructive decision on his life and on that of his wife, as will be shown later, though he knows that the person he is to borrow the money from is a person he should not trust. Anyway, he comes to take this decision out of his sense of responsibility, out of a hope not to disappoint her and out of his desire to make her “happy” (110). He is a human being who forgets about his own happiness as long as the other human being he cares about is happy; on her departure to South Africa, he tells her when she asks him if he is happy, ““I’m happy as long as you are happy”” (112). Scobie is a human being who is willing to sacrifice his own happiness and himself as well, as will be shown later, for the sake of the happiness of the other.

Besides, after Louise settles in South Africa, she comes to feel foolish for going away from her husband, which forces her to return to him (246). The event of her coming back highlights her sense of responsibility and her wish to compensate him for having worried him a lot “about the Commissionership” (248), which has led her to desert him. Having become aware of her earlier foolish decision, she decides to come back after making other “resolutions” to change “everything” in their life, to never bother him about the issue of promotion to the Commissionership (246) and to start her life with him “again—in the right way” (248). However, Louise’s new and changed approach towards life places a greater responsibility on Scobie’s shoulders, especially if we take into consideration the sinful love affair that has developed between Scobie and Helen while she was away in South Africa, which underscores the fact that responsibility is mutual and that it is a complicated issue.

As a policeman in one of the colonies of the British empire at this time of war, it was one of Scobie’s regular duties to inspect neutral ships that pass by this West African colony for fear

that diamond could be smuggled on these ships for the interest of the Germans. This is how he comes to inspect the *Esperança*, a Portuguese ship, which results in his discovery of a letter concealed in the bathroom, fixed with an adhesive tape in the cap of the cistern. In such cases and according to the regulations of war, Scobie is supposed to take the letter away and write a “report” on it (52), leaving the task of examining it “to the censorship” (53). However, due to a feeling of pity for the fat Portuguese captain who has written this letter to his daughter, Scobie comes to violate the regulations of war; instead of finishing his report on the letter, he opens the letter and reads it to make sure that it is written to the captain’s daughter, which turns out to be true (57-9). Because of his feeling of pity, which, according to Bernard Bergonzi, is “a dangerous virtue” (In Ian Scott-Kilvert, ed., 1987, 12), and due to his sympathy with the captain, he comes to tear the letter as well as his own report on it and burn them (60-1), which is not compatible with the military orders that state, “Every letter found—however obviously innocent—must be sent to the London censors unopened” (57). In this way, he comes to violate his responsibility towards his job as a police officer because he gives in to his sentiments (60), which corrupts him and later leads to the disintegration of his character, a theme to be discussed later on. Thus, Scobie, who is an honest policeman and a responsible one, and who refuses to accept the money that the Portuguese captain offers him (55) though he is in a dire need for it, especially after the bank manager has refused to lend him the money (46) to arrange the passage for his wife to South Africa, comes to desecrate his sense of responsibility gratis.

Another character, though a minor one, that emerges as one of the responsible human beings in the novel is that of Loder, the chief engineer of the torpedoed ship and one of its survivors. Though Loder has spent “forty days in open boats” (131), once he is on shore the first thing that he asks for is to make his “report to a proper official” (132). What makes him act in this way is a sense of “responsibility” since “the captain’s dead.” Besides, he feels that he is “responsible to the owners” (132) of the ship. Later, Druce, a police officer, in a talk with Scobie and Mrs. Perrot, gives an account of how Loder gave his report:

“All I needed. That chief engineer was a good fellow. He had it ready in his head. I could hardly write fast enough. When he stopped he went flat out. That was what was keeping him together—‘ma responsibility’. You know they’d walked—the ones that could walk—five days to get here.” (138)

What Druce says here indicates that Loder’s sense of responsibility is what was keeping him awake and conscious, and once he did his job, his responsibility, “he went flat out.” As Druce correctly points out, responsibility is what holds us together and enables us to fulfil our tasks and our missions in this life and in this world.

II. 3. Love versus Pity:

Love and pity are two of the main human feelings that decide the nature of the life of man. The difference between them is very delicate and sometimes confusing since both rely on human emotions: love emerges out of care for the other, and pity out of sympathy and a feeling of responsibility for the other. Yet, the confusing matter is that both come into existence because of concern for someone else, the other. One of the serious issues that *The Heart of the Matter* raises is the confusion that occurs when people get confused between feelings of love and of pity. Scobie, the protagonist, did love, and maybe is still in love with, his wife, but in the present he comes to confuse between the feeling of love he had for his wife in the past and the feeling of pity and responsibility he has for her in the present. However, his wife is aware of the difference, which leads her to accuse him of not loving her in the present; she had “known it for years” (64), as she tells him. When Scobie assures her that he loves her, she, sadly but accurately, admits to him, ““That’s your conscience...your

sense of duty. You've never loved anyone since Catherine [their daughter] died'" (64, ellipsis mine). His reply to her is, "'I try all the time to keep you happy. I work hard for that'" (65). This reply indicates how he intentionally confuses love with his sense of pity and responsibility. His confusion is intentional since a moment later he comes to meditate as follows, "No man could guarantee love for ever, but he had sworn fourteen years ago, at Ealing, silently during the horrible little elegant ceremony [of their marriage] among the lace and candles, that he would at least always see to it that she was happy" (65). Thus, since love is not guaranteed and since he does not have the same feeling of love for her, he commits himself to his "sense of duty" towards her to always make her "happy." That is why instead of directly telling her that he loves her, he keeps reiterating that he wants her "to be happy" (67). It is only after quarrelling with her and after accusing her that she "can't give [him] peace" (66) that he comes to tell her that he loves her and promises to "fix" her "passage" to South Africa (67). Scobie may be excused for this intentional confusion since his main aim is to make his wife, Louise, happy, which makes one sympathize with him instead of indicting him of lying. In fact, the maxim that Scobie espouses in the novel can be adopted by us, the readers, when we evaluate his actions in the novel: "We'd forgive most things if we knew the facts....A policeman should be the most forgiving person in the world if he gets the facts right" (87, ellipsis mine). We are not policemen, but facts in the novel and Scobie's desperate attempts to make Louise happy lead us to be sympathetic with him and even excuse him when his love for her turns into pity.

In addition to this love story that turns into pity, we have another love story that starts with pity and then develops into love; however it ends up with the same feeling of pity and responsibility; that is the love relationship that develops between Scobie and Helen Rolt. Lisa Crumley Bierman correctly argues, "Scobie's relationship with Helen is ... unhealthy; it is formed in pity and steeped in guilt and responsibility" (2002, 70; ellipsis mine). Helen Rolt is one of the survivors of a torpedoed ship; she comes into his life when he attends their reception at Pende: "Scobie always remembered how she was carried into his life on a stretcher grasping a stamp-album with her eyes fast shut" (138). Scobie never forgets this scene because it is what instigates his concern and his pity for her; she comes out of the sea as an unconscious, weak and ugly nineteen-year old young woman who has lost her husband in the sea (137). The suffering, the lack of experience, the weakness and the ugliness of Helen, which "was like handcuffs on his wrists" (188), are the things that initiate Scobie's feeling of pity and responsibility towards her:

He had no sense of responsibility towards the beautiful and the graceful and the intelligent. They would find their own way. It was the face for which nobody would go out of his way, the face that would never catch the covert look, the face which would soon be used to rebuffs and indifference that demanded his allegiance. The word "pity" is used as loosely as the word "love": the terrible promiscuous passion which so few experience. (189)

Scobie is aware of the difference between pity and love, but once their relationship develops, he himself gets confused about the difference between them. At the start, when he listened to her telling him of her childhood and her early life, he "listened with the intense interest one feels in a stranger's life, the interest the young mistake for love" (160). Being aware of the difference in their age, it makes them feel safe: "they were safe with each other. He was more than thirty years the older: his body in this climate had lost the sense of lust: he watched her with sadness and affection and enormous pity" (188). Thus, as both of them thought, the difference in age, her "dead husband" and his "living wife" in addition to his feeling of pity and responsibility towards her are all elements that enforce their "sense of security": "they were friends who could never be anything else than friends" (163). This friendship develops and the deceptive feeling of safety evolves until the limits that separate between friendship and love get mixed, and eventually both of them give in to the promiscuous passion of love.

This happens at a moment at which they feel “safe” and that they “don’t want anything out of” (189) one another: “What they had both thought was safety proved to have been the camouflage of an enemy who works in terms of friendship, trust and pity” (190). In this way, the feeling of pity that has created a bond between them comes to develop into love.

However, this passion of love, which enables him to regain his happiness, the “odd jubilation” that makes him feel “as though he had rediscovered something he had lost” (190, 191), does not last for long between them since once it is consummated, the feeling of responsibility comes back and agonizes him: “But human beings were condemned to consequences. The responsibility as well as the guilt was his ... he knew what he was about. He had sworn to preserve Louise’s happiness, and now he had accepted another and contradictory responsibility” (192, ellipsis mine). Scobie, a responsible person, cannot forget about the consequences of his actions; he has to spare his wife the effects of discovering this relationship, which leads him to plan and lie to conceal it, something that he fails in doing, as we find out later when Louise tells Wilson: ““It’s why I came home [from South Africa]. Mrs. Carter wrote to me. She said everybody was talking. Of course he never realised that. He thought he’d been so clever. And he nearly convinced me—that it was finished. Going to the Communion the way he did”” (328). Yet, this planning to hide this love makes him feel “like a criminal” (191). This feeling is enhanced because of his being a Catholic; as a Catholic he knows that this love relationship is a sinful one that he should absolve himself of. His responsibility and his pity should be totally directed towards his wife, not this other woman, a feeling that keeps agonizing him until he commits suicide, as will be shown later.

Being “so careful” to conceal this relationship, Scobie comes to avoid any public intimate contact with Helen, which maddens her and makes her accuse him that his “work is much more important to you than I am,” which is a true accusation though he falsely tells her that he would “sacrifice” his work for her (210). Helen’s accusation reminds one of Louise’s request when she asks him to “retire” (18) and travel with her to South Africa and start there anew, but he would not do that; as he earlier meditates, “he always prayed that death would come first” (43). Helen wants neither his “caution” nor his “pity”; she wants his love, something that he seems to be incapable of. His contemplation reflects this fact:

But it was not a question of whether she wanted it—she had it. Pity smouldered like decay at his heart. He would never rid himself of it. He knew from experience how passion died away and how love went, but pity always stayed. Nothing ever diminished pity. The conditions of life nurtured it. There was only one person in the world who was unpitiable—himself. (211)

Thus, instead of love, what he has for her is pity and nothing but pity, which drives him to desperately try to “protect” her, and his wife as well (212). Pity is the same, and the outcome is the same; in his school of pity, “they learn bitterness and frustration and how to grow old” (213), and consequently he comes to have a perpetual wish to make them, his wife and her, happy (65, 214). However, similar to Louise, what she wants and needs is his love, not his pity. Similar to his earlier surrender when he gives in to Louise’s wish and borrows the money to fix her passage to South Africa, he, contrary to reason, comes to write her a letter that expresses his love for her. In this letter, which, later on, proves to be destructive to his character and his career, he admits that he loves her more than himself, more than his wife and more than God, and ends again by saying that he wants to make her happy (215-6). In this way, his pity leads him to forget about his “caution” and make a sacrifice of it and even sacrifice his love for God, something that he blames himself for, which makes him cry aloud and pray to Him: ““O God, I have deserted you. Do not you desert me”” (216).

As I mentioned above, this letter in addition to his sinful relationship with Helen prove to be destructive to his character and to his career since they partly participate in the process of his

disintegration. Shortly after he writes this letter and pushes it under her door, he finds out that she did not get this letter and that it is lost (224); later it is revealed to the reader that Yusef has got this letter and comes to use it to blackmail Scobie (240-2). When he gives in to Yusef's attempt to give a package of genuine diamond to the captain of the *Esperança* so as to deliver it to the pilot at Lisbon in return for the letter, he comes to observe how the captain's behaviour changes from utter respect to pity (243-4), a feeling that demolishes Scobie's solidarity and integrity. After giving the captain the package and while inspecting the ship, Scobie sees the captain's face expressions as well as his own in a mirror, which drives him to wonder about what has actually happened to him and made him such a pitiable person: "Momentarily he wondered: who can that be? Before he realised that it was only this new unfamiliar look of pity that made it strange to him. He thought: am I really one of those whom people pity?" (244). Scobie's shock and wonder emerge from the fact that he has already considered himself the "only" "unpitiable" "person in the world" (211), but he is forced to find out that he, like any other human being, can be sympathized with and can be pitied, as does the Portuguese captain (243-4).

The last love affair in the novel is the one that takes place between Louise and Wilson, which ends with an uncertain hope that they may get married in the future. In fact, it is a one-sided love story since Louise never gives in to this love until after the death of Scobie. Their story starts with their common interest in poetry (27), which encourages Louise to start a friendship with him. The first meeting between them sees their discussion on poetry and later reading it, and even lending him a book. Louise's interest in him occurs due to the fact that she has few friends in this colony because of their opinion regarding her; for them, she is "the city intellectual" (5), as Harris tells Wilson, and she is "literary Louise" (28), as Fraser mockingly talks about her to his friends at the club. He mistakenly interprets Louise's care for him as love, which leads him to love her, which in turn leads him to envy Scobie for being her husband. Once he tells Harris that "she's too good for him" (71), i.e. he sees that Scobie is not worthy of her, which makes him later repeat again the same statement to him – "She's too good for you" (153). This feeling drives him to have a grudge against Scobie and to even accuse him of sending Louise "away" because he is "afraid of" him (153). Besides, out of his hatred of Scobie, he admits to Scobie that he "kissed" her when they were outside together (153). Yet, Wilson's confession does not shake Scobie's confidence in his wife since his experience tells him that this always happens to young people who come to this colony when they mistake care and interest for love. Later, when Wilson gives Louise the poem he has written, published and dedicated to her, and then admits to her that he loves her, she restates the same logic of her husband, "Oh, no, Wilson, ... no. You don't. It's just Coast fever" (258, ellipsis mine). By the end of the novel, after Scobie's death, Wilson again admits that he loves her and expresses his wish to marry her. Yet, she does not see that it seems likely to happen in the present; possibly in the future "loneliness" (327), her eternal enemy, may lead her to marry him. However, due to Scobie's betrayal of her, she seems to have lost belief in this noble feeling of love; she tells Wilson when he asks if she does not believe in his confession of love, "I don't believe in anybody who says love, love, love. It means self, self, self" (327). Thus, though she may marry him in the future, she does not tell him if she loves him and asks him not to "talk about love any more" since it was Scobie's "favourite lie" (327).

In this way, the only type of love that remains is the one that we have for God, whose mercy suffices for all the sins that human beings come to commit, whether intentionally or unintentionally; Scobie dies while saying aloud, "Dear God, I love" (326). Father Rank's last words about him accurately and revealingly describe Scobie's condition, this man who commits suicide because of his deep love for God and his sincere wish to stop sinning against Him, "'It may seem an odd thing to say—when a man's as wrong as he was—but I think, from what I saw of him, that he really loved God,'" a statement on which Louise concludes, "'He certainly loved no one else'" (334).

II.4. Despair and Damnation:

Despair can be defined as utter loss of hope, which is an “unforgivable sin,” or it can be seen as “a permanent sense of loss,” as Scobie tells Dr. Sykes at a dinner party (234). As for damnation, it can be seen as the consequence of losing hope and of losing confidence in the mercy of God. In *The Heart of the Matter*, Graham Greene provides us with a similar definition of despair and damnation:

Despair is the price one pays for setting oneself an impossible aim. It is, one is told, the unforgivable sin, but it is a sin the corrupt or evil man never practises. He always has hope. He never reaches the freezing-point of knowing absolute failure. Only the man of good will carries always in his heart this capacity for damnation. (67)

Scobie comes to set “an impossible aim” for himself, which is making his wife happy though he is aware that the happiness of others cannot be achieved or guaranteed and that happiness is relative. Later on, while he is on his way to investigate the death of Pemberton, Scobie comes to have this revealing interior monologue: “If I could just arrange for her happiness first, he thought, and in the confusing night he forgot for the while what experience had taught him—that no human being can really understand another, and no one can arrange another’s happiness” (93). This impossible hope of making his wife happy leads him, eventually, to commit the unforgivable sin of despair, which leads him to commit suicide, and by doing this he comes to damn himself for eternity. Earlier in the novel, Pemberton commits this unforgivable sin of despair and ends up by hanging himself (94). According to “the Church’s teaching” (99), as Father Clay points out, Pemberton has committed the unforgivable sin and thus has put himself outside the mercy of God. However, Scobie, who feels sorry for what happened to the young Pemberton, argues against Father Clay’s point of view and that of the church. He sees that since Pemberton “wasn’t a Catholic” and since he was young and lacked knowledge, he might be forgiven due to his “invincible ignorance” (95). After reading Pemberton’s letter to his father, Scobie, against his reason and against his knowledge of religion, tells Father Clay:

“You are not going to tell me there’s anything unforgivable there, Father. If you or I did it, it would be despair—I grant you anything with us. We’d be damned all right because we know, but *he* doesn’t know a thing.”
 “The Church’s teaching...”
 “Even the Church can’t teach me that God doesn’t pity the young...” (99)

Scobie’s viewpoint is that the decisive factor in this issue is one’s knowledge of what he does and that is why Pemberton, a young who lacks experience and knowledge, may, in the end, be pitied and be forgiven by God. In fact, what Scobie says shows that he is convinced that God’s forgiveness is to be granted to the young, whether they did have knowledge or not; granting the mercy of God is up to Him, not up to what the church says or teaches.

In a revealing scene in the novel that shows how much disappointed is Father Rank, he comes to disclose to Scobie how he suffers because he cannot be of any use to the living: “The dying ... that’s what I’m here for. They send for me when they are dying. ... I’ve never been any good to the living” (218, ellipsis mine). Commenting on this situation, Murray Roston correctly observes, “He [Father Rank] bemoans his failure to win the confidence of his parishioners and his chronic inability to find appropriate words of comfort and guidance when they are needed” (2006, 46). Father Rank’s disappointment, which is a degree of despair, leads him to announce to Scobie that “God doesn’t give the right words” (218), which might

be true since the right words emerge from within the human being due to his faith in God, which salvages man and enables him to avoid despair. Later on, when Scobie becomes confused due to his inability to take a decision with regard to abandoning Helen and going back to his wife, we find him waiting for the right words and even for “a miracle” (254) that never comes, which eventually leaves him in utter despair.

When Louise comes back from South Africa, she comes back with a resolution to start anew with Scobie, a resolution that makes her ask Scobie to go to Confession in order to be able “to go to Communion together” (248). However, his inability to end his love affair with Helen makes him not ready to go to Confession, which sets his life in complete chaos that ends up with his suicide. According to Scobie, if he goes to Communion without absolving himself of his sin of adultery, he damns himself; he remarks to Helen, ““To me that means—well, damnation. To take my God in mortal sin” (252). Wishing to conceal this relationship, he keeps lying to those around him, especially his wife, an act that agonizes him and makes him feel that “his whole personality crumple with the slow disintegration of lies” (250).

II.5. Disintegration of Character and Faith:

Disintegration, which is a destruction of one’s integrity and a loss of one’s ability to maintain one’s principles and ethics in the face of the hardships of life, is also one of the important themes in *The Heart of the Matter*. Haim Gordon points out that Scobie “is a seemingly good person who makes wrong decisions, fails flagrantly in his personal life, and loses his integrity” (1997, 85). Moreover, Gordon sees that Scobie is a failure in his personal life and sees that “Because he persistently chooses to evade confrontations on matters of principle, Scobie has ruined his career, made irresponsible decisions, and gradually effaced his integrity” (1997, 86). Scobie’s disintegration starts the moment he comes to give in to his feeling of pity towards others, whether it was his wife or other people with whom he comes to be in touch.

First, he relents to his wife’s wish to leave and go to South Africa to avoid being humiliated and alienated by people in this West African colony, and promises to do everything he can to arrange for her trip to South Africa though he does not have the means to do this. Later, he yields to her wish and borrows money from Yusef though he knows that he is “a man he must not borrow from” (108). Scobie’s pity and his desire to make his wife happy shatter his integrity; once he borrows the money from Yusef, to whom he refers as just “Y” in his diary, he realizes “the enormous breach pity had blasted through his integrity” (130). Two months later, when he goes to Yusef’s house to make sure if Yusef has framed Tallit in a diamond case, he comes to be obsessed with the feeling that this is the place where “he had lost his integrity” (174). This is how Scobie thinks once he is in the place to which he came to borrow money in return for a certain interest per annum:

Perhaps it was merely the want of air that caused the depression which now fell on his spirits: perhaps it was because he had returned to the scene of a crime. Useless to tell himself that he had committed no offence. Like a woman who has made a loveless marriage he recognised in the room as anonymous as an hotel bedroom the memory of an adultery. (174)

In fact, this apparent sense of guilt emerges from the fact that Scobie has borrowed money, though for a certain interest, from a man he should avoid and beware of, which makes him unable to reveal the source from which he got the money for a long while. This feeling of guilt is what instigates the process of the disintegration of his character.

Second, he is corrupted by sentiments. The scene in which he discovers a letter concealed by the captain of the Portuguese ship in the bathroom illustrates this; instead of dealing formally with the letter – that is to write a report on it and send it “to the London censors unopened” (57) – he tears and burns the letter and the report as well (59), which leads him to lie to others whenever asked if he had found anything; he tells Fraser that he “found nothing” (60). Contrary to other people who are corrupted by money, he is corrupted by his sentiments, which in addition to his feeling of pity leads to his gradual disintegration, as will be shown. Thus, though he refuses the bribe offered by the Portuguese captain, he comes to give in to his feeling of pity, which leads him to defile his sense of responsibility. After burning the letter and the report, which means destroying the evidence against the captain “who had broken the rules of his own company for the sake of a daughter” (61) and against the policeman, Scobie, who broke the rules of his work, Scobie comes to feel that “he was guilty—that he had joined the ranks of the corrupt police officers” (60). Yet, he is a different type of corrupt police officers: “They had been corrupted by money, and he had been corrupted by sentiment. Sentiment was the more dangerous, because you couldn’t name its price” (60). In fact, sentiment is more dangerous because it relates to what goes on in the heart depending on how it reacts to the simple matters that happen to us in our normal life, which sometimes leads us to forget about our duties and our responsibilities and violate them, as happens in Scobie’s case.

A short while after his wife travels to South Africa, Scobie comes to “feel—tired of [his] religion” (180) and to “feel—empty” and becomes uncertain that he even believes (181), as he tells Father Rank in his confession. However, the priest advises him not to worry and tells him that he feels in such a way because of his long stay in the colony and because of the climate: ““It’s easy ... to worry too much about that. Especially here. The penance I would give to a lot of people if I could is six months’ leave. The climate gets you down. It’s easy to mistake tiredness for—well, disbelief” (181, ellipsis mine). In fact, Scobie comes to feel in this way due to his feeling that he has lost his integrity. Besides, after he finds out that Yusef, the man who lent him the money, has manipulated him by providing him with false information in order to frame Tallit (175-7), he becomes frustrated and even feels betrayed, which enhances his sense of loss of integrity, whether of character or faith.

In addition to this feeling of tiredness and emptiness, Scobie comes to fall in love with Helen Rolt, a young woman of nineteen-year old, and eventually commits the sin of adultery with her, which is a betrayal to his wife, Louise, as well as a betrayal to his moral beliefs as a Catholic. After a short while, this love turns into a feeling of pity and responsibility, which enforces a commitment on him to make her happy. In this way, they come to have a quarrel, after which he writes her a letter to express his love to her. Yusef comes to get this letter through Helen’s boy, which enables him to blackmail Scobie (240-2). Yet, this letter in itself is not the real problem in Scobie’s life; the real problem is that he cannot behave like others and forget about his responsibility towards Helen and devote himself to his wife, which is the only way for his salvation, taking into consideration that he is a Catholic. Thus, instead of taking her word, when she asks him to go away and never come back (214), he returns to her though he knows that his peace, and his salvation as well, is to be away from her: “He thought: I’d go back and go to bed, in the morning I’d write to Louise and in the evening go to Confession: the day after that God would return to me in a priest’s hands: life would be simple again” (223). However, instead of following logic and mind, he follows his heart, and goes to Helen, which takes him into a long process that ends up with the disintegration of his character and his faith rather than regaining them. Once he is with her, he comes to feel that there is a “command” for him “to stay, to love, to accept responsibility, to lie” (223), which automatically leads him to delay his return to God for her own sake thinking that “God can wait” and that one’s love of God should not be “at the expense of one of his creatures” (223). This blind commitment and this faulty way of thinking eventually lead him to “despair” (224), which proves to be destructive to the integrity of his character and his faith. Once he is home, he finds out that his wife has sent him a telegram to inform him that she is on her way

back home from South Africa, which necessitates that he choose between two commitments, one towards his wife and the other towards Helen, an ordeal that devastates him spiritually, and eventually leads to his damnation. Instead of going back to his wife or even leaving her and staying with Helen to save himself, as the imagined inner voice of God tells him (316-17), he comes to choose to sacrifice his life for the sake of the two women he loves, his wife and his mistress, and for the sake of the God he loves in order to stop insulting him by sinning against him; he tells the inner voice that talks to him, “That’s impossible. I love you and I won’t go on insulting you at your own altar. You see it’s an *impasse*, God, an *impasse*” (317). In this way, Scobie comes to lose his integrity and to lose the eternity guaranteed by God in paradise; “This was what human love had done to him—it had robbed him of love for eternity” (315).

II.6. Sacrificing the Self for the Other:

In *The Heart of the Matter*, the above discussed themes, in one way or another, build up towards the theme of sacrificing the self for the other, namely offering the self to be sacrificed at the altar of the other for the sake of his happiness. Throughout the novel, Scobie keeps reiterating to his wife, Louise, and later to his mistress, Helen, that he wants to keep them happy and that he works hard for that (65, 67), and that he is happy as long as they are happy (112, 165). Yet, this hope of making the other happy is almost impossible since it necessitates that one understands the other and knows how to make him / her happy (93), an attempt that ends up with failure since it implies that one forgets about his own happiness and his own needs, and as a result comes to suffer. The failure to achieve the happiness of the other eventually leads to discontent and disappointment, as happens to Scobie, which leads him to commit the sin of despair, an unforgivable sin against God according to his Catholic beliefs (234), and in this way comes to damn himself and lose “eternity” for the sake of the two women he loves (315). This realization makes Scobie, and Greene as well, address himself to the reader as follows: “Point me out the happy man and I will point you out either egotism, evil—or else an absolute ignorance” (141). It is this conviction that leads Scobie earlier in the novel to point out to his wife, who says that she will “never forgive Pemberton,” who is dead at the time, that, “We’d forgive most things if we knew the facts.... A policeman should be the most forgiving person in the world if he gets the facts right” (87, ellipsis mine). However, his wife, Louise, is not a policeman, while he is a one who is aware of the others’ need for him and who is willing to sacrifice himself for them, especially once he gets the facts that enable him to reach “the heart of the matter” (141).

Later on, while attending the communion with his wife at the church, Scobie, who puts himself in the shoes of God who survives “the Cross every day,” “can only suffer,” “can never be lost” and “must come second to these others [human beings]” (270), comes to meditate as follows, “I must come last: I am the Deputy Commissioner of Police: a hundred men serve under me: I am the responsible man. It is my job to look after the others. I am conditioned to serve” (270). As a policeman, he can never run away from responsibility since this is the nature of his work, and maybe the nature of Scobie, the human being, which drives him to accuse God of making him the way he is (271), a responsible man who offers his own “damnation” to God and asks Him to “take it” on one condition to “use it for them [the others]” (272) and make them happy. Afterwards, in a revealing monologue that occurs between Scobie and an inner voice that stands for God, which Michael G. Brennan correctly sees as “an internalized dialogue between the two contrasting sides of Scobie’s mind” (2010, 89), this voice tries to dissuade him from the idea of committing suicide since he, as he admits, loves God and asks him to trust Him (315), Scobie comes to use the same reasoning:

The voice was silent in the cave and his own voice replied hopelessly: No. I don’t trust you. I love you, but I’ve never trusted you. If you made me, you made this feeling of responsibility that I’ve

always carried about like a sack of bricks. I'm not a policeman for nothing—responsible for order, for seeing justice is done. There was no other profession for a man of my kind. I can't shift my responsibility to you. If I could, I would be someone else. I can't make one of them [Louise and Helen] suffer so as to save myself. I'm responsible and I'll see it through the only way I can. A sick man's death means to them only a short suffering—everybody has to die. We are all of us resigned to death: it's life we aren't resigned to.

So long as you live, the voice said, I have hope. There's no human hopelessness like the hopelessness of God. Can't you just go on, as you are doing now? The voice pleaded, lowering the terms every time it spoke like a dealer in a market. It explained: there are worse acts. But no, he said, no. That's impossible. I love you and I won't go on insulting you at your own altar. You see, it's an *impasse*, God, an *impasse*, he said. (316-317)

In fact, Greene's choice of Scobie's job, as a policeman, is a dexterous and convenient one, especially if we take into consideration that he is one who has a permanent desire to achieve justice, which leads him to always look for facts that may acquit or indict the other. This responsible man cannot run away from whatever he has done and cannot ignore the fact that he has sinned against God and committed a "mortal sin" (315) the moment he attended the communion with his wife without having already absolved himself of his sin of adultery, which lands him into damnation. Having insulted God by sinning against Him, while knowing the consequences, drives him to think of "seeing" that "justice is done" instead of attempting to find a way to save himself at the expense of others; "the happiness of others had to be protected" (314). Michael G. Brennan remarks, "This devotional failure further convinces him that the happiness of others and the peace he so ardently desires can only be achieved through his death" (2010, 87). This leaves him nothing to do except meditating the idea of ending his life to stop insulting and hurting God, whom he loves and wants to spare further suffering by any further sinning against Him.

Earlier, he sacrifices part of himself, part of his integrity, when he gives in to his feeling of pity towards the Portuguese captain and comes to burn the letter hidden by this captain as well as his own report on it. Next, he comes to succumb to his wife's wish to travel to South Africa, which leads him to borrow money from a suspected person, Yusef. This act of sacrifice leads to a further disintegration of his character. Later on, after his wife's travel to South Africa, and after the reception of the survivors of the torpedoed ship, out of the sympathy that he feels towards the six-year old child who is ill and suffers due to her hard experience at the sea, he comes to make a sacrifice of his own peace for this child to ease her pain; he prays for God to give this young girl peace and take his own peace: "give her peace. Take away my peace for ever, but give her peace" (143), a prayer that is immediately answered since this girl dies a few moments later, which announces the loss of his own peace, a sacrifice that Robert Hoskins regards as an "offering" to God and as a "ransom for the child's pain" (1999, 105).

Furthermore, later on, after he falls in love with Helen, he comes to sacrifice his "caution" (215, 216), which is supposed to guard and guarantee his peace of mind, for the sake of assuring her that he loves her by writing her a letter in which he admits his love to her (215-216). This letter furthers his loss of integrity once it is found out that Yusef has got it; it enables Yusef to blackmail Scobie (239-242).

Still, further later on, after he damns himself by committing the sin of despair and after committing a mortal sin by attending communion without absolving himself of his sin of adultery, he comes to sacrifice himself and his eternity for the sake of the two women he has loved. He prays to God to accept his sacrifice of himself for their happiness, "O God, I offer

up my damnation to you. Take it. Use it for them” (272). Robert Hoskins correctly argues, “Scobie dies because he cannot reconcile the conduct of his life with his Catholic conscience” (1999, 114). However, he acts in this way since he thinks that “The happiness of others had to be protected” (314). Moreover, he comes to sacrifice himself for God for the sake of stopping to insult Him anymore (317). He comes to commit suicide out of his love for God and out of a desire to stop causing pain for those who come to be in contact with him. He acts in this way while he is totally aware that, by doing this, i.e. committing suicide, he sacrifices his “love for eternity” (315) for the sake of those whom he loves, the others, including God (317, 326). In short, as Mark Bosco accurately remarks, Scobie “deliberately damn[s] himself for the sake of others” (2005, 42).

III. Narration and Narrative Techniques

The aim of this section of the study is to deal with the method of narration employed in *The Heart of the Matter* in addition to studying the narrative techniques made use of in it. Besides, it attempts to assess how each narrative device fulfils its function in the novel. In this way, this segment comes to treat the third-person method of narration employed in the novel in addition to the following narrative techniques: epigraph, description, dialogue, interior monologue, addressing the reader as “you” / direct address to the reader, free indirect discourse, letters, diary, comment and dreams. What is more, Greene makes use of the stream-of-consciousness technique throughout the novel, as will be shown.

The novel is written in the form of a dramatic work as if it is a play. It is divided into three books, each of which is divided into parts, which in turn are divided into chapters, which, in turn, are divided into sections, each of which focuses on a single event, seen from point of view and the eyes of one of the main characters. Each section develops the story of the novel, and sometimes enhances its tension, which, in turn, complicates the story and develops the themes and the characters in the novel.

III.1. The Third-Person Omniscient Narrator:

In *The Heart of the Matter*, Graham Greene makes use of the omniscient narrator, i.e. the novel is narrated in the third-person method of narration, which means that the narrator knows everything about characters and is able to dig deep in the minds and consciousness of the characters. Greene, mostly, conveys to the reader the main events and the various descriptions of characters and places through the eyes and the consciousness of the main characters. In order to be able to filter such descriptions of certain places and certain events through the consciousness of certain characters in the novel, Greene employs the technique of the stream-of-consciousness. The use of this technique gives the reader the impression that Greene is indirectly using the first-person method of narration side by side the third-person method of narration, especially when he delivers to the reader the various thoughts of the characters through narrative devices such as interior monologue and addressing the reader as “you” and comment, as will be shown later on. As for the third-person omniscient narrator, it enables Greene to freely move from one character to another and from one consciousness to another, which in turn enables the reader to peep deeply in their minds and participate in their experiences and their suffering as well as the turbulence that goes on in their minds and their hearts.

III.2. Epigraph:

Epigraph which is “a quotation set at the beginning of a literary work ... to suggest its theme” (*Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, 418, ellipsis mine) is the first narrative device that Greene employs at the outset of the novel. Greene opens *The Heart of the Matter* with a quotation from the French Catholic poet Charles Péguy, “Le pêcheur est au Coeur même de

chrétienté.... Nul n'est aussi compétent que le pécheur en matière de chrétienté. Nul, si ce n'est le saint" [The sinner is at the heart of Christianity. Nobody is as competent as the sinner in matters of Christianity. Nobody, except the saint.] (Unpaged). In fact, this quotation from the writings of the French poet sums up the main themes of the novel. It also establishes a comparison between the priest and the sinner: both the priest and the sinner possess knowledge, but each of them ends up in a different way due to his deeds. The priest is saved by his knowledge while the sinner is damned by it. A quick look at what happens in the novel shows how Scobie is damned by his Catholic knowledge that tells him that if you commit a sin, you are to be punished by God and if you commit a mortal sin you are to be damned and deprived from eternity. He comes to commit both types of sin though he is aware that if he acts in this way he is to be damned; he ends up by committing suicide, which is a mortal sin.

III.3. Description:

Description, which can be of place, time, event or character, is the second narrative technique that Greene employs in *The Heart of the Matter*. This narrative device, which enables the reader to visualize events, places and characters, which makes them come alive in the imagination of the reader, is made use of everywhere in the novel from the opening section to the last one of it. In this novel, Greene usually filters the description of places, events and characters through the consciousness of the main characters, and this is why we never have a complete and finished description of anything at one time. The description is given in gradual doses, and we come to see them through the lens and the zoom of a camera that Greene holds and allows the readers to see and perceive as much as he wants and nothing more. In one of their conversations, Greene once tells Marie-Francoise Allain, a critic,

When I describe a scene I capture it with the moving eye of the cine-camera rather than with the photographer's eye – which leaves it frozen. In this precise domain I think the cinema has influenced me.
... I work with a camera, following my characters and their movements. So the landscape moves. When I turn my head and look at the harbour, my head moves, the houses move, the boats move, don't they?
(Cited in Neil Sinyard, 2003, 42; ellipsis mine)

In the opening scene of the novel we see Wilson sitting on the balcony of the Bedford Hotel waiting for his boy to bring him his drink. While sitting and waiting, we come to see Bond Street, "the young negresses in dark-blue gym smocks engaged on the interminable task of trying to wave their wirespring hair," the black clerks moving churchward with "their wives in brilliant afternoon dresses of blue and cerise" (1), and the small school boys trying to convince merchant officers walking on the street to go with them to a brothel near the police station until they succeed in persuading an able-seaman to go with them (1-2) through Wilson's eyes. Sometimes, the reader is given a description of the same place in different sections of the novel through different eyes of the main characters. An example of this is done through the description of Scobie's room at the police station: in the second scene of the novel, we are given a description of this room through Scobie's eyes (6-7), and later on we are given another description of the same room through Wilson's eyes (84). Another example is that of the bedroom in Scobie's house: early in the third section of the first chapter we are given a description of the bedroom in which Louise is sleeping at that time through Scobie's eyes (15), and later we are given another description of the same room, but without Louise in it, through Wilson's eyes (89). There are a lot of such examples of description in the novel, which creates a variety of perceptions as well as a variety of views with regard to what is presented in the novel.

III.4. Dialogue:

Dialogue is one of the most effective narrative techniques employed by Greene in *The Heart of the Matter*. From the very beginning of the novel, it is apparent that this narrative device is to be an indispensable one in developing characters and events of the novel and in this way develop its themes, plot and characterization. The first dialogue in the novel, between Wilson and Harris, indicates how rumours and slander are to be effective in the lives of the main characters. Harris refers to the rumours said about Scobie's sleeping with black girls and even slanders him about getting bribes from the Syrians, two accusations that are not true at the time (4-5). Also, through this dialogue we get an idea about how, in this colony, they see that Louise is "the city intellectual" (5). Dialogues in the novel are mostly brief and economic but they are revealing, and a quick look at them proves this fact. The last dialogue in the novel, between Father Rank and Louise, highlights the fact that though Scobie might have committed suicide and committed a mortal sin he loved no one but God, that we should not give ourselves the right to judge the deeds of others, that the Church states the rules and the teachings "but it doesn't know what goes on in a single human heart" and that we should always trust in the mercy of God (332-34).

III.5. Letters and Diary:

A close look at the letters and the diary included in the novel prove that Greene does not make use of these two narrative techniques in a traditional way. Here letters do not always convey feelings and diary does not provide us with meditations as it is expected. Besides, letters in this novel have always a destructive impact on the characters and on what happens in the present, which affects their future. The first letter in the novel, that of the Portuguese captain to his daughter, proves to be a destructive one to the integrity of Scobie; instead of writing a report about it and sending it to the censors in London, he tears and burns it in addition to his own report (58-61). This letter makes him a corrupted policeman though he does not take any bribes from the captain; contrary to other policemen who are corrupted by money, "he had been corrupted by sentiment" (60). The second letter is that of Pemberton to his father (98-99), which reveals that he has been indebted to Yusef and that he has committed suicide. This letter also proves to be destructive to the psychology of Scobie; it leads to an internal confusion in his personality since he keeps confusing between the signature of Pemberton as "Dicky" and "Ticki," the pet name given to him by Louise. Besides, this letter leads Scobie to doubt the teachings of the church; this is exposed when he says to Father Clay, "Even the Church can't teach me that God doesn't pity the young" (99). The last letter that deepens the disintegration in the personality of Scobie is the one he writes to Helen to tell her that he loves her more than anything else (215-216). This last letter proves to be destructive to Scobie and to Helen since she never gets this letter; later Yusef makes use of it to blackmail Scobie. In short, letters in this novel are destructive though they are written in a good will.

As for Diary, Scobie is the one who makes use of it in the novel. However, he never meditates in his diary or gives an opinion; he just mentions facts in it (228). What Scobie writes in the diary is "the other life—bare and undisturbed and built of facts" (284). He never tries to lie in them, but instead he omits things that could reveal what he really is; what he writes is supposed to be understood only by him. Later, he adds some false information about his sleeplessness with the aim of helping the two women he loved to forget about him and to help his wife get the insurance (310-11). In this way, some of the bare facts that Scobie has written in his diary were written with the aim of misleading those who come to read them (317-18, 325). He actually succeeds in doing so; after Scobie's death, Louise tells Wilson that he has written everything in his diary, that "he never lied in his diary" and that "he never said things he didn't mean—like love" (227-28). However, Wilson, the spy, was able to find out that

Scobie has added “the pieces about sleeplessness” (329), which makes him jump to the conclusion that he has committed suicide.

III.6. Dreams:

The sixth narrative technique that Greene effectively makes use of is dreams. Dreams in this novel reflect the aspirations, fears and disappointments of Scobie and the despair that finally kills him spiritually and physically as well. In the first section of chapter I of part three of the first book of the novel, Scobie, on his way to investigate the death of Pemberton, has “a dream of perfect happiness and freedom” (91). He dreams of himself being in a meadow with Ali, his boy, where he enjoys the beauty of nature and the singing of birds and where peace prevails and evil vanishes to the extent that even the serpent does not bite him: “and once when he sat down the grass was parted by a small green snake which passed on to his hand and up to his arm without fear, and before it slid down into the grass again touched his cheek with a cold, friendly, remote tongue” (91). It is Scobie’s dream of an Eden where he can have the peace of his soul and where he can get rid of his worries and become able to arrange for the happiness of his wife. However, this dream of perfect happiness and freedom cannot last for long for he, later in the same section, has another dream in which he is worried and confused. In this dream, happiness is replaced by his confusion about the dead Pemberton and Louise who become “obscurely linked,” his confusion regarding the signature – “Dicky” or “Ticki” - at the end of a letter he reads in the dream, and his confusion about someone he has “to save, Louise or Dicky or Ticki” (100). His confusion disables him, which worries him. Later in the same section, he has another dream in which he sees Louise “crying” and he “writing his last letter” before committing suicide (105-06). But, he does not commit suicide because it means depriving him of eternity, and then he becomes confused about who is to commit suicide – Louise or he himself. The dream mainly reflects his worry about his inability to arrange for Louise’s passage to South Africa and his wish to arrange for it and for her happiness. It also reflects his worry about the teachings of the church (106). This dream obsesses him even after he returns to his house; he mistakenly fears that Louise would commit suicide because of his failure to arrange for her trip. However, she assures him that it is a “silly” idea since, as she tells him “Nothing like that could ever happen with us. We’re Catholics” (109). She reminds him of his being a Catholic who cannot think of killing himself out of despair, something that he actually commits later on. The last dream that Scobie comes to have occurs after he fails in making his confession to Father Rank (265-67), and consequently becomes totally despaired. He dreams of himself in a boat with a dead body, which smelt, but after some time he becomes aware “that it was not the dead body that smelt but his own living one. He felt as though his blood had ceased to run: when he tried to lift his arm it dangled uselessly from his shoulder” (268). This last dream highlights his spiritual death which heralds his physical death by the end of the novel.

III.7. Direct Address to the Reader/Addressing the Reader as “you”:

Direct address to the reader / addressing the reader as “you” is the seventh narrative device that Greene employs in *The Heart of the Matter*. This device enables Greene to involve the reader in the experiences of the main characters and in whatever happens in the novel. This device is made use of in many places in the novel, but few examples would reveal how important this narrative technique is. In the second section of the novel, which is narrated from the point of view of Scobie, we are given this example about the smell of corruption which one smells once he is in the police station, which indicates the corruption that pervades in such places, “The place was scrubbed daily, but you could never eliminate the smell. Prisoners and policemen carried it in their clothing like cigarette smoke” (9). Here Greene relies on readers’ experiences and their attempts to get rid of bad smells – that of physical dirt – by normal methods of cleanliness, but such methods can never rid the smell – that of corruption – that Greene refers to here. Another example is, “Here intonations changed in the

course of a few months: became high-pitched and insincere, or flat and guarded. You could tell that Wilson was fresh from home” (41-2). Here Greene addresses the readers who can distinguish the intonation and the accent of the speaker and in this way can discover if he is sincere or not. Another example is, “They had been corrupted by money, and he had been corrupted by sentiment. Sentiment was the more dangerous, because you couldn’t name its price” (60). Here Greene addresses himself to the reader who can distinguish between these two types of people who are corrupted whether by money or sentiment. One last example, though there are many other examples in the novel, in which Greene, and Scobie as well, addresses himself directly to the reader, is, “Point me out the happy man and I will point you out either egotism, evil—or an absolute ignorance” (141). Here Greene addresses himself to the feelings as well as the experiences of the readers in order to make them realize that the outside happiness is not a true proof of real happiness since if everything is exposed, we will find out that no one is happy except those who are selfish and careless about the happiness of the other, contrary to the case of Scobie who always cares for the happiness of the other.

III.8. Comment:

Greene makes use of this narrative technique, comment, in order to highlight how the third-person omniscient narrator reacts towards what happens in the novel and towards what occurs to the characters throughout the novel. Besides, this device shows how the omniscient narrator is involved in the experiences of the characters, which makes him unable to refrain from reacting and meditating on what happens to them. Sometimes, comments are given from the point of view of characters, as happens with regard to Scobie: “He gave her a bright fake smile; so much of life was a putting off of unhappiness for another time. Nothing was ever lost by delay” (17), “He hated the name [Ticki] she had given him, but it always worked” (43). These comments reflect Scobie’s persistent and permanent attempts to make Louise, his wife, happy forgetting about his own happiness. Such comments indirectly expose the narrator’s sympathy with Scobie. Another type of comment that Greene employs in this novel is the one that is provided by the narrator at the beginning of certain sections, and then proceeds on to reveal the reason why for this comment. For example, at the outset of section five of the first chapter in the novel, the omniscient narrator gives this comment, “Scobie was later than he expected. It was the encounter with Yusef that delayed him” (30). After giving this comment, the narrator goes on to give a complete account of the accidental encounter that took place between Scobie and Yusef, a man he should not be seen with (30-5), which later complicates the events of the novel.

III.9. Interior Monologue:

Interior or internal monologue is the ninth narrative technique that Greene employs in the novel. Jeremy Hawthorn points out that this narrative device is used to represent “the unexpressed thoughts of a CHARACTER. Strictly speaking interior monologue, unlike the broader term STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS, applies when the words used to express the thoughts are those that the character is assumed to be using for thinking” (2001, 155). In addition to expressing the thoughts of the characters, Greene makes use of this device to expose the internal conflict that goes on inside the character and to shed light on the questions that characters cannot discuss openly. This narrative technique is used everywhere in the novel, from the outset to the end. Most of the main characters come to have their own internal thoughts that are expressed by means of these interior monologues. In the second section of the first chapter of book one of the novel, Scobie, who has been told that he is passed over for promotion, comes to feel pity for his wife, not for himself, and starts thinking in this way, “He thought to himself, poor Louise, if I had left it to her, where should we be now? and he admitted straight away that they wouldn’t be here—somewhere far better, better climate, better pay, better position. She would have taken every opening for improvement” (9). Scobie though dealt with unjustly feels pity for his wife since he sees himself a failure who is not

able to provide a better life for his wife by having a better position. What makes him think in such a way is his feeling of guilt and his sense of responsibility towards his wife. Scobie, who cares a lot about his wife's welfare, becomes angry when he overhears Fraser, an officer, describes her as "literary Louise" to other officers and comes to think in such a way, "They wouldn't even let her enjoy her books" (28). A little bit later, he thinks again in this way, "What are those others worth that they have the nerve to sneer at any human being?" and also "What right have you, he longed to exclaim, to criticise her? This is my doing. This is what I've made of her. She wasn't always like this" (29). This is the man who feels responsible for whatever happens to his wife and who never dispenses with this feeling to the last moment of his life. The novel abounds with many examples of interior monologues that reflect the conflict that disturbs the psyche and soul of the characters in their various relations with one another whether in fear, anger, hatred, sadness, despair, doubt, happiness or love of God: "Oh God, it's better than a millstone....I can't give her pain, and I can't go on giving you pain. Oh God, if you love me as I know you do, help me to leave you. Dear God, forget me" (322), and at the moment of his death he cries aloud, "Dear God, I love" (326), a cry in which Peter M. Sinclair correctly finds "an affirmation" of Scobie's love for God (2011, 140).

III.10. Free Indirect Discourse:

The tenth narrative technique that Greene makes use of in *The Heart of the Matter* is free indirect discourse, which is very similar to reported speech. A close reading of the novel shows that this device goes hand in hand with the previous device, interior monologue. The omniscient narrator, now and then, reports the thoughts of the characters. This is apparent in many examples in the novel; in such instances the narrator starts with an interior monologue and then goes on to report the thoughts of the character. After the Commissioner tells him that he is passed over for promotion, he sees an African girl at the police station. The natural beauty of this girl makes him think of the fifteen years he wasted in this West African colony without achieving a real success; "He thought: how beautiful she is. It was strange to think that fifteen years ago he would not have noticed her beauty—the small high breasts, the tiny wrists, the thrust of the young buttocks, she would have been indistinguishable from her fellows—a black. In those days he had thought his wife beautiful" (13). Another instance is the one given when Scobie thinks about how Louise really loves him, "poor dear, she loved him: she was someone of human stature with her own sense of responsibility, not simply the object of his care and kindness" (108). After Scobie meets Helen in the colony and becomes friends with her, she tells him of her previous life; this is reported in a quite long example of free indirect discourse (160, 161 & 162). This instance starts as follows, "she told him her school was on the downs just behind Seaport: they had a French mistress called Mlle Dupont who had a vile temper" (160). One more example of the many instances of free indirect discourse that the novel abounds with is the one given after a quarrel that occurs between Scobie and Helen. Here Scobie's interior monologue is changed into a free indirect discourse,

He thought: how much older she [Helen] is than she was a month ago. She hadn't been capable of a scene then, but she had been educated by love and secrecy: he was beginning to form her. He wondered whether if this went on long enough, she would be indistinguishable from Louise. In my school, he thought wearily, they learn bitterness and frustration and how to grow old. (213)

In the last example one observes how smoothly Greene makes use of two narrative techniques simultaneously – interior monologue and free indirect discourse – with the aim of delivering one essential message to the reader, that Scobie is a man who can never forget about his sense of responsibility. He always cares about the other, whether it is his wife or Helen. This feeling makes him earlier feel guilty for the change that has occurred to his wife and for the alienation and disappointment she suffers from. Here, again, he sees himself responsible for

the change that has happened to Helen, which makes her suffer a feeling of “bitterness and frustration”. In short, he is a man who always forgets about his own suffering and his own frustration, and who always cares about the others and their welfare.

IV. Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to undertake a close reading of Graham Greene’s *The Heart of the Matter* with the aim of highlighting its main themes and underscoring the method of narration and the narrative techniques employed in writing this novel. The close study and the detailed analysis of the novel show that Greene has succeeded, to a great extent, in presenting his vision through multiple perspectives. His use of the third-person omniscient narrator and the technique of the stream-of-consciousness in addition to his use of the narrative techniques – epigraph, description, dialogue, letters, diary, dreams, addressing the reader as “you” / direct address to the reader, comment, interior monologue, and free indirect discourse – have enabled him to convey his main message to the reader through various levels of perception. Greene’s use of these narrative techniques and the omniscient narrator has enabled him to give a concrete characterization of his characters and to present his main themes – loneliness, alienation and exile; responsibility and pity; love versus pity; despair and damnation; disintegration of character and faith; and finally sacrificing the self for the other – and to develop them in a way that enabled him to concretize his vision to the reader.

Throughout the novel, Greene highlights his main message that we are human beings who can be good or bad, not angels in a fallen world; we are somewhere between good and evil. That is why we should suspend our judgement of others’ deeds since we are not perfect. Besides we do not have perfect knowledge; our knowledge is limited and thus we cannot give a perfect judgement of others and their actions. Only God possess perfect knowledge, and thus it is up to Him to judge our human acts, whether they are good or evil. As for us, the human beings, we are just given the option to choose between what is good and what is evil, and because of our limited knowledge we often come to commit sins even though we do our best to choose doing whatever is good, as Scobie’s story shows. On the other hand, there are some who are saved by the limited knowledge they are given, as Father Rank’s case shows. Contrary to Louise, Father Rank, who is aware of his limited knowledge, suspends his judgement of Scobie’s acts. He even advises Louise to suspend her judgement of her dead husband when she describes him as “a bad Catholic” and suspects that he is not to be granted God’s mercy. He assures her that no one “know[s] a thing about God’s mercy” and that though the “Church knows all the rules” “it doesn’t know what goes on in a single human heart” (333). The novel opens with Wilson and Harris talking about the rumours said about Scobie’s actions; they end up by falsely judging him as a corrupt person who sleeps with black girls and takes bribes from Syrians. In a similar way, the novel comes to an end with Louise and Father Rank discussing Scobie’s suspected suicide, and end up by concluding that in spite of everything and though he might have committed suicide, he loved no one but God (334). In all cases, human beings’ knowledge, and that of the Church as well, is limited, and thus it is only up to God to judge and to forgive or not. Being ignorant of the extent to which God’s mercy can reach, we are not in a position to judge who can receive God’s mercy. For this reason, we should always trust in the mercy of God. Scobie’s mistake is that he did not have trust in God and in His mercy though he loved Him; this is what has led him to commit suicide to stop insulting God (316-17). Scobie commits his mortal sins out of an attempt to make others happy. However, the last chapter of the novel proves that he has failed in his attempt (327-334). Still, what consoles us, the readers, is that Scobie, at least, did try to make others happy by sacrificing himself for them.

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- [26] L.B. Thomson, *Graham Greene and the Politics of Popular Fiction and Film*, (2009), Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan.

ⁱ I build my argument in this paragraph on what is stated in *The Holy Quran* in “Surat al-Baqarah,” verses 30 – 38, and in the **Bible**, gospels 1 and 2.

ⁱⁱ At a certain point in the novel while giving Yusef a lift, Scobie comes to wonder about the reason why he “love[s] this place so much.” He wonders as follows:

Is it because here human nature hasn’t had time to disguise itself? Nobody here could ever talk about a heaven on earth. Heaven remained rigidly in its proper place on the other side of death, and on this side flourished the injustices, the cruelties, the meanness that elsewhere people so cleverly hushed up. Here you could love human beings nearly as God loved them, knowing the worst: you didn’t love a pose, a pretty dress, a sentiment artfully assumed. (33-34)

ⁱⁱⁱ Later Louise keeps asking Scobie to let her go to South Africa until he manages a passage for her. After happily spending a night at the club, and out of a sense that she “can’t bear it any longer here” (44), she again asks Scobie to “let [her] go away and begin again” (43) in South Africa where she can set up a new home and a new life for herself there and wait for him to come, whether in a “leave” or after his “retirement,” which was harder for him than death itself: “he always prayed that death would come first” (43). Anyway, Scobie eventually gives in to her wish and promises to do something about it (44). Later on at the time of her departure to South Africa, she comes to have this revealing dialogue with Scobie:

“Darling,” she said, “when this time is over, I’ll be good to you again. I just couldn’t stand this life any more.” (111)

...

“I’m an awful deserter.” [Louise]

“No, no. This isn’t the place for you.” [Scobie]

“It would have been different if they’d made you Commissioner.”

(115)

...

“Do you love me, Ticki?” (116)

...

“I love you Louise. Of course, it’s true.”

“If I can’t bear it down there alone, Ticki, I’ll come back.” (116)

(111, 115, 116, ellipsis mine)

This conversation reveals once more that she leaves this place because she cannot bear life in it anymore due to her feeling of being alienated in it and because of the injustice that Scobie suffered in it. However, according to what she says, what will make her come back to this same place again is loneliness, if suffered from in South Africa away from her husband.

^{iv} Later on, she makes use of the same argument and even the same words. Later, talking about what he has done with regard to her passage to South Africa and fearing that he would not do anything about it, she, while “crying dumbly,” tells him, “Ticki [Scobie], I can’t bear this place any longer. I know I’ve said it before, but I mean it this time. I shall go mad. Ticki, I’m so lonely. I haven’t a friend, Ticki” (63).

^v Later on, a doctor, who attends the reception of the survivors of the torpedoed ship at Pende, voices a similar viewpoint when he says to Scobie, “If you survive at all ... you get over it. It’s failure people don’t get over, and this you see is a kind of success” (131, *ellipsis mine*). The success he means here is the success of the survivors who were able to remain alive for “forty days in open boats” (131).