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God's Spies: A Study of the Theological Concepts of Evil and Grace in Spy Novels

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GOD'S SPIES: A STUDY OF THE THEOLOGICAL

CONCEPTS OF EVIL AND GRACE IN SPY NOVELS

(TITLE)

BY

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B.A., University of Michigan, 1947

THESIS

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YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

May 8, 1967
DATE

ADVISER

5 May 1967
DATE

DEPARTMENT HEAD

And we'll talk with them too,
Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out,
And take upon 's the mystery of things
As if we were God's spies.

The Tragedy of King Lear
Act V, Sc. 111

The theological concepts of evil and grace were frequently found in serious literature up until the twentieth century. The reader was expected to be familiar with these ideas, and to realize that the characters involved attained their success or went to their doom as a result of these fundamentally opposed spiritual realities.

In this age of skepticism and humanism, however, most major writers create characters whose central pre-occupation seems to be that they have nothing to hold onto--not even belief in God. Moral evil is still very much present, but moral or spiritual good, if present at all, is attributed to man himself--his "innate goodness," his "fundamental decency." Grace, in the sense of God's involvement in man's goodness, seems to have vanished.

Yet grace can still be found in modern literature, whatever the writer's intent, with or without the reader's awareness. It is my purpose to show that it can be found in a medium in which it might be least expected--the spy novel.

Grace is difficult to identify. Webster says it is "unmerited divine assistance given man for his

regeneration or sanctification."¹ The Catholic Encyclopaedia says it is "the means . . . to effect the redemption from sin through Christ, and to lead men to their eternal destiny in heaven."² Episcopal theologians define it as "the help of God, His favor toward us, and His power given to us, so that we may fulfill His will and live acceptably before Him . . . in fact, grace is God's love in action."³

Grace is a keynote to the understanding of Shakespeare's tragedies. G. R. Elliott says,

The doctrine of Grace had a very special fascination for Shakespeare. His allusions to it, explicit and implicit, are innumerable. We may believe that for him as man it represented the essence of Christianity. We can be certain that for him as writer it pointed to a truth fundamental for human life, and hence for vital poetry and drama. Grace in his view was less a Christian dogma than a human experience, an experience affording the greatest of all the contrasts that constitute the warp and woof of drama. A contrast is intensely dramatic in proportion as it comprises things radically different from each other, yet clearly related. And for Shakespeare the ultimate contrast was provided by Grace and Nature--by the spectacle of a divinely human will working in, through and above our humanly defective wills.⁴

¹Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1965).

²Catholic Encyclopaedia (New York: Robert Appleton Co.), VI (1909), 689.

³James A. Pike and W. Norman Pittenger, The Faith of the Church (Greenwich, Conn.: Seabury Press, 1951), p. 144.

⁴G. R. Elliott, Dramatic Providence in Macbeth (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. ix.

Grace perhaps is best seen in its relationship to evil. I am concerned here only with moral evil, or what is called in the Judeo-Christian tradition, sin, and the suffering that results from sin. Physical evil, the result of natural catastrophes like earthquake, fire, plague pestilence or famine, I exclude from consideration.

For purposes of this paper, evil shall be regarded as selfishness, self-centeredness, self-concern, or what theologians call original sin. From this premise, I conclude that either an awareness of this human failing in oneself as evil, or a genuine concern for others, is a manifestation of God's grace. When a character reveals a spark of humanity or divinity, "in a world which seeks to reduce him to a mechanism, or a mere thing,"⁵ (here seen to be the world of espionage,) grace will be assumed to have aided him.

It is important to note that this view links the concept of grace inextricably with the concept of evil. It is also important that by this definition grace, i.e., awareness of evil in oneself, can exist without awareness of grace in oneself.

The spy novel now rivals the murder mystery as the bedside reading of our day, and is usually read

⁵Cleanth Brooks, The Hidden God (New Haven: Yale Press, 1963), p. 6.

only in the expectation of entertainment. It has several standard ingredients. One, of course, is a spy, who, according to Webster, "acts in a clandestine manner or on false pretenses, to obtain information in the zone of operations of a belligerent with the intention of communicating it to the hostile party."⁶ This leads to an assumption of sides: the "good side" the hero is working for, and the "bad side" he is spying on. Plot, action, speed, artifice, and clear motivation are desirable. Another part of the fascination of spy stories seems to be the Robinson Crusoe element--man alone in hostile territory, dependent on his own resources for survival.

James Bond, the famous spy created by Ian Fleming, is the apotheosis of the spy novel's protagonists, and he combines a formula of "sex, sadism, and pseudosophistication."⁷ Few people are likely to consider either James Bond or his medium as theological.

Within this unlikely genre, however, there are some novels in which the conflict between evil and grace is still present, with or without the intent of the author. I shall attempt to show, by examining works of three twentieth-century writers, how evil and grace still

⁶Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary,
op. cit.

⁷Granville Hicks, "Literary Horizons," Saturday Review, XLVIII, No. 30 (July 24, 1965), 39.

operate, how "sides" become blended and juxtaposed, even disappear altogether, and how good, if it triumphs, does so through the grace of God, working through what Graham Greene calls shabby, human, mediocre individuals."⁸

Joseph Conrad, who wrote perhaps the first English novels about spies, was preoccupied with evil. He had an ethical, rather than religious or theological vision, however. His religion has been characterized by a life long friend and critic:

Man could not apprehend the nature of the Cosmos. Explanations of Christianity and other organized religions he's rejected long before he began to write. The existence of a primum mobile he could find no evidence for. He was left with a view of the world as a dramatic spectacle rather than an ethical process, whose essential character was mysterious, baffling and inscrutable, which sometimes made sense and often did not, which was outside morality and theology, and which could not be overcome by mere application of human intelligence or will.⁹

Conrad cannot be said to be writing in the framework of any established dogma. In his first spy novel, The Secret Agent, his preoccupation with evil allows not a glimmer of grace, and his characters are impelled to their dooms by their own selfish concerns. Under Western Eyes, however, is a different matter. In it, the concept of grace shines through strongly.

⁸Graham Greene, Ministry of Fear (New York: Viking Press, 1952), p. 31.

⁹Leo Gurko, Giant in Exile (New York: MacMillan, 1962), pp. 190-191.

Razumov, the protagonist, is a lonely man with no family, no ties, and no connections. As Leavis says,

He is wholly bent on his career and we are told characteristically,

'There was nothing strange in the student Razumov's wish for distinction. A man's real life is that accorded to him in the thoughts of other men by reason of respect or natural love.'¹⁰

He is, then, a highly self-centered individual. This does not mean that he is self sufficient. He aims to study hard, win the silver medal, and become a celebrated professor--a somebody. He is concentrating on himself and his ambitions, but the satisfaction of these will be achieved through the recognition of others.

To do this, he feels he cannot afford to take sides in the revolutionary struggle in Russia. When he finds the revolutionist Haldin in his room seeking protection, he deeply resents the forced end of his neutrality.

No individual so deeply committed to self can be God-centered. Razumov is suffering from pride, putting himself and his will before all else. Indeed he feels no need of God, finds it unbelievable, and most disturbing, when Haldin professes faith in Him.

Razumov must decide whether to protect Haldin, and become involved with the revolutionists, or betray

¹⁰F. R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday), p. 266.

him to the authorities. This decision is described in unmistakably religious terms.

Razumov stood on the point of conversion . . . Like other Russians before him, Razumov, in conflict with himself, felt the touch of grace upon his forehead.¹¹

The conversion, however is to Czarist Russia rather than to God. A touch of God's grace might have led to the inescapable conclusion that his obligation was to help a fellow human being in distress, a concept older than its description in the parable of the good samaritan. He chooses preservation of Russia, and hence preservation of self.

And am I who love my country--who have nothing but that to love and put my faith in--am I to have my future, perhaps my usefulness, ruined by this sanguinary fanatic?¹²

Thus he betrays Haldin, and is sent to spy on the revolutionists in Geneva. There he meets Haldin's sister, Natalia. Still deeply resentful of Haldin's causing him to be placed in the position he is in, he plans revenge on her, simply because she is Haldin's sister. He says later in his journal,

I was given up to evil . . . I believed that I had nothing but an inexhaustible fund of anger and hate for you both . . . I shall steal his sister's soul

¹¹ Joseph Conrad, Under Western Eyes, (Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1963), p. 27.

¹² Ibid.

from her . . . I returned to look at you every day and drink in your presence the poison of my infamous intention.¹³

Only at this point does the grace of God become apparent. Far from gaining revenge on Haldin through his sister, he falls in love with her. Finding himself with the capacity for love has a devastating effect on Razumov. It sends him into complete despair. He cannot play the masquerade any longer.

Whenever he went abroad, he felt himself at once closely involved in the moral consequences of his act.¹⁴

He is "like a man totally abandoned by providence-- desolate."¹⁵ He is compelled to confess, not only to Natalia but to the revolutionists as well. This is not to claim that he acknowledges grace, but he does think about God often.

I have the greatest difficulty in saving myself from the superstition of an active providence. It's irresistible . . .¹⁶

he tells Natalia.

'It's lucky I don't believe in another world,' he thought cynically.¹⁷

And after his confession,

'Yes, I am washed clear.'¹⁸

surely one of the most symbolic of Christian terms.

¹³Ibid., pp. 301-302.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 252.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 295.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 286.

¹⁸Ibid.

Why, one asks, is not the confession to Natalia enough for Razumov? Why must he confess to the revolutionists too? The only satisfactory answer lies in the concept of penance. Penance may consist of interior repentance, with a purpose of amendment for the future, or the term may designate imposed or inflicted punishment from an outside source. It is this which Razumov seems to be seeking when he confesses to the revolutionists. He is indeed punished: first deafened, then nearly killed in an accident. Yet even the revolutionists forgive him, and Tekla, a "good Samaritan by an irresistible vocation", takes care of him for the rest of his days.

Razumov is one of Conrad's most moral heroes. It is not his moral concepts which bring about his despair, confession, penance and forgiveness, however, but love, to him who had never known love. Love, the true concern for someone outside the self, a manifestation of grace, brings about his final peace.

Graham Greene, unlike Conrad, is a writer who is a committed Christian and a member of the Roman Catholic Church. Francis L. Kunkel says of him,

Greene says it would embarrass him to discuss the ideas underlying his novels because in the act of writing he is carried along by the unpredictable energies of his characters rather than by desire to express his thoughts about the problems besetting mankind, though in Greene these problems

derive from his central preoccupations, grace, sin and the flesh.¹⁹

Many of Greene's novels, therefore, are specifically concerned with evil and grace, and deliberately so. However, he has also written what he calls "entertainments", a term selected purposefully to set them apart from his more serious fiction. As A. A. DeVitis says,

The entertainments may indicate the religious and ethical problems, but these are second to the plot, action and melodrama that distinguish the thriller type . . . Greene is a writer with a profound sense of evil in the world. His novels deal primarily with the fall of man; his entertainments deal with man, perhaps fallen, perhaps not--²⁰

In at least one of Greene's entertainments, Confidential Agent, there is the same fallen man we have seen in Conrad. Like Razumov, D. (he is given only an initial) is alone, in despair, a victim of a country torn by civil war. He is not a young student, but a middle-aged scholar. He has become, by the time the novel opens, committed to one side, from some vague principle that it is "of the people." His wife has been killed by the other side, and he finds the only way he can live is to try to be past all feeling.

¹⁹Robert O. Evans, Ed., Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations (Lexington: U. of Kentucky Press, 1963), p. 237.

²⁰A. A. DeVitis, Graham Greene (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964), pp. 52-53.

D. is sent by his side to England to negotiate with British mine-owners for badly needed coal. In the pursuit of this task he encounters all the perilous situations and violence expected from the other side. He is in such despair he does not even fight back. He is forced to entrust his identity papers to the care of the young girl at the boarding house where his side has sent him. Because she keeps them, she is killed by the manageress of the boarding house, whom D. had assumed to be on his side. He is therefore alone against the whole world. Not only does the other side ruthlessly pursue him, but his own side betrays him. Not only is the reader unable to distinguish between sides--the protagonist cannot either.

Greene denies D. a belief in God.

If you believed in God you could leave punishment to Him. But he hadn't that particular faith. Unless people received their deserts the world to him was chaos, he was faced with despair.²¹

However, as a result of the murder of this young woman, D. begins to feel again. He begins to feel pity--the emotion Greene is preoccupied with, and which he claims can be corrosive. Pity leads D. to strength--he begins to fight back and finally becomes the pursuer instead of the pursued.

²¹Graham Greene, Confidential Agent (New York: Viking Press, 1939), p. 32.

He doesn't get his coal, but neither does the other side. He does get the coal mine-owner's daughter, in a very contrived twist of plot. Yet the fact is not obscured that the young girl, her pitiful appreciation of his kindnesses, and the sacrifice she makes for him, move him to respond with feeling to something outside himself, and thus bring about his salvation. Pity, which leads D. out of the complete separation from God known as despair, is the emotion inspired by grace, which leads him to living again.

The Quiet American is in Greene's terms a "novel", and as such Greene imposes stricter limitations in it than in his entertainments. The setting is Viet Nam in 1956, when the French are fighting the Viet Minh. The protagonist is Thomas Fowler, a British newspaperman who, like D. is represented as being beyond feeling. Unlike Razumov and D., however, he is not in despair, but is represented as being contented, living in comfort with his mistress, Phueng, covering the war for his paper in the daytime and smoking his opium pipe in the evening. Fowler is the only one of the heroes of Greene's novels who is not a Roman Catholic; he is an existentialist who appeals at times to "a God in whom I did not believe."

Into this halcyon situation comes the "quiet American," Pyle, who assumes that he knows all about what to do about Viet Nam from reading books about it at

Harvard. He is quiet, modest, innocent, but completely convinced that what is needed is a "Third Force" led by a General Tho, who has taken to the hills to fight both sides. Pyle is represented as being employed by the Economic Aid Mission, but Fowler is suspicious. "Perhaps I should have seen that fanatic gleam," he says.²²

Pyle and Fowler meet on a trip to the war zone, and Pyle saves Fowler's life, causing Fowler to feel an obligation which he resents. When Phuong leaves Fowler for Pyle, who can promise her marriage, which Fowler, who has a wife in England, cannot, the resentment is intensified.

Then he discovers that Pyle, under the guise of "Economic Aid", is in reality an agent for one of America's intelligence agencies, and is aiding General Tho's side in the manufacture of plastic bombs. Even though one of these goes off in the square, killing many women and children instead of the parade of military it was supposed to demolish, Fowler cannot get Pyle to see the brutality resulting from his meddling.

He betrays Pyle to the Communists, who plan to kill him, yet he does so reluctantly, saying,

²²Graham Greene, The Quiet American (New York: Bantam Books, 1964), p. 17.

'I handed back the decision to that somebody in whom I didn't believe; you can intervene if you want to--a telegram on his desk; a message from the Minister.'²³

That "somebody in whom he doesn't believe" does not intervene, and Pyle is killed. At the end of the book, Fowler's life is in most respects back at the point where Pyle came in. Phuong has returned to him, and his wife was even agreed to divorce him. If this were an entertainment, Greene might have ended it at that. Yet Fowler's last sentence is,

'Everything had gone right with me since he had died, but how I wished there existed someone to whom I could say that I was sorry.'²⁴

Where is God's grace in this serious novel about spies and sides by a writer who is a committed Christian? D. in the Confidential Agent is filled with despair, and is moved through pity to thinking, feeling, and caring again. Fowler is not despairing, but wants to be past all feeling. When he finds himself feeling pity for a wounded man, he says,

'I know myself and the depth of my selfishness. I cannot be at ease (and to be at ease is my chief wish) if someone else is in pain. . . Sometimes this is mistaken by the innocent for unselfishness, when all I am doing is sacrificing a small good--in this case postponement in attending to my hurt--for the sake of a far

²³Ibid., p. 173.

²⁴Ibid., p. 183.

greater good, a peace of mind, when I need think only of myself.'²⁵

He does care for Phuong, but only because she satisfies his creature comforts. However, the sufferings of innocent women and children in the bombing which Pyle has engineered produce more reaction in him than he has anticipated, and his indignation at Pyle's indifference-- "He was impregnable, armoured by his good intentions and his ignorance--" leads him to betrayal of Pyle.

'Unlike them (the mourners of the dead in the bombing) I had reason for thankfulness, for wasn't Phuong alive? Hadn't Phuong been warned? But what I remembered was the torso in the square, the baby on its mother's lap. They had not been warned; they had not been sufficiently important . . . A two hundred-pound bomb does not discriminate.'²⁶

This reaction comes against Fowler's will. Even more against his will come the guilt and pain he feels at Pyle's death.

Fowler has been moved by grace to a feeling of responsibility and guilt, even as Razumov, but by the end of the book he has come only as far as admitting the need to confess, rather than the actual contrition. The response of feeling to someone outside himself is the beginning, the guilt is the middle, and the end is not yet. Fowler will never again be "at ease" until it is reached, for grace has worked in him despite himself.

²⁵Ibid., p. 107.

²⁶Ibid., p. 158.

Conrad and Greene are recognized major novelists whom we may reasonably expect to deal with larger themes, even in spy novels. The writer whose book I shall deal with next is by no means recognized as major, and his novels have not yet received more than sporadic critical acclaim. I hope to show, however, that it is work of greater significance than the usual paperback thriller, with as many overtones of the basic concepts of evil and grace as are shown by Conrad and Greene.

In 1963, an unknown author, writing under the pseudonym of John LeCarre, published a novel called The Spy Who Came in from the Cold. It was acclaimed by Graham Greene as the best spy story he had ever read, and the Atlantic Monthly said in its review,

Not only is it spellbinding as a thriller; it also has the power and depth of a serious novel because it explores the conflict of individual motives and organizational habits among the men who are doing the dirtiest and riskiest jobs of the cold war.²⁷

Alec Leamas, the protagonist, is the antithesis of James Bond. He is an aging British agent who is given one last assignment before retirement--the elimination of his formidable East German opponent, Mundt. To accomplish this he has to pose as a has-been who is ripe for defection to the Communists. In his role as a penniless

²⁷Wm. Barrett, "Reader's Choice", Atlantic Monthly, CCXIII, No. 3 (March, 1964), 166.

and friendless ex-agent, he takes a job in a library, where he meets a young Jewish girl, Liz Gold. She is a Communist party member, and although Leamas knows this, they become lovers. He is forced to send her away, however, and upon being approached by East German agents, pretends to defect.

In the course of his interrogation in Holland and East Germany, Leamas manages to deliberately indicate that Mundt has been an agent of the British, while at the same time denying that he could have been. His interrogator is Mundt's underling, Fiedler, described as "the acolyte who will one day stab the high priest in the back."²⁸ Leamas's job is to give him the weapon to destroy Mundt and encourage him to use it.

Mundt realizes the implications of this and has both imprisoned. Fiedler manages to present his evidence of Mundt's guilt to the Praesidium, and all are called to appear before a tribunal at which Mundt is on trial. Not until Liz appears, having been enticed to East Germany by treachery, and inadvertently exposes Leamas, does Leamas understand the situation: Mundt has really been a British agent all along, and Fiedler, who had begun to suspect the truth about his superior, is really the British target. Leamas has been the pawn.

²⁸John LeCarre, The Spy Who Came in From the Cold, (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1963), p. 110.

Under British orders, Mundt allows Leamas and Liz to escape from the prison and has them taken to East Berlin, where they are instructed how to get over the wall. Liz, however, is shot down, presumably on Mundt's orders, before she reaches the top. Leamas, at the top, climbs back down beside her and is killed too. Fiedler, having been convicted of being the British agent Mundt actually is, will be shot by his own side.

Both in its portrayal of the aging, disillusioned spy, literally sick to death of the inhumanity of the profession, and in the "double double cross"²⁹ at the end this book has become a classic of a sort.

There is a great deal of discussion of "sides" in this book. Because the book is topical, the reader is tempted to identify with the British side, justifying it, as Leamas's superior does,

'You can't be less ruthless than the opposition, simply because your government's policy is benevolent . . . After all you can't compare the ideals of one side with the methods of the other, can you now?'³⁰

The refrain that "both sides are alike, you know" is repeated often, but only by the German Jewish Communist, Fiedler, and the British Jewish Communist,

²⁹Barrett, op. cit., p. 186.

³⁰LeCarre, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

Liz, both of whom feel the need to defend their choice of Marxism. Leamas is angry, hurt and betrayed by his own side, but can still find reasons to attack Communism... "I never heard that the Communists preached the sanctity of human life."³¹

Grace in Leamas is indicated in the title of the book. Coming in from the cold has a double meaning in this context--it means both retirement and the ability to feel sympathy again. From the start, Leamas is suspected by his superior of being worn down by the inhumanity of his profession, and when accused of this he has a vision of innocent refugees being bombed. Another time he was so shaken by a near-miss automobile accident in which four children were involved that for a time he could no longer drive, and he has a vision of this when he is shot down at the end. Therefore, we are not completely unprepared when his love for Liz turns out to be so genuine that he will not return to the West without her, choosing to sacrifice his life instead. Leamas exemplifies the action of grace working within him both in the awareness of his own guilt, and in his final selfless act.

³¹Ibid., p. 213.

EPILOGUE

In 1966 Anthony Burgess, a prolific English contemporary author of note, published a spy novel. Called Tremor of Intent, it was proclaimed by the author as an "eschatological spy novel," and the term eschatology was defined on the dust jacket as "The term theologians--and theological writers--use to designate the ultimate realities; God, the Devil, Hell, Heaven." We may assume, therefore, in the investigation of this novel that if evil and grace are present as opposing forces, it is with the avowed intent of the author.

Burgess has done his spy novel homework well. His protagonist, Denis Hillier, is an aging spy on his last assignment before retirement, like Leamas. He is a fallen-away Roman Catholic, like Greene's heroes. He even has two "chronic diseases," as he calls them, "gluttony and satyriasis," obviously inherited from James Bond. He is, as reviewer Saul Maloff says,

. . . a stock figure--a deliberate mock-up of elements out of LeCarre, Fleming and Graham Greene.³²

Like Ragunov, he is difficult to convince of any wrongdoing on "his side"; England is his country and he is loyal to it.

³²Saul Maloff, "Sin Was a Chronic Disease", Saturday Review, XLIX, No. 44 (October 29, 1966), 32.

The plot concerns Hillier's last mission--a trip to Russia to retrieve a scientist named Roper³³ who had defected. Hillier and Roper had been friends at the Catholic college they had attended years before. Most of the characterization of both is shown in Hillier's "retrospective preamble"³⁴ which begins the book. Roper, in college, had had an inquiring scientific mind and had delighted in challenging the priests with questions:

"Does Christ reside in the molecules themselves, or only in the molecules organized into bread?"³⁵

Nearing graduation, he is described as being "full and empty at the same time. He was growing out of boyhood into thinghood, not manhood--a highly efficient artifact crammed with non-human knowledge."³⁶

During the war he had married a German girl who convinced him that England was to blame for World War II and Germany only trying to save Europe. After she left him to become a prostitute, he was thrown into "a great empty pit where nothing was to

³³Both Hillier and Roper have been described as allegorical names. See preceding footnote.

³⁴Naomi Bliven, "Books," The New Yorker (February 11, 1967), p. 159.

³⁵Anthony Burgess, Tremor of Intent (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1966), p. 10.

³⁶Ibid., p. 13.

be trusted any more, where there was no belief in anything."³⁷

Hillier had followed the "literary intellectual"³⁸ route, and has become an expert in Slavonic languages; hence his path to spydom. He knows he cannot bring Roper back with moral persuasion or with money, only with drugs. Facing this task, he says only a large retirement bonus could have convinced him to attempt to play "such a mean trick on a friend."³⁹

Hillier's religion is indicated as conventional Catholicism. He believes in Original Sin, which he defines as "People tend to choose the worse way rather than the better."⁴⁰ He also says, however, "Ah, what a bloody Manichaean mess life is,"⁴¹ and frequently refers to the forces of light and the forces of darkness, so that we know he tends more than a little toward that ancient heresy. In his disguise as Jagger, the expert in typewriters, on the cruise ship he takes to Russia to retrieve Roper, he describes himself "as functional as a spy and as dehumanized."⁴²

³⁷Ibid., p. 14.

³⁸C. P. Snow's term, as distinguished from the scientific, in The Two Cultures (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1959).

³⁹Burgess, op. cit., p. 50.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 48.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 22.

⁴²Ibid., p. 164.

New characters are introduced on shipboard-- a precocious thirteen-year-old quiz kid, Alan, and his sixteen-year-old sister, Clara; Mr. Theodorescu, a neutral agent who collects information and sells it to the highest bidder; his companion, Miss Devi, a beautiful Tamil; Wriste, the helpful steward. Hillier falls victim to Miss Devi's seductive powers and is drugged into giving Theodorescu information. Once in Russia he finds Roper at an international scientific conference, and has the trouble he anticipated in trying to persuade Roper to go back to England. While they are arguing, Wriste, the surprise villain, appears sans disguise, and threatens to shoot them both. He informs them that neither side wants either of them. Hillier "knows too much to be let loose into retirement,"⁴³ and as for Roper--"Scientists, like poets, mature early and decay early."⁴⁴

Alan, the young boy, interrupts the execution scene and shoots Wriste, allowing Hillier, after a fantastic job of disguising the dead steward as himself, to escape. Roper refuses to leave, saying that Russia is home. Hillier realizes he himself now has no home to go to.

⁴³Ibid., p. 164.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 165.

Hillier has one last act to perform--revenge on Theodorescu. While approaching this task later in Istanbul, he "noted the tremor of intent in his fingers." Theodorescu goes to his doom in another bizarre episode of serum, truth and truth serum. Hillier, presumed dead now on both sides in the person of Wriste's corpse, goes to Ireland and becomes a Catholic priest.

The indications of grace which Burgess seems to give Hillier are many. He is a Catholic and conscious of sin. He admits to two, and wishes to be rid of them, but, like St. Augustine, not yet. He feels guilt at having to "play a mean trick" on Roper. Even his falling in love with the sixteen-year-old Clara is supposed to be caused by an awareness of sin, since he thinks she will be his regeneration. He feels the "tremor of intent" from guilt when he has to kill, and he finds a home at last in the priesthood.

It would seem, then, that the genres of espionage and eschatology have finally met intentionally and successfully. As a spy novel, this book succeeds on more levels than most. It is excellently entertaining. It has humor - something lacking in the other books we have seen. It succeeds best as a gigantic spoof--if widely enough read, it could do to the genre what Don Quixote did to the literature of chivalry. But it fails on the

level at which it is proclaimed to be serious--the eschatological level. This failure is in reality two related failures on two associated levels. Mr. Burgess's characters are not human--they are caricatures, and fake men have fake Gods. The characters are used so painstakingly as cardboard figures to present theological ideas that their ideas cease to have meaning and become in themselves cardboard. The figure of the young boy, Alan, a quiz kid who also knows all about guns and intervenes like God at just the right moment, is patently ridiculous. Theodorescu, the mock-up of a greedy and gluttonous neutral, is super-human in some scenes, sub-human in others, but never real, nor is Miss Devi, a love goddess descended from the sirens. Least convincing of all is Hillier's spectacular conversion to the priesthood. Even after this he insists on the Manichee line, and says,

If we're going to save the world
we shall have to use unorthodox doctrines
as well as unorthodox methods. Don't you
think we'd all rather see devil worship
than bland neutrality?⁴⁵

This makes the reader wonder which Catholic order would accept him--certainly not the Dominicans.

As the New Republic reviewer said,

⁴⁵Lawrence Graver, "House of Burgesses," New Republic, CLV, No. 16 (October 15, 1966), 25.

The ideas come on too casually and are never given sufficient articulation. Since the people fail to rise above caricatures, their assertions are all so much intellectual ballast.⁴⁶

Thus we have the phenomenon of contrasts: spy novels which do not claim to be oriented in theological concepts, do, in fact, offer clear manifestations of evil and grace. A spy novel which proclaims itself to be eschatological is found to be hollow.

But the object of this paper has been in both circumstances supported: the concepts of evil and grace, or the concept of evil-and-grace, may be found in that non-theological genre, the twentieth century spy novel.

⁴⁶Ibid.

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