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THE MYTH OF THE QUESTING HERO IN TWO TRAVEL BOOKS
BY GRAHAM GREENE AND ROBERT BYRON

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

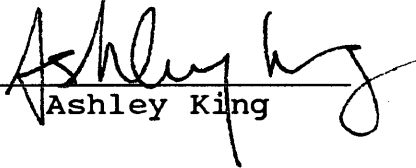
Ashley King

1988

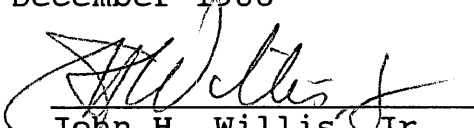
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts


Ashley King

Approved, December 1988


John H. Willis, Jr.


John Conlee


David Jenkins

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes and compares two travel books of the 1930's as literary narratives structured by the archetypes and plot of the myth of the questing hero. The books are Robert Byron's First Russia, Then Tibet (1936), and Graham Greene's Journey Without Maps (1933).

Paul Fussell's Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between The Wars, which defines the travel book genre as a literary form, is used as a starting place from which to explicate the two books. This thesis argues that Fussell's idea that some travel books are partially fictionalized is correct, and that furthermore, Greene and Byron have fictionalized their travel experiences in similar ways by using the structures of the myth of the questing hero. Critical sources include Joseph Campbell's The Hero with a Thousand Faces and Northrop Frye's work on the use of myth in western literature.

The two narratives are analyzed in terms of the way they conform to the structure of the mythic hero's tri-partite journey which includes: Separation, Trials and Adventures, and Return. The stages of the two journeys are compared with each other and with the stages of the hero's journey as variously defined by Frye and Campbell.

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In his book Abroad Paul Fussell established that many travel books written between the wars (1918-1939) are a part of a literary genre deserving greater recognition. Fussell makes the distinction between travel guide books, which are intended as suggestions for tourists to follow, and what he prefers to call travel books, which may contain elements of the novel, romance, picaresque tale, parable, the moral essay, the historical eye-witness account, or the religious quest myth. Classification difficulties often prevent them from being taken seriously as literature.

In addition to defining the genre, Fussell also provides a canon, identifying five writers whose books are the finest examples of the genre. They are D.H. Lawrence, Norman Douglas, Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, and, virtually unknown in the U.S., Robert Byron. Abroad amply

demonstrates the literary importance of travel books. Fussell devotes the most text to Greene's and Byron's work. Abroad contains a number of sections that provide literary criticism and interpretation of some of the works of each of the writers. However, since travel books potentially fit into so many different literary genres, there are a correspondingly large number of ways of explicating them. Often, Fussell's interpretations are more suggestive than conclusive.

Because of limited space this paper cannot attempt to prove Fussell's thesis. A greater selection of travel books would be necessary. My purpose in this paper is to explicate and analyze two travel books written by two authors who are arguably the most important travel writers of the 1930s. I will proceed from a structuralist perspective grounded in the assumption that although human narratives are heterogeneous, there exist only a small number of universal narrative structures or myths. These myths have always been in use by fiction writers (Frye, Creation and Recreation, 1980). In the case of the travel books, this study concludes that the questing hero myth constitutes their hermeneutic structure. This myth operates as a grammar that orders the relationship between narrative elements in the two travel books. Further, the myth serves to elevate the books above simple adventure

stories. It informs the books with a transcendent and universal significance for the reader.

I believe that the quest myth structures Graham Greene's Journey Without Maps (1936) and Robert Byron's First Russia, Then Tibet (1933). The quest myth is what Northrop Frye calls a "displaced myth" (i.e. a myth used in a modern and secular context) (Fussell, p. 15). The informing power of this structure allows the two books to be understood on two levels. They may be interpreted as historical documents reflective of the spiritual quests of their time, and as examples of man's universal quest for self-knowledge.

As Frye writes in Creation and Recreation, "it is only when a myth is accepted as an imaginative story that it is really believed in. As a story, a myth becomes a model of human experience and its relation to that experience becomes a confronting and present experience" (p. 29). Thus, a myth is more than a popular artifact or just "a culturally early narrative" (p. 27). Using myth is a natural thing for a writer to do when confronted by amorphous experience. "It is out of the story patterns contained in such a mythology that literature develops" (p. 28). I want to argue that both Greene and Byron use myth deliberately as a method of producing a narrative out of travel experiences.

With Abroad as a point of departure I will examine the two books as travel literature structured by the "displaced myth" of the questing hero. Further, I would like to argue that the goal of the search in the two books is the same: spiritual renewal through the medium of the journey. As Greene writes, he wants "to discover if one can from what we have come, to discover at what point we went astray" (p. 10). Byron enlarges this sentiment in his introduction, entitled "The Traveller's Confession:" "I would discover what ideas, if those of the West be inadequate, can be found to guide the world" (p. 12). By using a familiar myth to structure their experiences abroad, Greene and Byron are able to turn journal notes full of challenging but chaotic experiences (Greene's African diary was published as In Search of a Character in 1961) into stories with satisfyingly familiar plots and exotic enough details to please the armchair traveler.

Outline of the Questing Hero Myth

The questing hero myth structures the religious journey of the hero (as exemplified in the subtitle of Pilgrim's Progress) into three steps: "The manner of his setting out; His Dangerous Journey; and Safe Arrival at the Desired Country." As Fussell notes "the first and last stages of the tripartite experience tend to be moments of heightened ritual or magic, even in entirely

'secular' travel writings" (p. 208). I have renamed these three categories: 1) leave-taking and separation, 2) quest, and 3) return. The first stage includes feelings of depression and alienation and the crossing of the first threshold into the other world. During the quest itself, guides are sought and texts are consulted, and trials are endured. When the traveler or hero returns, he finds that gifts of power and knowledge have been bestowed upon him.

The shape of the journey is circular, from home back to home, a place the author initially wants to leave. The first place visited on the journey is a distilled version of the home just left. Once he gets to the other country, the traveler encounters a new physical and spiritual landscape and experiences trials that change the way he sees the world. He encounters an axis mundi or a kind of center of the earth, which marks the climax of the journey. When he returns he is able to see home in a new way, usually in the positive context of the new experience (Creation and Recreation, p. 35).

Description of The Two Books

First Russia, Then Tibet

Robert Byron travels to Moscow determined to discover if it is really the place of a great new social experiment. Instead, he is repulsed by materialist dogma and saddened by the state's attempts to replace

traditional religion with the worship of the state. The Soviets preach materialism to Byron, and he preaches his creed of individualism to the reader. He leaves for Tibet.

The bridge between his Russian trip and the Tibetan one is a plane journey. The chapter entitled "The Air Mail" chronicles a trip from the modern ordinary world of London through western culture's fluorescence, adolescence and finally its infancy. It is the perfect transition to Tibet.

Tibet takes Byron further back in time to an alien place completely outside the orbit of European ideas, yet strangely familiar. In the "Celestial Empire," as he calls it, the travelers endure pain and physical danger that climaxes at 14,000 feet in a world run by monks that seems wholly devoted to religious life. Byron begins his story by lampooning the Dalai Lama, but the trials he endures make him reassess Tibetan religious culture, which represses individualism as much as the Soviet state. By the end of the book he realizes that there is some value in cultural homogeneity and coherence, and he writes with great respect of Tibet's religious traditions.

Journey Without Maps

Graham Greene's Journey without Maps describes his journey into the wilderness of Liberia and Sierra Leone. Like First Russia, Then Tibet, it is divided into a

tripartite structure. However, the continuous narrative and fewer digressions make it more novelistic. As Greene progresses into the interior of Africa, civilization falls away in stages, first at an Anglican mission in the bush and climaxing in a high remote village ringed by mountains and green lightning. The arduousness of the trek teaches him to trust the natives and to rely on his instincts. Various figures appear in the landscape and guide him to geographical points as well as to new psychological perspectives. The journey enables him to see that good and bad are comingled in human nature. Although he manages to get used to Liberia, he realizes that England is home, and that life is worth living during his "conversion experiences." He also sees that the primitive, the Heart of Darkness, is everywhere.

Part One, Leave-taking and Separation

Alienation from Home and Abroad

The heroic quest begins with a profound sense of estrangement from familiar surroundings. Inward journeys are outward journeys and the spiritual homelessness of the hero foreshadows the departure from the homeland. Both Byron and Greene experience deep depression upon leaving England and a condition of intellectual and moral

isolation from European civilization during the early stages of their travel.

In the chapter entitled "Nowhere To Go," Fussell cites the war as a major cause of wanderlust in the general British populace, but especially for writers. For four years, three months, and seven days, the average citizen was forbidden to leave Britain because of the Defense of the Realm Acts of 1914 and 1915. Fuel shortages limited even domestic travel, which meant that most people stayed home in underheated houses for the duration of the war. Fussell calls the diaspora of British writers all over the world a symptom of literary modernism, but he also sees it as a response to the "decay of imaginative and intellectual possibility corresponding to the literal loss of physical freedom" (p. 10). Fussell provides literary evidence and historical documents from the period between the wars to show that the hideous experience of either spending the war stuck in a stifling island country, or in the trenches afraid for one's life, seemed equally compelling arguments for escaping abroad. In another chapter entitled "I Hate it Here," he outlines the disgust and alienation felt by many people who fled Britain after the war. At this time, writers suddenly began to depict Britain as, a repressive, grey, damp place strangled by the class system, in which the pubs closed far too early. Fussell calls this feeling "new and

recognizably 'post-war'" (p. 15). He quotes Robert Graves's declaration "I went abroad, resolved never to make England my home again," as typical of the travel writers' sentiments. Byron and Greene are two writers who continued to live in England although they spent years abroad. Although they ultimately became less disaffected than writers like Graves, both authors begin their books by describing a feeling of gloom or alienation.

For Byron, being an alien in Russia is an exhilarating experience, although he feels great hostility there. The foreigner, "be he ever so filled with a love of humanity in general...he is nevertheless an enemy of Russia and, while in Russia is among enemies of himself" (p. 63). For Byron, the hostility works two ways, however. At home in England, he could never have such an intense experience. Therefore, the anxiety he feels about being a foreigner is tempered by the knowledge that whatever happens on his trip, at least it is not what happens at home. As he sets off on his quest in the Tibetan highlands, his usual confidence changes to apprehension. Of trekking in the mountains he writes: "It produced a curious feeling, almost fear, this first contact with persons, clothes, and observances of utter strangeness" (p. 179). Again and again the mountainous environment seems otherworldly, at odds with the diminutive Westerners. "It is not my habit to moralize on

the smallness of man," writes Byron, nevertheless doing so, "but the Himamlayas do induce a sense of it. They are out of scale to a degree which produces something like fear" (pp. 234-5).

When leaving for the trip to India on the Air Mail plane, Byron initially experiences depression. "My first sensation was one of suffocating depression....But to contemplate the continuance of this inferno of drill, buzz, and roar, and these attitudes of a strait-jacket for eight days on end was to relinquish faith in the beneficence of earthly fate" (p. 130). Upon arriving at Sind, in India, Byron is very disappointed. The place reminds him of an American city in the midwest, but evidence of the sterility of colonialism is everywhere. Byron writes that only the sight of the familiar faces of some friends who arrive to greet him and take him to their home cures his feelings of doubt and depression this time.

When departing for Tibet, Byron seems unable to escape British society in Darjeeling. His party is "prey to a mounting depression" (p. 230). This initial depression can be equated with the doubt of every new convert who begins the journey to enlightenment. The trek into the mountains sounds dangerous and none of the experts are encouraging. Visitors pass into Tibet at the pleasure of the Dalai Lama. The experts Byron consults

predict that the lengthy and tedious negotiations will fail at any moment, but somehow he manages to obtain a travel permit. As Byron leaves Gyantse, in Tibet, he observes, "an unreasoning depression, which seems inseparable from travel in Tibet, began to settle on us" (p. 230).

When Graham Greene leaves England he is definitely disaffected. A series of vaguely depressing visions represents the traveler's feeling about his homeland as he begins the trip. As the train travels from London to Liverpool Greene reads the grim headlines of a newspaper, which include murder and suicide. Greene finds Liverpool "seedy" and ultra-English on a grand scale. The last English person described on shore is a woman who has emigrated to America and is home for Christmas, drinking in the hotel bar with the family that she left behind. She is bright and cheerful, but her old father and aging friends have "the dust-bin look," reminding him of tenements and clotheslines. The woman seems to be a sign that England's seediness can only be escaped abroad.

Further unpleasantness awaits on the voyage. The boat stops in Spain and it is not sunny but raining. On the quay there are pimps everywhere. At Teneriffe Greene has the ghastly experience of seeing one of his novels botched in a "cheap banal film." On board the ship are a Nazi artist and a loud, doughy Englishman returning to the

Coast of Africa. Together the scenes and characters on the boat create a picture of modern life in decay. Everything is cheap and tawdry. The ship next stops on the coast of Africa. There Greene encounters an extreme and therefore more offensive version of British civilization. A palpable sense of evil is building up to reach a climax deep in the heart of the bush country. Greene wants the reader to have vivid examples of modern western culture to compare with the native culture he finds in the bush.

The Transition to the Other World

A state of alienation is one of the necessary ingredients for the hero's transition into the other world. His separateness from his home environment makes him "pure" and means that he does not participate in the "corrupt" aspects of the new societies he moves in. The hero is thus made ready to receive the transforming experiences of the quest. "The first stage of the mythological journey ...signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity to a zone unknown," writes Joseph Campbell (p. 58). He goes on to say that this fateful region may be represented to the hero as a distant land, or a heaven or a hell.

Byron's transition to the other world is accomplished without comment in the Russian section of his narrative, but the transition to Tibet forms an entire chapter describing the plane flight he takes to India. The whole flight is described in terms of the utmost detachment. Byron seems to be in a dream while the other passengers experience the agonies of air sickness and suffer from the heat. "The heat of the air seems scarcely possible, like the conditions of a dream. ...Enormous bumps hurled us up and down, to the visible distress of the other passengers" (p. 145). All are prostrate except Byron. Meanwhile, he describes the deaths and accidents associated with other flights by the same company. The flight seems to be a kind of trial that shows that Byron alone is ready for the physically grueling experiences ahead of him in Tibet. It also further disassociates him from ordinary tourists and travelers.

Byron, like Greene, presents an absurd picture of a civilization that has become a caricature of itself when transplanted abroad. After the trial of the airplane trip, permission is granted for Byron's party to enter Tibet from Darjeeling. Even in that remote part of colonial India, thousands of feet high in the mountains, the British Consulate must have his garden and must dress for dinner. An amusing scene results when the house catches on fire and the British Trade Agent's Aide waits

until his master has finished a little speech before informing him of the incident. Byron's last glimpse of colonial civilization is as critical as Greene's but much more comic.

Greene describes his first encounter with the British community in Africa as a distilled version of what he has just escaped, "English civilization at its worst." There are indications that the speaker/hero is about to penetrate into the depths of hell; he can count the vultures outside his hotel room window. The Blacks who live in Freetown sadden Greene because of the way they ape white civilization. They have fashionable weddings and school sports and Armistice Day celebrations. "It would be so much more amusing if it was all untrue, a fictitious skit on English methods of colonization," he says of their efforts to be like the British (p. 38).

After describing the hiring of his guides in Freetown, Greene inserts a transitional chapter entitled "The Way Back" which marks the way in to the primitive heart of the continent and the human heart he says he wants to explore. "The Way Back" contains a few characters who are engaged in other spiritual quests. They are Charles Seitz, a Satan-like failed medical student; "he had a grudge against God," and a Miss Kilvare who worships the prophetess Joanna (p. 79). He calls them "holy and depraved individualists" (p. 80).

They, like Greene at this moment in the narrative, are on the fringes of life, shunned, but trying to forge new philosophies to make sense out of the world. At the end of the frontier the way forward becomes easy and the way back is "narrow, hidden, difficult, to the English scene" (p. 74). Greene finally embarks on his own trial to see if he can enter the Heart of Darkness which corresponds to the underworld in the quest myth.

These experiences on the coast, like Byron's encounters with Soviet propaganda, and the plane trip to Tibet, function as rites of passage that prepare Greene to have the climactic experience in the heart of the African wilderness.

Part Two, The Quest

The Seeking of Guides

As the journey begins, the traveler/hero takes on guides. By guides I mean those traditional functionaries who act as helpers, interpreters, and occasionally as protectors of the questing hero during the journey. This tradition is as old as the Odyssey. When the hero goes to the underworld, he must have a guide. Virgil is Dante's guide in the Divine Comedy and Tiresias is Odysseus' in the Odyssey. The hero also seeks both good and evil manifestations in the underworld for their knowledge or

power. Sometimes these manifestations appear in the forms of what I call angels or devils, who are not developed characters but guideposts against which the hero's reactions to his changing environment can be measured.

The traveler learns arcane knowledge in order to prepare himself for the trials that he will experience in the wilderness. As Joseph Campbell puts it, "the first encounter of the journey is with a protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass" (p. 69). An excellent example is Byron's Tibetan tutor who teaches him the proper etiquette and aids him in buying the correct grades of scarves as gifts for men of different ranks encountered on the journey. Byron writes, "His long pigtail and elfin face, the spit of an autumn leaf, endeared him to us" (p. 158). Each traveler describes himself as alone, rarely referring to the constant companions of the same race and age who accompany them on the trek. The "natives," however, are the nominal guides. Sometimes they represent a higher knowledge of natural forces, and sometimes they provide comic relief.

In order to view the country in Russia, Byron takes on guides. Underlining his individualism, Byron refuses to go on any sort of conducted tour despite the additional expense and difficulty of traveling alone. Despite his

efforts, the government saddles him with several guides. Byron sometimes uses these hapless government agents as foils for his own persona in the book. For example, he describes one of them in order to make the point that all humans are not only materialistic, they are also eager to enjoy religious and cultural stimulation when given the chance. In this way Byron pokes fun at Utopian societies. The young man is a Soviet Jew enamored of technology. "Yet this youth, who had placed a sacramental finger on the first Ford car, was as impatient and active as myself in climbing about rickety scaffolding in the biting cold to study 14th century frescoes of the Novgorod Churches" (p. 52).

The meeting of guides marks various turning points in Byron's trip backward into Russian time. With them he seeks the shrines of art and culture ignored by the Soviet authorities. Their propagandizing serves to hone his increasingly contemptuous view of the new state. At one point he demands to see the prisons of the Russian secret police, whose whispered name he loves to take loudly in vain in public places. "Thereafter our guide, a man of intelligence, ceased his futile rote of moral tales" (p. 75). Instead the guide is guided by Byron who teaches him about art and culture. In this way Byron becomes a kind of pilgrim to the shores of injustice, teaching his creed abroad and convincing the faithful at home of his prophet-

like righteousness because he has been to the source of the false and threatening creed and seen it with his own eyes.

In Tibet Byron seeks a different kind of idealistic society, one run on spiritual principles. In this part of his journey he not only has human guides, he also brings along certain texts, like Sir Charles Bell's People of Tibet. He looks for the places illustrated therein. He and his friends take care to obtain instruction in the Tibetan language and etiquette from the old man mentioned earlier. They also outfit themselves elaborately. These preparations stand them in good stead during the most difficult parts of their trek. It is obvious that without a knowledge of proper etiquette they would not have gained entrance into the country or the monasteries whose hospitality cheered them during difficult times.

Tibet, the "Celestial Empire," is a country filled with architectural delights for Byron. Everywhere Byron sees evidence of religious structures, including prayer flags and wheels in remote wildernesses. At one point he visits a monastery called Dongtse. There the monks feed and refresh him. He asks his guide Pemba to direct him to a house illustrated in one of Bell's books. Pemba replies that it does not exist, but the monks direct him to it. It is right below the monastery. The secular guide fails him but he does not give up and the religious guides help

him to find the place he seeks. As the traveler/hero Byron must eventually surpass his guide in his desire to press forward with the trek and locate the "shrines" described in his texts. The fact that Byron is able to begin guiding his guide by appealing to a higher authority shows that he has passed one of the tests of the journey. Indeed, on the return trip he even leads the trekkers. Byron is no longer helpless in the face of the unknown; he has conquered it. His unfailing faith in the accuracy of his text is rewarded by the sight of another of the architectural wonders he continually seeks.

The most powerful guide is the one that Byron encounters in a blizzard just before leaving Tibet. The mules are lying down and the snow piled waist-high, but Byron trudges forward alone. Blind, he loses the trail through the pass. After desperate floundering, he finds the tracks of a human which he follows a few yards in the snow. There he discovers a half frozen idiot whom he cannot induce to move. "But, as though by a miracle, assistance came" (p. 239). They hear the shouts of a caravan coming from the opposite way. The idiot is animated, and leads Byron's pony to safety while Byron walks over the pass and into India. The waist-high snow is no longer mentioned. In this manner they are delivered from the rooftop of the world back to British civilization and friends in India.

Greene also consults texts and hires human guides. He quotes from a British government report on Liberia and consults three maps; all of them prove to be incorrect and useless. Without his native guides, Greene admits that he would have been very lost. They supply other knowledge besides their guidance through the network of paths. They warn him about the Bush Devils and carry him at the end when he is ill. The first guide he meets lives on the Coast, a Mr. D. who is an old and venerable Kru tribesman and a fellow Catholic. This first wise old man Greene meets fulfills the same function as Byron's Tibetan tutor. Mr. D. provides correct route information where the maps and the texts fail.

One of the most important pieces of arcane knowledge provided Greene by Mr. D involves hospitality and manners. Along the way, Greene and all the carriers must rely on local chiefs for hospitality. In return one must "dash" the chief, or press a silver coin into his hand. Eventually Greene manages to overcome his distaste for the idea of this form of tipping, thus ensuring the survival of the expedition. This kind of self-reliance is important for Greene to learn, because as the story progresses he, too, has to guide his guides in country alien to them all.

When the circular trek is almost complete, and the party is nearly back at the coast, they encounter a man mentioned in one of the British government publications on

Liberia, one of Greene's guidebooks. The man is Elwood Davis, the "dictator of Grand Bassa." The publication said that he was an American mercenary monster responsible for a massacre of women and children during the civil war. Greene, however, is charmed by him. In the beginning of the trip he is touchy and suspicious of Blacks because people on the coast had warned of their dishonesty. The meeting with Davis shows how far Greene has progressed since he began his trip. At home in England, just reading about this man made the hair stand up on the back of Greene's neck. Now, not only can he stare evil in the face unflinchingly, he can even see the possibility of innocence in the most evil person he encounters.

Some guides help to change Greene's attitudes toward Africa and his fellow men. Other guides literally lead him through the wild forest to his goal. One guide performs both functions. On one of the last and most despair-filled days of the trek Greene meets a kind of saint named Victor in a poverty-stricken town that extends its hospitality and asks for no return. Victor is a Catholic converted by missionaries who acts as the local schoolmaster. He palpitates with religious excitement, causing a young boy in a transparent vest to say his catechism for the white traveler. Victor's piety impresses Greene. Later, Victor acts as a guide for the party when the carriers are no longer in their homeland.

He leads them to the first town they have seen in a long time. Victor appears in the narrative shortly after Greene has written off the African forest as a grimly sterile virgin place. The encounter shows what Greene realizes through his journey--that fruitful spirituality can grow anywhere.

The Trials of the Quest

After enduring some preliminary trials and crossing the threshold with several kinds of guides, the hero must endure greater trials while actually in the other country. These later trials are necessary to bring the hero closer to the climactic experience of the journey--the revelations and the gifts and power bestowed on the traveler at the axis mundi, or the center of the earth. Part of the trial is psychological in nature. Time and distance are warped or skewed in some way, and the hero must surrender himself to these changes if he is to gain a new perspective on the world.

Sometimes the trials appear comic in Byron's description of Russia. All the western cultural icons he has always taken for granted are reviled in the Soviet Union. He describes the neat manner in which his favorite paintings have been relabelled as bourgeois and decadent. One sign reads "Gauguin: Taste of the Rentier" (p.44). In a more serious incident, he is taken for a spy and all

his papers and diaries are seized. In the end the strangeness is almost too much for him to bear. "At times during my visit, I began to doubt my own sanity" (p. 45). Later his alien status begins to worry him; "The sauntering foreigner is aware of a strange isolation, a kind of negative hostility emanating ...from the impersonal mass claiming power over him" (p. 63). A whole country is engaging in a quest for heaven on earth and Byron is the only one who seems to realize how false it is. Significantly, the trains keep getting derailed. At one point there is a grisly accident. Nineteen people are killed and forty wounded. Afterward the golden domes of the Pechensky Monastery seem to flash "a message of impotence and desuetude in a world of trained cynics" (p. 120).

In Tibet, the difference between the self and the environment becomes one of the journey's greatest trials. On the journey into Tibet Byron is unable to wash, and suffers from chronic sunburn, his face a suppurating, jellied mask. In the mornings he awakes "to a sensation of profound nausea" (p. 198). Upon arriving at their goal, the Tibetan town of Gyantse, Byron writes, "There can have been no one in the country so filthy, so utterly repulsive to look at, as ourselves by the time we arrived ..." (p. 198).

As the trek progresses, the terrible cold and filthy conditions begin to depress Byron's companions. G. and M., as they are called, continually contrive to avoid Byron's disciplined wanderings. At one point they threaten to mutiny and turn around, demanding, "why have you brought us to this terrible place?" Byron, too, is wavering, but this petulant attitude disgusts him and he casually replies that he rather fancies seeing a lake just ahead. G. and M. resign themselves to their fate.

Greene rules his carriers with the stern and proprietary hand of the patriarch. He discovers that in buying a servant's labor he buys his loyalty too. "I ought to have despised them, . . . But after a while I began to love them for it" (p. 145). He is their lord and master and he finds out what it means to be a god. This assumption of responsibility is the price he must pay for the privilege of outsiderhood. At one point the carriers threaten to leave him in the middle of the bush. Greene manages to bluff his way out. When peace is restored the carriers immediately ask permission to kill a goat bought earlier. He agrees as a gesture of conciliation, and they do it immediately in front of him as if he were their god. It looks "like a crucified child" (p. 182). It seems to function as a kind of pagan sacrifice of thanksgiving for peace.

Toward the end of the quest the carriers conduct a trial because one of them is accused of stealing. Greene is the ultimate adjudicator. He agrees to the harsh punishment. The accused bearer threatens to go, but is afraid to start for home in the alien territory. Greene feels uncomfortable in his position of great spiritual responsibility. At the beginning of the trek he claimed to push thoughts like eternal life and Christian responsibility to the back of his mind. Now, at the end of his trial/journey these thoughts and spiritual duties, like the person of Elwood Davis, have been squarely faced. He is a changed man for his experience.

Greene seems even more at odds with his environment than Byron, who at least recognizes a backward version of his own philosophy in Russia. Greene is disaffected in England, but in Africa he is an alien radically outside the scope of anything familiar. In the bush even his guides are outsiders after they leave their territory, so Greene is utterly alone at the head of a column of aliens in a strange land. By barely mentioning the female cousin who is his constant companion, he artificially enhances his aloneness and makes the journey seem more of a personal struggle of one man against a wilderness. It is only through reading secondary sources, such as Gwenn Boardmann's Graham Greene, that one can discover her name. If she was a help to him, Greene does not record the fact.

Mythic heroes are rarely accompanied except by guides or otherworldly beings. The fact that Greene left his cousin's experience out of the book shows the extent to which he self-consciously made the book into a hero's journey through the wilderness.

Like Byron, Greene eventually starts to doubt his sanity, and only manages to fill the terrible grinding boredom by counting or thinking about food or poetry: "The routine became almost unbearable" (p. 189). Finally even these remnants of his own culture cease to make sense. The green, thriving, vermin-filled forest becomes a dead thing to him like "the shell of a house on a bankrupt housing estate" (p. 192). When he thinks of A.E. Housman's poem of love in a traditional benign, tree-filled nature, "Tell Me Not Here, It Needs Not Saying," the deadness of the jungle deconstructs it for him. "The poem had ceased to mean anything. It was impossible here to think of Nature in such terms of enchantment and nostalgia" (p. 192).

The Confusion of Time and Distance

Both Byron and Greene write about the confusion of time and distance. Northrop Frye explains in Creation and Recreation that "Everything that raises man from his fallen level to his originally designed one involves some degree of returning to his original creation" (p. 53).

Greene says that he is attempting to get to an earlier, more innocent time by moving geographically into the interior of the African continent. Byron continually describes Tibet as "Medieval" and untouched by history. "Tibet has no relation to the West whatsoever; the historical faculty becomes superfluous; observation consists in the assimilation of pure novelty" (p.11). Fussell says that the confusion of time and space is a typical one in travel books. He suggests that there is a relation between the redrafting of literal national frontiers between the wars, and the fragmentary way in which modern human experience is rendered in writing and art. He comments, "these actions betray a concern with current space instead of time or tradition" (p. 36). By simply moving through geographical frontiers, Greene and Byron are able to juxtapose radically different times and places encountered both on the journey, and before and after it. Thus they are able to describe something real that is at the same time surreal because of the fragmentary way in which it is represented both temporally and spatially.

In Moscow, time has been skewed by the Revolution. "The first difficulty is to determine what day it is, since the names of our seven-day week have fallen into abeyance" (p. 66). There is a holiday every sixth day. Some people operate on the new system, some on the old.

"If, however, you succeed in remembering when the Christian Sunday falls, you can visit the private markets" (p.66).

Once in Tibet, however, time seems to stop altogether for Byron and the journey becomes a physically arduous yet breathtakingly strange trek through a white wilderness. Looking back he writes, "I realize what a precious glimpse that week gave us of a way of life which the world has nowhere else preserved. In European parlance it is a Medieval way of life, a stage through which we ourselves passed long ago, but from which, nevertheless, the roots of our tradition still draw much of their strength" (p. 228).

Time is an absurd plaything in a place that does not feel the effects of history or admit any kind of modern technical innovation except the telegraph. When the party visits the Kenchung of a monastery for lunch, a humorous scene is enacted that might have been invented to tease Alice in Wonderland. Thinking they have arrived on time, the Kenchung's guests are surprized to see him consult a cheap kitchen clock, an Empire clock on the mantelpiece, a silver pocket watch, and an alarm clock wrapped in cotton wadding. "By dint of consulting all four time-pieces, our host informed us that we were late" (p. 217). Upon inspecting the Kenchung's library they discover that "once more we were back in the Middle Ages, when the only

literature was sacred" (p. 218). Byron has arrived at another time simply by going to another part of the planet. His journey into Tibet is analogous to Greene's penetration of the African jungles and the questing hero's arrival at a place outside time. The confusion of earthly chronological time serves as a trial for the hero but it also signals his descent into a "hell," or some world outside time in which trials take place. Only then is he ready to experience the revelation that comes later.

Greene's journey to enlightenment also begins with the abandonment of normal notions of time. At the beginning of the trek, he persists in measuring time by the clock and calendar as he had in England. "I had not yet got accustomed to the idea that time, as a measured and recorded period, had been left behind on the coast" (p. 69). One by one his watches succumb to the climate. "Only one [watch] reached the coast and it had long since ceased to tell the 'real' time" (p. 69). At first, he thinks that he can plan the journey according to a timetable, but the abandonment of a two-week schedule that eventually turns into a month occurs later in the narrative when he has accepted African time. Greene himself likens the journey to Freudian therapy. The traveler/patient returns to the womb of history to discover the nature of the past and its effects on the present.

Greene's journey operates on many levels-- the psychic/spiritual quest for cultural and personal enlightenment, and the geographical level in which each step represents a step closer to the heartland of the country as well as a step closer to enlightenment. "In Liberia again and again are caught hints of what it was that we had developed from" (p. 104).

Time in the author's life becomes confused in a kind of free association of similar types of experiences. Memories of his adoption of Catholicism and of other travels abroad mingle with thoughts about entering the new country. Seeing the past spread before one is like going to confession. "I couldn't help feeling.... that I had got somewhere new by way of memories I hadn't known I possessed. I had taken the thread of life from very far back, from so far back as innocence" (p. 116). This personal revelation comes at the end of a tangled bunch of associations about Nottingham, Yugoslavia, a dog, and a Moroccan cafe. "New Countries" are psychic, geographic, and spiritual.

At the beginning of his trek Greene frequently suffers from his failure to adapt to African time. Sometimes he refuses the hospitality of a village because it is not on the time-table. This causes the carriers to feel abused and mutinous. Finally, he relaxes and leaves the beaten track, going where no English explorer had ever

been. There he surrenders to African time and learns that a good reason for quickening the pace is that the rains are coming early. He is ill, but if he stops to rest, the party may never get out of the jungle.

Greene finally reaches the point at which time in the European sense becomes absurd. Victor, the school teacher mentioned earlier, guides them to a town one morning, stopping at his schoolhouse to demand why the bell has not been rung. His young assistant points to a rusty alarm clock. By his time it is only eight forty-five. The lesson is that time is irrelevant in a place that operates outside time, and by its own rules.

Journey to the Center of the Earth: The Axis Mundi

Once on the quest, after having entered the otherworldly place or hell, the hero must endure trials as well as describe the beautiful and exotic aspects of the place. The dangers, however, are as great as the rewards. The trials are psychological as well as physical with the result that the traveler's perspective alters. The trials build to a climax as the traveler approaches the axis mundi or the Heart of Darkness, as Greene describes it. According to Joseph Campbell, the meaning the hero discovers is spiritual and experiential rather than intellectual or verbal. The travelers leave their rational intellectual culture behind to seek transcendent

experience outside the western world. "There is, however an experience possible, for which the hero's arrival at the world axis and his readiness to learn....has proven him to be eligible [for the journey]" (p. 424 The Masks of God). Dante finds Lucifer frozen in ice when he arrives at the center of the earth. Similarly, both Greene and Byron arrive at a kind of axis mundi at the center of their journeys. The question both travelers ask is "what is ailing the Western World?" The axis mundi is identified with the tree of life in some legends, or as the Devil in Hell or Christ nailed on the cross. When Greene and Byron reach the axis mundi of their journeys, they have powerful experiences which significantly alter their perceptions of the world. Northrop Frye writes that the central image of a journey to renewal in Western literature appears in Dante's Purgatorio as,

one of the oldest and most widespread symbolic images in the world, the spiral ascent up a mountain or tower to Heaven, and makes it the journey of Dante himself as he climbs up the mountain of Purgatory shedding one of the seven original sins at each spiral turn. The Garden of Eden is the summit: that is, Dante is moving backwards in time to his own original state, as he would have been if there had been no fall of Adam (pp. 46-47).

How similar this description of the use of myth in literature is to Byron's and Greene's narratives of moving backward in time and encountering greater purity and simplicity of human culture as they progress.

Russia's cultural and spiritual riches are not as great as Tibet's. Byron does go to an actual center of the earth with his two Tibetan friends Mary and Jigmed. He met them in Tibet during his pilgrimage, and now he accompanies them on their Bhuddist pilgrimage to holy places in the foothills of the Himalayas. Instead of laughing at the Tibetans, as he does at the beginning of the journey, Byron is moved by his friends' devotion. Together they go to the site where "Buddha, arrived at last on the centre of the Universe, seated himself beneath the pipal-tree and received the Illumination that illuminated the earth." He writes, "I sought the genius loci" (p. 245). Byron himself sits under a tree at the holy site and meditates on his journey. This incident marks the climax of the book. At this time he reflects on all that his travel has taught him.

Like Dante, who goes to the center of Hell and finds the Devil, Greene encounters the Big Bush Devil at the farthest point in the bush which is called Zigita. Along the way he has seen lesser bush devils who remind him of people dressed as witches from his childhood. As he progresses deeper into the jungle on his circular journey, the people become more deeply religious. Later, when he starts to come out of the jungle again the devils become less powerful in the villages. The people at Zigita are the most primitive and deeply superstitious he has met,

and even the native carriers from nearer the coast fear the Big Devil. It is at Zigita that Greene has a supernatural experience. The arrival at the Devil's enclave is announced by all kinds of signs. First, they must climb the steepest of hills, bending over double and crawling. This part of the country is outside the law. The President of the Republic "had forgotten or never trodden this way, as hard and rough, according to Sir Alfred Sharpe, as any in Africa" (p. 161). Nearby they see a two thousand foot "thimble of almost perpendicular rock...The home of evil spirits" (p. 161). The whole scene crackles with excitement. The villagers and Greene's party wait indoors for the feared Devil to come out of his compound while green lightning (said to be made by the Devil himself) flashes around the hills. Drums are playing. One of the carriers tells over and over a story about the Devil haunting the District Commissioner of Sierra Leone. The storm does not let up until Greene's party leaves Zigita, and the carriers, after waiting a respectful distance, begin to sing with relief at their escape. Greene never sees the Devil, but the rats torture him and he is frightened.

Greene writes: "We had the creeps that night....I very nearly took the automatic out of the moneybox to load it" (p. 167). Despite repeated warnings, Greene and his cousin go outside and then wait by the window to see the

Devil. It is said to be death or blindness for a non-initiate to view him. When Greene finally does go to bed, the ever-present rats terrify him. "The rats came leaping into my room like large cats...they made too much noise for me to sleep..., but curiously, when daylight came, nothing was out of order," although he was certain he had heard the biscuit tin fall (p. 169). It is almost as if the Devil had given him a supernatural experience to warn against further trespasses. "There was certainly something bad about Zigita. I never felt quite well again until I reached the Coast" (p. 169).

Part Three, Return

Gifts: Power and Perspective

After the journey to the axis mundi, a synthesis of the two worlds is created. In contrast to his amused remarks about Tibetans with their hats like great plates or buns at the beginning of the narrative, Byron ends his book on a positively reverential note. He is moved to describe the Bhudda's gift to the world as, "a wisdom whose conception of time and space was a forecast of our own, and whose canon of individual self-reliance is as high a compliment as any ever paid by man to man, must always command respect, even among the ignorant." And, as Byron continues, sitting under a pipal tree in imitation

of the Bhudda, "it was a warmer, an historical emotion that held me now, which celebrated not the wisdom itself but the event of its coming on this hallowed site" (p. 245). He realizes that "the topography of the Gaya district is as authentic as that of Jerusalem" (p. 250). Gaya is the site of the Bhudda's translation into nirvana.

Both Greene and Byron come to believe in the supernatural; at least their characters in the narrative express a belief in it. Byron solemnly comments about the shadow of the Bhudda, supposedly left behind in a cave where he slept; "such things do remain" (p. 250). Greene writes that he believes that people in Africa can make lightning. A woman prisoner at the mercenary Elwood Davis' camp is accused of having made lightning to avenge herself on someone. "Very likely she had made lightning (I could not disbelieve these stories: they were too well attested), but perhaps the natural force had died in her during her imprisonment" (p. 247). It is impossible to say whether the authors actually believed these things, but the supernatural element contributes to the feeling at the end of both books that the travelers are changed men who have been privy to some of the secret workings of the universe.

Greene and Byron both express a desire at the beginning of their books to regenerate their ailing European culture from fresh seeds from another part of the

world. This impulse results in a synthesis of home and abroad, heaven and hell mentioned earlier. Their books promise the exotic and bizarre, but like all art they consciously utilize old forms with which their audience is familiar in order to showcase the "new" way of seeing the world.

The synthesis in Byron's journey occurs at the end of his pilgrimage with Mary and Jigmed. He realizes that Tibet is one of the last places on earth untouched by the industrial revolution. He expresses concern about its fate and the fate of his own country. The fact that his thoughts return to home brings the narrative full circle. Images of the wheel recur in the final pages. As he leaves the country on a train with his new friends, Byron worries, "What is the future of my own country?" (p. 254). Byron closes the last scene with images of the East and the West together. The Eastern image is of oxen by a well turning a wheel to bring up the water "treading out their immemorial circuit" (p. 249). The other image brings in the twentieth century's obsession with speed, forward motion and travel. The weary travelers board a train and go forward into the unknown, but not without Byron's reminder that he always returns to the places he visits. On the final page, Tibet's cyclical, fixed worldview is synthesized with the West's progressive motion. The

traveler and the reader can go forth armed with the best knowledge from both civilizations.

Greene's experiences at the end of his journey are spiritually more profound than Byron's, and his philosophical insights into the problem of the co-existence of good and evil, progress and stasis, are more penetrating. Both authors see change as inevitable, but their worldviews differ slightly at the end of their books. Byron is satisfied with the western and eastern ideals he has discovered by the end of the book. He hopes that Tibet will remain untouched by western influences, and he considers his travel there a rare gift. Thinking about Europe at the close of his journey, Greene contrasts images of the bush and its devils with all the modern European characters he has described at intervals throughout the book. These include the failed medical student mentioned earlier, a major who orders prostitutes by phone, and banal things like a bus ride through Nottingham. Obviously he has come to the conclusion that darkness is everywhere in different forms. Reconciled to England he writes "after all, it is home....where we will soon forget the finer taste, the finer pleasure, the finer terror on which we might have built" (pp. 280 - 81). Instead of contempt, he feels pity for the "civilized" men on the coast. He now finds it positive that the Blacks have achieved any kind of independence at all, even if it

is only through the aping of European man. Greene notes with approval that "a kind of patriotism has emerged from the graft and privation [of coastal civilization]" (p. 288).

The most important piece of knowledge Greene gains on the African trek is the synthesis of two worlds, the realization that we all live simultaneously on the Coast and in the Bush. "But what astonished me about Africa," Greene concludes, "was that it had never been really strange.... 'The Heart of Darkness' was common to us both" (p. 310). As Greene sees it when docking in England, the real loot he has brought back with him is the knowledge of a place that is "as far back as one needed to go, The innocence, the virginity, the graves not yet opened for gold, the mine not broken with sledges" (p. 313). Journey without Maps closes with an image that synthesizes the African experience with the European. While the passengers are going through customs, a child is heard crying in a tenement nearby. Greene writes that it is too young to have learned about sin or to be afraid of anything, but is "crying for no intelligible reason but because it still possessed the ancestral fear, the devil was dancing in its sleep" (p. 312). Greene's new vision of his home causes him to ignore the fact that the child probably just needed parental attention. For the same reason that he ignores his cousin, he imposes his heroic

ego on the scene and distorts reality in order to create this symbol of innocence troubled by evil.

Conclusion

Why should the two travelers shape their journeys as quests? Northrop Frye observes that man's goal is to build a society on earth as much like paradise as possible, a well-ordered city of gods "so that creation here appears as an end to the human journey rather than the beginning of it" (p. 37). Part of art, he argues in Creation and Recreation, is destruction or an answer to destruction. The artist destroys convention or tries to create a new one; that is what makes his work creative. The artist makes a synthesis of old forms and new ideas, and provides the audience with productive new perspectives on life and culture. Greene and Byron have used the mythic structure that is as old as time as a vehicle for their exotic experiences. The motive for their journeys is escape and renewal, so the hero myth structure serves both authors' purposes. They want to present themselves as hero-figures alone in the wilderness struggling to gain valuable knowledge about the universe that slips away daily with the advance of the civilized world.

The reason that the idea of renewal is central to these and other travel narratives of the thirties is the feeling of their era that the West was a corrupted and

decadent culture in need of fresh ideas. With the decline of the British Empire and the close of the Great War, the feeling that a more innocent era had come to an end was not a surprising one. Young people often left Britain to travel abroad with what Fussell calls the "I Hate it Here" attitude (p. 15). Sometimes they were in search of a cheaper place to live, but they also seemed to revel in finding bits of the world that were still untouched by western civilization. There they hoped to find the seeds of regeneration for their own culture. The idea that the traveler's activity could be raised to the level of a pilgrimage seems natural in an age obsessed with travel, art, and literature as a means of escape and renewal.

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