

University of Warwick institutional repository: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap>

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick

<http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/4186>

This thesis is made available online and is protected by original copyright.

Please scroll down to view the document itself.

Please refer to the repository record for this item for information to help you to cite it. Our policy information is available from the repository home page.

THE LIFE OF HENRY YORKE AND THE WRITING OF HENRY GREEN

submitted by Ann Hancock for the
degree of Ph.D. to the Department
of English, University of Warwick,

November 1981

THE LIFE OF HENRY YORKE AND THE WRITING OF HENRY GREEN

C O N T E N T S

Acknowledgements

Summary

Preface

PART I: HENRY YORKE

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Childhood: Pack My Bag
- 3 Oxford: Blindness
- 4 Birmingham and London: Living, Party Going
- 5 War and the Fire Service: Caught, Loving, Back
- 6 Success in England and Abroad: Concluding
- 7 Novel Theories: Nothing, Doting
- 8 Death - and a P.S.

PART II: HENRY GREEN

- 9 Building Meaning
- 10 Symbolism and Imagery
- 11 Confronting Language: Narrative
- 12 Dialogue
- 13 Reading Loving

Conclusion

Notes

Bibliography

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to the following people who kindly responded to my letters seeking information about Henry Yorke: Harold Acton, Kingsley Amis, John Lehmann, Diana Mosley, Anthony Powell, Peter Quennell, the late Goronwy Rees, Alan Ross, Auberon Waugh, Sebastian Yorke.

Special thanks are due to Audrey Cooper of the University of Warwick library for her help in acquiring published material on Green; to Challice Reed of the B.B.C. for providing me with transcripts of radio programmes; and to Henry Green's publishers, both in England and in Europe.

SUMMARY

This thesis is in two parts. Part I deals with the life of Henry Yorke, the real name of the author, Henry Green. My aims are: to suggest how the roles of businessman and novelist interrelated and how Green's personality and attitudes affected his writing; to describe how the novels were critically received at the time of publication; and to establish Green's social context. Green's life has up to now been virtually ignored by critics so research involved not only reference to published material but also contact with Green's friend and family.

The opening pages of Part II make the link between life and work in a brief discussion of Green's theoretical writings, which were based largely on his own experience. I then go on to consider the novels in detail. Some comparisons are made with other novelists, not so much to set Green in a tradition as to establish a context of twentieth-century literature which Green is at once part of yet apart from.

Chapters 9 to 12 examine techniques: structure, imagery, symbolism, narrative style, dialogue. There are several reasons for my approach. First, the concentration on language is due to my interest in Green primarily as a writer of prose rather than fiction. Repeated words and, even more, dialogue, are structural elements in Green's novels but have received scant attention. My discussion of these topics stresses ambivalence, which characterized Green's style of perception. I explore his belief that a novel should be open to a multitude of interpretations and show how the reader is encouraged to participate in the creation of meaning. The last chapter brings together many of the points already made in a close reading of Loving.

PREFACE

One of a number of paradoxes inherent in writing about Henry Yorke/Green is that the more one discovers about him, the further he retreats into mystery. Yet it is not my intention to reinforce a common impression of Green as an elusive man and writer, since this merely generates complacency. Rather I wish to explore the mystery in terms of its creative function from the point of view both of Green, who found mystery in life, and his readers, who find mystery on almost every page of the novels.

Even a limited account of the life of Henry Yorke offers a useful perspective on his writing. The relationship between the life and the work is an equivocal one. It is stressed by Green and by commentators that the two roles of Henry Yorke, Managing Director of H. Pontifex and Sons, and Henry Green, novelist, were quite distinct; this duality is made explicit in the title of this thesis and its division into two parts. However, in many ways Green's approach to writing developed from his view of life. The ambivalence in his attitudes, which meant that extreme pessimism and unsociability coexisted with joyful appreciation of people and places, his superficial conventionality qualified by bizarre idiosyncracies, his abiding interest in the processes of conversation, his early rejection of an academic view of literature, his traumatic war experiences, the very lack of event in his life - all are reflected vividly and forcefully in the novels. A further point, made to me by Goronwy Rees, a good friend of Green, is that almost all the characters in the novels are easily identifiable as real people; but I would not, and indeed could not, attempt to amplify that assertion.

My brief study of Green's life aims partly to suggest the relationship between life and writing and to obtain a glimpse of how his personality developed. However, it has a further purpose in that it incorporates

reference to Green's neglected work - Pack My Bag, the three war stories, book reviews, radio appearances. The biographical section also indicates how Green saw his writing and how it was regarded by others; I look at reviews of the novels and significant articles which reveal popular and critical assessments of Green's work during his literary career and after, both in England and elsewhere.

It is difficult to find biographical material on Green since his life is virtually undocumented. Paul Bailey is currently working on an official biography which will no doubt contain information I have been unable to obtain; certainly when this thesis was started, in 1975, very little was accessible. The sources for my account are, first, books on Green's Oxford period, critical, biographical and autobiographical. Green features prominently in none of them, though Anthony Powell's To Keep the Ball Rolling is perhaps the most helpful. Next I approached Green's family, friends, acquaintances, many of whom replied to my letters and were almost all sympathetic. Sebastian Yorke, Green's only son, kindly invited me to his Leeds factory to talk to him, and what he told me was extremely useful. I did not visit Green's widow in response to a request from Sebastian that I should not disturb her. Apparently she had been upset by several amateur biographers and critics since Green's death in 1973 and I did not wish to add to her distress. Papers lodged with the British Library gave me a little information on the composition of some of the novels and I was assured by Sebastian that nothing else was available. I was helped in tracing the critical work partly by the bibliographies of Edward Stokes and John Russell and by references in other books and articles. However, many of the reviews seem previously to have gone unremarked and were discovered only after prolonged searches aided by educated guesswork.

In the opening pages of Chapter 9 I reinforce the link between life and work in a brief discussion of attitudes held by Green which affected his writing. I then begin the main section of Part II: an examination of certain important features of Green's prose. First, in the remainder of Chapter 9, I consider the use of repeated words in Caught and Party Going, referring to James's The Bostonians for points of comparison. I stress the role of the reader in maintaining different kinds of reading as he reads; while the process of going through a novel is sequential, the function of both 'key words' and, in Caught, the chronological inconsistencies is to force the reader into a sustained awareness of the whole book, a demand more usually made by poetry.

Symbolism, primarily from Back, and imagery, in Concluding, are the subjects of Chapter 10. I take up Bruce Johnson's comparison of symbolism in Joyce and Green and argue that in fact the methods of the two writers are quite different. Joyce's symbols take the reader beyond the novel while Green's stimulate heightened understanding of what is happening within the novel; a more illuminating comparison can be made between the network of personal significance built around roses in Back and that accreting to a number of objects, particularly the centipede, in Alain Robbe-Grillet's La Jalousie.

Two main points are made about imagery. First I show that the accumulation of images suggests a predominant mood, this helped by symbolism, but that the groups of images are ambivalent so that finally the reader's imaginative effort is required in order to characterize that mood. Imagery is used to distinguish multiple viewpoints, differing perceptions of reality; this is illustrated by reference to a passage from Party Going. Then I describe how Green's imagery, like his symbolism, is firmly rooted in the surface of the novel, the situation. I contrast Stephen's vision of

the girl on the beach from A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man with the conclusion of Back, Charley's vision of Nancy, which Edward Stokes describes as a Joycean epiphany but which I maintain has a quite different purpose.

Chapters 11 and 12 are about language. I discuss in Chapter 11 some of the peculiarities of Green's narrative style. I take as my starting point Philip Toynbee's description of Green as a "terrorist" of language, and contrast the opening paragraphs of Party Going with a passage written by Christopher Isherwood, a novelist whom Toynbee would class with an opposing group of writers, the "Men in the Street". I also mention comments made by Stokes and Russell on Green's characteristics of style, particularly in the middle novels, and note the extent to which Green's prose aspires to dialogue from his first novel; passages from Blindness, Living and Pack My Bag are considered. In Chapter 12 I turn to what seems to me the logical extension of previous work, Green's last two novels, written almost entirely in dialogue; I confine myself mainly to Doting. I am concerned primarily with answering two linked questions: whether the novels are narratives or drama and the degree to which the characters, and by extension the reader, achieve autonomy, in other words, the degree to which the author dictates interpretation. A comparison between Green and Ivy Compton-Burnett reveals that although Green provides more directive comment than Ivy Compton-Burnett, in fact Green's characters achieve a curious independence which hers do not. The remainder of the chapter shows, through close reading of passages of dialogue, ways in which the reader is encouraged to make his or her own interpretation of events and characters.

There are several reasons for isolating these aspects of Green's writing. I do not wish to duplicate points covered already in the four books on Green. Edward Stokes's The Novels of Henry Green (1959), the first book to appear, is an exhaustive but basically descriptive account of a number of components of the novels: stories, characters, themes, narrative methods, style. A. Kingsley Weatherhead, in A Reading of Henry Green (1961), adopts

a thematic approach, investigating self-creation in the characters of each of the novels in turn. In Henry Green: Nine Novels and an Unpacked Bag (1960) John Russell, like Weatherhead, attempts readings of the novels, which he considers chronologically, and charts Green's development. Bruce Bassoff, whose Toward Loving: the Poetics of the Novel and the Practice of Henry Green (1975) is the most recent to give attention to Green, uses Green as, in his own words, a "springboard for a discussion of some of the salient problems one faces in criticism of the novel". Thus part of his book deals with the novel in general and those sections on Green alone, though they investigate imagery and style among other things, are fundamentally different in aim from my work.

None of the above-mentioned critics has much to say about dialogue and only very limited efforts have been made to show what Henry Yorke contributed to Henry Green. More important, all have viewed Green as a writer of fiction while I consider it more profitable to see him more as a writer of prose, his aim to establish reciprocal communication between writer and reader. Thus the telling of a story is subordinate to the language; words are paramount - their choice, order, recurrence.

This leads to another common factor in my approaches to Green: the participation of the reader in the creation of meaning. I am interested especially in the experience of reading Green. Green, as author/narrator, is on the one hand neutral - his refusal to comment or judge prompts the reader to make his own interpretations - and yet reveals his involvement by his loving, sensuous portrayals of his characters and their world and through the idiosyncracies of language.

Constant in my discussions of Green's novels is an insistence on the function of ambivalence and ambiguity, and this is related closely to Green's interest in the multiplicity of perception. To this can be linked Green's belief that his work should be open to infinite interpretations; it is up to each reader to find his or her own way. Green very much wanted

readers to make an imaginative and individual response to his novels. He did not like critics since literary criticism was anathema to him, and he valued feeling and instinct above intellect. So my final chapter is a personal interpretation of Loving, Green's middle novel, chosen for extended consideration above all because, although it was not Green's favourite of his novels, it is mine.

PART I :

HENRY YORKE

C H A P T E R I

Introduction

In 1963 Henry Green wrote a short article for the Spectator entitled 'For Jenny with Affection from Henry Green'.¹ It was his last published work and it reveals perhaps too frankly the state of health and mind which determined the character of the ten years up to his death in December 1973.

Green lives with his wife in Belgravia. He has now become a hermit. Only the other day a woman of sixty looking after the tobacconist's shop was dragged by her hair across the counter and stabbed twice in the neck. That is one reason why I don't go out any more.

Green can write novels, but his present difficulty is to know quite how to do it. As Time magazine says, Green is ailing, which means he has several things wrong with him which, rising sixty, is perhaps to be expected.

Of course, he sees his contemporaries die almost every day, like John Strachey and many another.

Whether you are a man like Kingsley Martin and believe in things is, of course, an advantage. Green tells me that he doesn't believe in anything at all. And perhaps that is not a bad thing. Love your wife, love your cat and stay perfectly quiet, if possible not to leave the house. Because on the street if you are sixty danger threatens.

It has always been said as a sign of age that if you don't see policemen with medal ribbons it means that you are getting very old. In other words, the policemen are very much younger. One of the reasons I won't go out is for fear of meeting a policeman. Yesterday I saw four at the corner and was very frightened indeed.

Louis Ferdinand Céline, who was one of the best novelists who has ever lived, and is dead now, had such a persecution thing. When Auric, the composer, was walking with him in a fog in Paris there was somebody wavering in front of them and Céline said in a very loud voice, "C'est un juif." Auric was much disturbed because he didn't have a thing about Jews and in any case the fog was too deep to tell.

So the whole thing is really not to go out. If one can afford it, the best thing is to stay in one place,² which might be bed. Not sex, for sleep.

Green's description of himself is no exaggeration. His son Sebastian and John Russell, whose account of a visit to Green in 1964 appeared in the Kenyon Review as 'There It Is', confirm his complete withdrawal from friends and to some extent family. The last time Sebastian can remember his father going out was when he persuaded him to go to a boxing championship at the Albert Hall; he had hardly left the house in the previous seven years.³ Physically he was not in good health. The "several things wrong with him" included diabetes, attacks of dyspepsia, no doubt

encouraged by many years of heavy drinking, and the famous deafness which he managed to use to his own advantage on many occasions. Yet 'For Jenny with Affection' is not simply a self-pitying study of disintegration. It expresses more concisely than anything else Green wrote the ambivalence in his character and his attitude towards writing.

Morbidity pervades Green's portrayal of his existence. He draws a sinister parallel between himself and the "woman of sixty" who was "stabbed twice in the neck" to justify his statement "on the street if you are sixty danger threatens". He was actually only fifty-eight at the time but implies that he is older. His pessimism verges on paranoia: "One of the reasons I won't go out is for fear of meeting a policeman. Yesterday I saw four at the corner and was very frightened indeed." Again he seeks to persuade the reader he is justified in his irrational terror, or at least not alone in experiencing it, by introducing Céline, for many years one of Green's favourite writers, who also had "such a persecution thing". Incidentally Green had a "thing about Jews" too.

Although one cannot deny the intensity of his fears, there is a strong element of self-dramatization in his enumeration of his ills. A strange mixture of humorous self-consciousness and despair characterizes his attitude; it is most significantly shown in the way he writes of himself both in the first and the third person, as if he were two separate people. This enables him to reveal his preoccupations openly while hiding behind the ironic impersonality of an interviewer. The sense of 'doubleness' here can be detected over and over again and reveals a deep-seated ambivalence in Green which has a profound effect on the manner in which he represents himself.

Everything I have mentioned so far, including ill health, existed earlier than the last decade of Green's life, though in a more moderate form. John Russell records that Green's wife told him "'Henry is such a

pessimist". Apparently he carried an umbrella at his wedding in 1929 even though it was a beautiful July day.⁴ A morbid conviction that he was to die before his time is expressed in the autobiography, in the very first paragraph of the book: "Surely it would be asking much to pretend one had a chance to live." This is partly explained by the war - his sense of approaching doom must have been shared by many - but not everyone responded by writing a volume of reminiscences as a final work.

Green summed up an autobiographical sketch written when the war was well past with these words:

I write at night and at week ends. I relax with drink and conversation. In the war I was a P.F.C. fireman in London, the relaxation in fire stations was more drink and conversation. And so I hope to go on till I die, rather sooner now than later. There is no more to say.

Here he expresses a resigned wish for death most unusual in a man of forty-four. Some of his depression seems to have its origin in his war work for the Fire Service; John Russell mentions his anxieties about the possibilities of fire.⁶ However, the potential melodrama in a tragic situation never escapes Green's attention.

When a drone from low altitude reaches Green's ears in his Belgravia sitting room, he identifies it immediately as "that blasted" Duke of Edinburgh, the only person permitted to pilot a helicopter over London. Green adds in terror, "He will get me yet." He means that in making a low approach to Buckingham Palace, the Duke will one time swoop too low and crash through Green's roof to the sitting room and further. He, his wife, and the Duke will all be burned up. A day afterward a cordon of police will appear (he hates the police), and then the Queen in her widow's weeds - with the ruins on show, so to speak. There will be formal obsequies ... The account goes on and on, with Green conscious that the more maudlin he grows the funnier he becomes.

Melancholy pessimism seems to co-exist with the humorous and exaggerated perception of a comedian.

During a BBC radio discussion on Green Sir V.S. Pritchett put forward this opinion:

. . . there was a mad side to Henry Green, I think, which none of us know about at all; but it appears to be in his writing that there is something that you feel that he might have gone over the edge if not very careful and that gave him a kind of trembling nerve which made him susceptible to many things which we really know nothing about. I don't mean certifiable madness of course, but I mean a willingness to accept a non-rational world, you know, a world which has no everyday explanation.

The apprehension of a non-rational world is an experience shared by most of Green's characters. Their lives are never explained by the author and they probably could not account themselves for their motivations. Each individual has an idiosyncratic vision of the world, the result of feeling rather than thought (these characters are no more interested in ideas for their own sake than their creator was) and, which leads quickly to chaos, one man's view is more or less incompatible with everyone else's. So Charley cannot bring Nancy to accept his conception of her as Rose, Elizabeth Rock cannot mould her father, who throws aside and subsequently burns without reading all correspondence, into her idea of a celebrated scientist awaiting his reward. Green himself seems to have been most interested in things strange or unfamiliar, oddities of speech, appearance or behaviour; watching people was a favourite pastime.

However, I do not think that Green's "mad side" can be fully explained in terms of his perception of and belief in a non-rational world, though what Pritchett says is certainly true and very important to any consideration of the novels. It may be that his ten years of self-imposed isolation, which many might describe as 'mad', was also caused by the stresses of the double life he led and tended to mythologize.

A number of critics point out that Green had two roles in life, Henry Yorke, businessman, and Henry Green, novelist. Green himself was

at pains to present himself as a businessman, especially to the Americans. Harvey Breit quotes him: "'Say,' he said, 'I am the son of a prominent industrialist. Say, I am an engineer in the firm.'"⁹

In a Newsweek article of the same year Green described himself as a "45-year-old British engineer" and his father as a "prominent industrialist".¹⁰ This characterization has been pervasive and even the blurb on the jacket of the 1977 Hogarth Press reissue of Blindness describes him like this:

Henry Green was born in 1905 and spent his youth in his family home in the West Country. After his education at Eton and Oxford he worked with his father in an engineering company, but pursued a parallel career as a novelist.

The misconceptions to which this gives new life will become clear later; what is important here is why Green created this public image of a businessman who also happened to write novels. He has two explanations for his reticence about his writing. One is the fear that "his business would suffer if his identity become known".¹¹ The other, implied more often than stated, is that he disliked talking about or explaining his work: "'It's the books not the man that count.'"¹²

These reasons may account for the avoidance of publicity he maintained throughout his life but they do not fully explain why he was so adamant in his wish to be thought of as predominantly a businessman when writing took up so much of his time and effort. Alan Ross makes some interesting comments in Radio 3's 'Drawing Tears out of the Stone'. He says that Green always wanted to be accepted as a completely conventional man, an ordinary middle-class executive; and one can come no closer than that to the English standard of conventionality. Yet what his novels and in many ways his life constantly show is how extraordinary he really was. He was an original, he saw things differently from most, or perhaps it was just that he saw different things.

Anecdotes by those who knew him show him to have unusual priorities, to notice what often goes unnoticed.

Once, he said "buck nigger" too loudly in his pub (referring to the headwaiter in a curry place who is, he says, masquerading as an Indian), and a small, nervous, newly emigrated West Indian withered under the phrase not directed at him. When Green's companions later deplored the episode and said that they wished he had spotted the man, they were surprised to learn that in fact Green had had him under close observation. He had watched the man fiddle nervously with a little lace purse.

"A little lace purse?"

"Yes. So perfectly extraordinary. Going right back to Victorian times."¹³

Alan Ross describes a visit Green made to him in Italy. The first day he went down to the beach like everyone else but the rest of the time he spent by a pool in the garden, watching and occasionally prodding a water-snake; this became for him the whole interest of being in Italy. Ross says he was not at all interested in doing the things people are expected to do on holiday.¹⁴ Anthony Powell makes a comment about

Green's literary tastes:

Quite early on, Yorke was accustomed to take the line that he did not like Shakespeare (not a good sign as a rule), one characteristic of a standpoint equally uninfluenced by convention or fashion. At Oxford, perhaps before, he had a passion for Carlyle (an author tolerable to myself only in small doses), and (a taste I have never acquired) Doughty's Arabia Deserta; both indicating a congenial leaning towards obscure diction.¹⁵

Green's approach to novel writing shows a similar disregard for fashion.

There was a tension between his desire for conventionality (and certainly he was a typical upper middle-class man in his political outlook, such as it was) and his affinity with the extraordinary. Powell describes Green's picture of himself in Pack My Bag rather unfairly as of a young man "eternally hesitating between a stuffy conventionality, and scarcely less tiresome revolt against convention".¹⁶ The dichotomy cannot be dismissed as easily as that. Ambivalence is at the heart of Green's thought and experience and he acknowledged it. In a rather sad article printed in the Guardian in August 1973, just four months before

his death, he said: "'So I live, as I always have, in a double world, to one of which I am quite unconnected.'"¹⁷ It would be interesting to speculate to which of his worlds he felt unconnected; but it is in any case clear that he felt a kind of alienation from certain aspects of living.

Although it may seem that the contradictory elements of his personality were adequately absorbed in his adult life by his two occupations, it is far from certain that the harmonious interdependence of business and writing indicated by his public persona was ever achieved. Sebastian Yorke gives a slightly different impression of his father's career from what one is led to believe. He says that Green entered H. Pontifex and Sons, his father's firm, because it was expected and because he had to earn a living. He was by no means totally committed to his work and was indeed "fairly amateur" about it. At the age of fifty-three he was pleased to retire; he had only waited that long because Sebastian was not old enough to take over. Working in the factory helped his writing and he did not see the two things as incompatible, but writing and business cannot simply be seen as "parallel careers". His first love was writing and he states categorically: "I found my happiness in life not through earning my living or through gardening or fishing but through writing."¹⁸ Green made a show of not caring what people thought of his books. He loathed the majority of reviewers, whom he called "cannibal eccentrics"¹⁹, and said to Alan Ross: "I write for about six people (including myself) whom I respect and for no one else."²⁰ This suggests that he was not interested in success, but his close friend Goronwy Rees²¹ and his son say that this was not true. He had no respect for the opinions of intellectuals but minded very much his failure to reach the general reader at whom he aimed his novels. His defensive

postures have much to do with his relationship with his father, which will be discussed later, as well as his temperament.

Green was not a 'literary' person. Unlike many of his Oxford contemporaries he never turned to journalism - he wrote only a very few reviews and articles - and did not enter into many of the social activities of the various literary groups. Yet he had an intense involvement with literature, both his own and others'. He considered it vital to keep up with what was new in novels (he had little interest in poetry and drama) and he read at the rate of one or even two novels a day. In 'Unloving' he said: "I am a one novel a day man." Sebastian told John Russell that his father "would, for long stretches, go through two books a day".²² So he was connected with books but not with their world and this simultaneous detachment and involvement is an important feature of his vision.

Similarly mixed feelings pertain to his attitudes towards people. He found them interesting, especially those most unlike himself, and could be a witty, talkative companion. Most people who knew him liked him and Sebastian relates that he could send an audience into fits of laughter with the stories he told. Diana Mosley says that he was always ready to laugh at anything funny and was especially fond of sick jokes. Anthony Powell's Infants of the Spring reveals that the telling of stories was a habit acquired at an early age (p.67) and this is confirmed by Pack My Bag where Green says that when young he often concocted outrageous tales for the benefit of strangers (p.126). The nature of Green's interest in people is perhaps displayed by the fact that he liked to have different sets of friends: the locals at the pub, business associates, literary acquaintances (some of them old Oxford friends) and family connections, mostly to be found among the aristocracy. He was eager to hear and exchange gossip and not averse to listening to the private conversations of those around him in restaurants, delighting as he did in picking up

snatches of dialogue and speculating on the lives of the speakers.

However, he was not always sociable even in youth; although Peter Quennell remembers him as "notably gregarious and amorous", Harold Acton recollects that he was "quiet, meditative, . . . not much of a talker". Pack My Bag indicates that his need to talk all the time had its origin in a kind of excited, adolescent nervousness, aroused especially by female company.

When he went to Oxford he became aware for the first time of the im-

sion he made: "I had never watched myself before when talking and effort made me differently shy, that is I mercifully talked less." (p.216)

The melancholy which afflicted Green seems always to have been latent.

Pack My Bag he reveals one reason why he preferred variety in friends:

All through my life I have been plagued by enjoying first experiences too much, and that is true also of my first experiences of new people. How wonderful they seem the first few times, how clever, how beautiful, how right; how nice one seems to them because so interested, how well it all goes and then how dull it becomes and flat. I spend my time thinking there is nothing to say and people are always saying to me, "what is the matter?" (pp.63-4)

Fluctuation between absorption in social contact and disillusionment it was eventually halted by the abandonment of such contact.

Sebastian's explanation of his father's retreat from the outside world is that he simply became bored with his friends, as he had tired of his job, and no longer wished to see them. The only people he would see were young,

Sebastian's friends, presumably because they were a new, and thus interesting, experience.

Green not only put aside his work and friends, he also stopped writing after 1952. Although several projects were started and he used to dictate to Jenny Rees, Goronwy Rees's daughter and the Jenny of the Spectator article, few made much progress and none remains.²³ His failure to produce anything after Dotting seems to have a number of causes. Obviously illness was an important factor. In order to write he needed a great deal of physical as well as mental energy which he could no longer find. It may

also be that he felt he had written himself out; there was no more to say. Green was a tremendously careful writer, rewriting and rewriting until he was satisfied. That he was self-critical can be seen from the article 'An Unfinished Novel', in which he discusses and quotes from a discarded novel called Mood.²⁴ It is unlikely that he would have published anything he considered second-rate; and that too may explain his silence.

If interest resides in variety, Henry Green's life was not an interesting one. He was almost exceptional among his famous contemporaries, one of the "children of the sun" who turned away from all that soubriquet represents. Yet his life should not be ignored for he saw his life and his novels as closely connected. Goronwy Rees maintains that all Green's novels were autobiographical not only because many of the characters can be identified as people Green knew but, and this is more important, because he put so much of his energy and perceptions into them. He used his experience of love. 'An Unfinished Novel' begins "I was in love in the late twenties when I began a novel I am never to finish, called Mood". According to Goronwy Rees, all the novels were "provoked by some direct personal experience, usually by falling in love". Even his ideas on the novel, formulated in the early 1950s but relating in many ways to earlier work, evolved out of his responses to life not literature. After Oxford he never read criticism or literary theory but was content to take and transform what he saw and knew. This meant that a novel must be about life and have life, but the life he knew was not exceptional.

Being a person to whom not very much has happened in his life, having always been in easy circumstances, et cetera, I believe that the true life has nothing to do with sudden death, the atom bomb, et cetera. . . . I consider that the novel should be concerned with the everyday mishaps of ordinary life. 25

The extent to which the ambivalent personality I have tried to outline in the preceding pages is reflected in the novels is quite marked, especially with regard to the position of the narrator. He is quite detached from his characters for he rarely comments on them and does not enter God-like into their heads to analyze what they are thinking. Nevertheless he is involved with them and this shows through in the style. However stupid or trivial the characters may be, their feelings and actions are rendered interesting, even attractive, by the way they are described.

In Green's novels it is this 'intimate distance' which at one extreme precludes judgement and at the other avoids sentimentality. Both are absent from his work. Green himself loathed sentimentality and I think that the abhorrence of false emotion saves even those scenes verging on pretension from quite succumbing to it.

The uneasy amalgam of a conventional social position with extraordinary preoccupations and perceptions is also carried over to the novels. In theme and subject matter the novels are concerned with everyday mediocrity on various social levels but the treatment of such matter often surprises the reader with the unexpected and tips the balance into strangeness; the familiar becomes unfamiliar. The "trembling nerve" which Pritchett attributes to Green affects his writing considerably for it is a writing based on tensions, between words, phrases, thoughts, actions.

Most critics who have written on Green have concentrated on the novels and largely ignored the man. Out of the four books devoted to his work,²⁶ only two make even passing comments on his family background and education. It may be that his life has not been considered interesting or relevant enough to discuss - of course a writer's life should always take second place to his work - or it may be the lack of published information which has deterred the potential biographer. Whatever the reasons, the result has been that Green is thought of as a mystery man, an oddity for whom there is no place. This categorization has an undeniable effect on readings of his novels. Perhaps the most common epithet applied to them is 'elusive'. The first two sentences of Robert Ryf's pamphlet on Green illustrate the tendency: "Nearly everyone who writes about Henry Green ends up calling him elusive. Nearly everyone who reads him understands why."²⁷ It is significant that elusiveness is attributed here to both the man and his work - a shadowy man who writes shadowy novels. The critic's lack of knowledge of Green seems to prepare him for ignorance of what is happening in the novels. He fears that something has happened only he has missed it, perhaps because he does not know the author's preoccupations. This is quite the wrong way to read a Green novel because it puts a false emphasis on event, while denying the solidity of the experience novels such as Caught, Loving and Concluding describe. Events, causality, conclusions are not important to Green; his novels defy our expectations of what a novel should be as his life does not correspond with our notions of the 'literary life'.

Although Green is a highly original writer, he should not be left in a vacuum. As it is difficult to trace literary influence by finding allusions in his books, critics tend too easily to dismiss them from consideration as part of the English novel tradition. Edward Stokes

uses novels by Elizabeth Bowen and Ivy Compton-Burnett to make technical points about Green's writing but his intention is merely to show that while Bowen and Compton-Burnett are consistent in method and also in theme, Green is inconsistent in his choice of subject matter, this being reflected in changes of style. There seems to be no particular reason why these two novelists are chosen and Stokes makes no attempt at what could be an interesting comparison, especially with Ivy Compton-Burnett. Indeed, Orville Prescott sees the three novelists, along with Graham Greene, as a group²⁸ but Stokes does not acknowledge this or seek to challenge Prescott's facetious criticism. I think it is important to try to place Green in twentieth-century literature and in discovering something about his life one can also see how he compares with his contemporary writers, many of whom were his friends.

CHAPTER 2

Childhood: Pack My Bag

Henry Green's parents do not feature prominently in Pack My Bag, but what is said about them is significant. At the point in the book where Green is describing his parents' near fatal accident in Mexico (they often went to Mexico as Green's father was Chairman of the Mexican Railways Company and on this occasion, in 1923, they were injured when a train went off the rails), he says this about his relationship with them:

It is not necessary to enter into my relations with my parents. I believe we were never far from each other's thoughts, I do not suppose a day has passed when I have not thought of them, but apart from the few inevitable frictions and those mostly came later, we were on easy terms, not too close to that intimacy which strangles or too far from intimacy of any kind. (p. 145)

This is not strictly true, at least not with regard to his father, with whom he experienced more than the "few inevitable frictions". Goronwy Rees says that after his father died Green told him that he intended to write a new autobiography which would tell the truth. Yet even looking at the references to his father in Pack My Bag one can see hinted a relationship that is formal, competitive and without much affection. On page 19 we are told of the academic achievements of Henry's father and grandfather, none of which he could equal: "My grandfather had been able to read Homer in the original when he was seven, my father at that age had done much the same and I, all I had done was to get through Captain Marryat by then." Later he recalls something his father said with which he did not agree:

Once when I was older and we were sitting at peace on the lawn one Sunday evening, my father said "I can't bear to think of going back to the office tomorrow morning, it is like going back to school." I agreed to be polite but I remember thinking there could be nothing so bad as when one's holidays from school were over and also promising myself I would never forget this, never think the same when I was his age and I had laid the books on algebra for ever down. (p. 73)

This reveals a relationship based more on politeness than communication and also makes clear that Henry did not want to turn into the same

kind of man as his father. However, father and son had a shared interest which made them rivals. They played billiards together all the time, "every day for hours" (p. 177) and in the New York Herald Tribune Book Review he says: "My father played the game to win, and until I got good enough to beat him I minded losing."¹

What is said about Green's mother is quite different. Right at the beginning of the book he talks about his feeling for her. He has been recalling the gardener's dislike for his employer, which he made very obvious to Henry:

I only know that I adored her and that nothing he said began to alter this even; it was as though someone were bringing out mean things about adoration to another full of his first love, what was said came as laughter in the face of creation and this and my love for my mother is what I first remember. (p. 6)

He remembers intimate moments with his mother: "My mother used to say 'how much do you love me - more than toffee?' or 'more than this much', putting her thumb and forefinger so close together you could hardly see between." (p. 14). Sebastian says that Henry was very fond of his mother and she of him, but father and son never got on at all well. Henry intensely disliked his father yet strangely had a respect for him which affected his view of what constitutes a successful life.

Henry's mother was the Honourable Maud Evelyn Wyndham, daughter of the second Baron Leconfield, and there were aristocratic connections on his father's side too. Yorke is the family name of the Earls of Hardwicke and tracing back through five generations of Henry's family leads to the Right Reverend, the Honourable James Yorke, Bishop of Ely and a younger son of the first Earl of Hardwicke. This younger, but prosperous, branch of the family lived as country gentlemen at Forthampton Court, Tewkesbury, where Henry's elder brother, Gerald, still lives. Henry's father was Vincent Wodehouse Yorke, born in 1869. He went to Eton and in 1888 won a scholarship to King's College,

Cambridge, where he took firsts in both parts of the Classics Tripos and was elected a Fellow in 1895. After leaving Cambridge, he spent two years as an archaeologist in Greece and Asia Minor, publishing the results of his research in several academic journals.² He maintained his interest in archaeology throughout his life and he was Honorary Treasurer of the British School of Archaeology.

Vincent Yorke began his business career at the age of thirty, when his parents bought him H. Pontifex and Sons, a bankrupt coppersmiths. Pontifex had existed for some 150 years and supplied William Blake with his copper plates; engravings by Blake adorned the walls of Henry's office in London. Sebastian believes that the business was bought simply to give Vincent Yorke something to do; his partner, Hugh Smith, was bought in by his family for a similar reason. Goronwy Rees, however, maintains that Yorke needed an additional source of income to keep his wife, whom he married in 1899, in the comfort she was used to. The business, manufacturing equipment for the food and drinks trade, was a great success. Yorke sold the original premises in Fetter Lane to the Evening Standard, moved the works to Birmingham where they remained until 1958 and set up a London office in George Street, Marylebone. Having made Pontifex viable, he then turned to the City and, as in everything, he was a success. Over the years he held a number of important appointments. In 1906 he joined the board of the National Provident Institution for Mutual Life Assurance and in 1943, at the age of 74, was elected Chairman; he kept the post until 1953. He was also a Director of the Bank of Scotland and the Westminster Bank and Chairman of the Mexican Railways Company. Scholar and city gentleman, he also maintained his position of country squire at his home in Tewkesbury. He was a J.P. for Gloucestershire, Chairman of the Friends of Tewkesbury Abbey and a keen hunter. He never retired but worked at

Pontifex almost up to his death.

He seems to have been a selfish and unpleasant man, interested only in money, yet Henry wanted or needed to be like him in some way. Sebastian feels that Henry was disappointed that he never had a City career like his father and almost expected his father's appointments to be handed down to him, as if by inheritance. Vincent Yorke's attitude to his son's writing was as one might expect. He despised it, although if the novels had been best sellers, and thus made money, he would certainly have considered Henry a 'success' and respected him. But it seems that his view of Henry Green was formed early in his son's writing career. He sent Blindness (before it had found a publisher) to John Buchan, who was a friend of the family; Buchan's opinion was that the novel was worthless and the author should write no more.

It may say something about Green's feelings towards his parents that in Blindness John Haye's stepmother, who apparently bears a resemblance to Green's own mother so close that it caused some embarrassment when the book came out, is fully characterized while his father is dead and rarely mentioned. Green seems always to have had a good relationship with his mother who, like her husband, lived to a great age; she died in July 1963 when she was 88. Mrs Yorke thought quite differently from her husband about Henry's writing. She was extremely proud of him and used a press release service to obtain everything written on his work. However, according to Maurice Bowra, she was a little perturbed by Living: "'I don't know what he was doin' leavin' out the definite articles.'"³

Both Bowra and Anthony Powell refer to Mrs Yorke in their autobiographies and both focus on her talent for conversation and her idiosyncratic manner of speaking. Powell describes her as a "sparkling talker", "in contrast with her husband", with "an inimitable style in

anecdote".⁴ Bowra echoes this: "She was extremely quick and clever and witty and scored one off with great brilliance."⁵ The character of her speech is very interesting, "sporting vernacular . . . deliberately decorated with the brilliantly pedantic phrase".⁶ Bowra gives some examples: "She talked the clipped language of her time and class and not only dropped the g from 'huntin'' and 'shooting'', but managed somehow to drop it from words which did not contain it, as in 'Cheltin'ham' and 'Chippin'ham'."⁷ It seems likely that Green's fascination with how people talk, both the characteristic modes of class or region and, especially, individual deviations in expression, began through listening to his mother and the Gloucestershire people in the place he was born. Pack My Bag reveals that Vincent Yorke too was interested in language; studying the unfamiliar words he heard in the conversation of the local people was a hobby. The following anecdote, however, reveals the perils of considering language as a scholarly exercise rather than a way of life:

. . . much of their speech was fantastic and my father, an amateur of it, was always consulting his Dialect Dictionary. Sometimes he was able to use a word of theirs as once, when describing an exact kind of dryness in a pear, he brought out an Elizabethan word acquired by listening over years. He was at once corrected with a Saxon monosyllable he had never heard and quickly making his way home he turned this up to find it meant a drier state of dryness.

(Pack My Bag, pp. 10-11)

Bowra thinks that Green inherited more from his mother than from his father: "From him [his father] Henry inherited his appearance and some of his intellectual powers, but his other gifts came from his mother."⁸ His mother may have been most influential on the way he wrote but it was his father who had the greater effect on the way he lived.

Green was born Henry Vincent Yorke on 29 October 1905. There is little to tell about his early childhood; the first six years of his life are covered by less than eleven pages in Pack My Bag which conclude with this summary: ". . . some months in London of which I remember nothing and the others down at home of which I remember, as you have seen, hardly

anything at all." (p.15). This short opening section is characterized by questions which exhibit a sense of uncertainty about the events described. Looked at from an adult point of view, his past actions arouse speculation with regard to his memory and his interpretation. Two people he recollects are his grandfather and his nanny:

He liked everything to be tidy and they say that when he went to bed he used to wash his beard in rose water and then put it in a bag with two flaps to go over his ears. Or is this the sort of thing they tell children to please them? (p.13)

Why can I hardly remember her? Only once at all clearly and then she was sick after eating fish much later when we were in the second house in London. . . . What was she like and did she ever speak to Poole? (p.9)

The first chapter sets the tone and themes of the book and also indicates Green's attitude to autobiography. His "self portrait" is not in any way a conventional social autobiography in the manner of Powell's To Keep the Ball Rolling or even Waugh's A Little Learning. He does not attempt to give a definitive or complete picture and the kind of material he uses is not always what one would expect. Pack My Bag contains no family history, although both his parents came from notable families. Unlike Waugh and Powell he shows no interest in tracing ancestry. Incidentally Sebastian Yorke appears to have a similar disregard for family connections. Green refers only rarely to real people in his book. He claims that the factual details of his life would be of no interest to the reader:

Is it presumptuous to write about oneself and is that why it is easier to write about what one has been told when it has no bearing on what one has experienced? Is it fair to expect people to be interested if it is boring and hard work to put down and probably so dull to read. /sic / It may be worth doing if there are others interested in all sorts of people, interested enough that is to read any sort of person's life which is not made up of running away to sea or of privations. (pp. 11-12)

There is a curious kind of arrogance in this denigration of his life as an object of interest for what Green expects the reader to accept in the place of a social history which includes information on many people

other than the autobiographer is a series of private, seemingly trivial events and feelings remembered and recorded almost at random. Perhaps the comments quoted above are intended as a challenge to the reader interested only in the "sort of person's life which is . . . made up of running away to sea or of privations". Green is offering us a different kind of life-story in which there is no attempt to describe exciting events or people, yet it does have a coherent rationale. In 'There It Is' John Russell mentions Green's early notebooks in which he made a list of ways to remember, including "Remembering by significant irrelevance". The "significant irrelevance" plays an important part in Pack My Bag; many of the little incidents he mentions, his encounters with the maid with bad breath, bumping into a girl in the street, a bicycle ride with a war-shattered Australian soldier, do not at first appear to deserve the importance they are given. However it is soon clear what Green is doing. He is suggesting that such incidents are typical of the randomness of memory. He also implies that the aleatory nature of memory can be revealing in that a trifling event can sometimes become a formative experience. Pack My Bag is as much a book about memory, in the mould of Proust's A La Recherche du Temps Perdu⁹, as it is the story of a man growing up. Reminiscence gives a significant perspective on life, "How one changed from boy to man", yet, as Green the novelist shows, it can also be destructive. Living in the past, as Charley in Back does, results in madness, and thinking too much about past actions is potentially destructive, leading in Caught to Pye's suicide. In Blindness John Hays emphasizes after he goes blind that he must 'see' in a new way, must not try to recapture old ways; his turning point is "beginning again", unoppressed by the past. Green says in Pack My Bag: "It is wrong to try to recreate days that are done. All one can do is search them out and put them down as close as possible to what they now seem." (p. 143).

This relates directly to what I noted earlier, that Green uses adult experience to interpret childhood memories. The desire to live in the present, while making creative use of the past, was always natural to Green. He did not, for instance, look back at his own novels and was never known to read others' work more than once. Writers such as Dostoevsky who impressed him when he was young did not continue to interest him; he was always moving on.

In Pack My Bag Green does not aim at particularisation. Although he records subjectively personal experiences he tries to make them generally applicable. Without avoiding the truth he fictionalises his life. Although he does often "recreate days that are done" extremely vividly it is not so much an attempt to recapture the past as an invitation to the reader to share the experience, to compare it with his own memories: "Our memories when they are written should . . . not break on a reader's communion with his own but only remind him by the sound so faint of ours." (Pack My Bag, pp. 143-4).

Green's main statement of intent comes in the most quoted passage in Pack My Bag:

Names distract, nicknames are too easy and if leaving both out as it often does makes a book look blind then that to my mind is no disadvantage. Prose is not to be read aloud but to oneself alone at night, and it is not quick as poetry but rather a gathering web of insinuations which go further than names however shared can ever go. Prose should be a long intimacy between strangers with no direct appeal to what both may have known. It should slowly appeal to feelings unexpressed, it should in the end draw tears out of the stone, and feelings are not bounded by the associations common to place names or to persons with whom the reader is unexpectedly familiar. (p.88)

At the age of six and three-quarters¹⁰ Green went to a private preparatory school in Kent, unnamed in Pack My Bag, of which most of the pupils (including Anthony Powell) were officers' sons. Powell remembers his very first meeting with Green; he had come to look round the school:

After tea we were taken over the premises. In the gymnasium the junior boys were marching round. The Headmaster called one of them out, and questioned him. The boy, just about my own age, good-looking, dark, rather plump, gave his replies in a quiet manner. He was Henry Yorke . . . , who was to be a close friend for many years.11

Powell is not very charitable about the school, pointing out in particular its academic inadequacies. Dredged up to replace regular masters who had been called up, the male teachers were likely to be old or wounded, the females incompetent. Of course Powell did enter the school in 1916, right in the middle of the war, while Green was there from 1912, and this may explain why Green remembers it as a fairly good school. However, even he says that they had a "sorry crew of masters" (Pack My Bag, p.32). Powell shows little interest in offering reminiscences of his prep school days, though he does talk at some length about the beginnings of his friendship with Green.

In the quite long section of Pack My Bag which deals with early schooldays Green concentrates on the idiosyncracies of the school and on a number of childhood experiences and feelings which must surely strike a chord in most readers. What he learnt at school seems not to have been academic but emanated from the headmaster who existed in Green's mind, as a "heroic man, colossal figure", almost to the exclusion of all the other teachers.

He may now at this distance seem harsh and bad-tempered. But he taught us more than all the others and most of what we learned was not book-learning. Even if he had appalling views on life and on how one should try to live at least he was positive, there was something to cling to, to unlearn later on. (p.25)

Green never had a great deal of respect for "book-learning", as will become clearer when I describe his opinion of Oxford and his reasons for leaving.

He records very vividly some of the unforgettable trials of a young child at boarding school: the lavatories which would not lock, the lack of privacy, the terrors of gymn lessons, homesickness and the dread of

showing it, bewilderment at the headmaster's brisk and inadequate talk on the facts of life. All these things were much more real, because closer, to Green than the war which seemed remote, its only immediate effect on the boys being a reduction in the quantity and quality of the food they received. Although relations were dying, Green and his fellows were not affected by the war until air raids brought it near enough to experience.

Green's eldest brother had been to the school before him and had been one of its brightest pupils. The headmaster had great hopes that Henry would equal his brother's achievements but Green admits he did not live up to expectations. Powell maintains that Green exaggerates his academic failings and that he was actually reasonably proficient at school but whether or not that is so Green certainly did not excel. This brother, whose name was Philip, died at an early age at Eton, where he was a 'colleger', a King's Scholar, as was Vincent Yorke. In Pack My Bag Green describes his reactions to this tragedy. Philip was six years older than Henry and they did not have a very close relationship, mainly because they rarely came in contact with each other. He hero-worshipped both of his (older) brothers but he did not have for them the kind of feeling which would cause heartbreak when Philip died. Green says "It meant absolutely nothing to me at all" (p.80); but he did feel guilt that he could not feel a deeper sense of loss.

Gerald, Green's other brother, also older than him, did not go to the same prep school as Philip and Henry, but all three went to Eton, which Henry entered in the summer of 1918. Again Green does not specify his school in Pack My Bag, referring to it only as a "public school . . . down by a river in a deadly stretch" (p.88). He describes it as a "humane concentration camp" and maintains that he hated it, extending gratitude only on the grounds that it gave him a chance to get his reading done (p.95). When Henry arrived, Gerald was already senior in the school, Head of

House, in the school cricket eleven and in Sixth Form, which was a group of the school's top twenty boys. Later, he was also elected to 'Pop', an exclusive society of prefects, elected by their fellows, which wielded great power over the other boys. Green says that his brother's elevated status afforded him a certain amount of protection but that he suffered for it when Gerald left to go to Cambridge. One of the privileges he gained was that he and Gerald ate tea together.

But I was more fortunate still because of an unprecedented thing, I had tea every day with my brother. . . . You may think it natural for a brother to do what he did, it may seem the more natural the older and more important he might be that he should do what he could for his younger brother, but if you think this you must remember that our society at school was primitive. . . . Our teas therefore came to be accepted not without scandal and without other brothers even attempting to do the same. It was a seven days' wonder which persisted and for which I was duly beaten a year later, the first day of the new term after he had gone up to Cambridge. (pp.98-9)

This brother, who had such a brilliant school career, rather as his father had before, and went on to obtain a first in History at Trinity College, Cambridge, seems to have reacted completely against his upbringing and education later in life. He, as the elder brother, was supposed to join his father in Pontifex, according to Sebastian Yorke, but he became interested in black magic and fell in with Aleister Crowley. At present he lives on the family estate; he married Angela Vivien in 1937 and has three children.

Green's experiences of Eton can be found in two sources, Pack My Bag and Blindness, additional information being provided by Powell's autobiography. Although the diary part of Blindness cannot be read too literally as an account of Green's adolescent years, it is probably based on fact, and it is interesting to compare the attitudes of John Haye and Henry Green to school. The protagonist of Blindness, a novel started after all when Green was still at Eton, is full of enthusiasm while the thirty-five-year-old Green denigrates both the school and his position in it. Several of the incidents he recalls in Pack My Bag occur also in

Blindness and while the 'self portrait' confirms the duality in his personality which I have already described, the novel shows us that the young Henry Yorke was rather different.

Pack My Bag gives the impression that the young Green veered between the impulse to be unconventional and the desire to be accepted as part of the group, a mixture of feelings common to many adolescents trying to find their own distinctive personality without becoming misfits. His attempts to be different numbered among them the acquisition of a straw hat:

This hat was like those which some years later girls wore to sunbathe in only there were two holes cut on either hand for those upstanding horse's ears with fur inside, the cuckolds.

This horse's sunbonnet is the extent of my emancipation at that time. Not having drawn enough attention by exhibiting pictures of old houses I had tried the curiosity of bird pictures. When this failed, and I suppose things brought back from abroad if not too big got by in spite of being "awful", I had gone for this odd hat which I had painted in alternate rings of red and yellow.

Can anything more ridiculous be imagined? You may think I wore it to be conspicuous but I cannot remember ever doing this, it hung on a nail and was as pointless as any act in that age of exquisite pointlessness, when all there is to do is to grow up. (pp.110-11)

In Blindness John Hays describes the incident like this:

Have bought the most gorgeous sun hat for a horse in straw for sixpence, and have painted it in concentric rings. . . . In the ear-holes I am going to put violently swearing colours, orange and magenta, in ribbon I got for nothing by being nice to a shopwoman at Bowlay's. Our little John is getting on, isn't he?

The hat is a masterpiece, and being so has, of course, started a violent controversy. Those who consider it merely boulderism, and those who think it amusing, talk very seriously together and stop when I approach, while the faithful come in occasionally to tell me what the others have said. (p.8)

The major difference between these two descriptions is in the degree of self-consciousness. John Hays revels in the "exquisite pointlessness" of the act and the attention it draws from his friends, and tends to overstate the effect it has; it "started a violent controversy". Henry Green is faintly embarrassed by the whole affair and suggests that it did not even achieve the desired effect of attracting notice.

Green also details in Pack My Bag the agonies of exclusion he suffered when everyone he knew became involved in playing fives:

"Loneliness began for me now fierce, desperate, taking on an importance out of all proportion to its quality which was that of a boy in his 'teens who thought he was too good for pleasures not shared in conversation." (p.135). However, he does state that he had some friends and that "there was a set I was half in with" (p.111). Membership of this 'set' dominates the diary section of Blindness. John Haye has a close and enthusiastic relationship with three fellow pupils, named in the novel as B.G., Seymour and H.B., but in real life respectively Robert Byron and (almost certainly) Brian Howard and Harold Acton. It is known that Green and Byron were good friends (Infants of the Spring, p.109) and Marie Lancaster's book on Howard reveals that Green liked Howard:

'I think he was quite the most handsome boy I'd ever seen - and remained so as a man up till the war. . . . He was a brilliant conversationalist, even as a boy, and was able to dominate people by his conversation. . . . He became a great social success at Eton. . . .

'He had tremendous charm - and could put it on when he wanted to. Harold Acton and Brian, who were great rivals, started the Eton Society of Arts, which met once a week for two years, and I was the Secretary. I was always running after them.' 12

Howard obviously recognized himself in Blindness: "'I suppose you've seen Henry Yorke's book? (Blindness). I think it's rather good, and the Eton part about us all is amusing.'" 13 In Pack My Bag there is a veiled reference to Brian Howard as "Our leading spirit, an extraordinarily able and amusing man for his age" (p.167).

One of the things which held this group together was the Society of Arts, mentioned above by Green, which was established by Howard and others in February 1922. Under the supervision of the art master, Mr Evans, they held Saturday evening meetings in the art room where they had discussions, lectures and papers on a variety of ambitious subjects such as Post-Impressionism and Oriental Art. Members included Harold and William Acton,

Byron, Powell and Hugh Lygon, a suggested prototype for Sebastian Flyte in Waugh's Brideshead Revisited. Green is very offhand about the part he played in the society:

Characteristically enough I was made Secretary. Too cautious to go entirely on one side or the other I listened to many a long rigmarole from the games fiends about "that awful Society of yours, I can't understand what you find in those aesthetes." It was a fearful release, I kept my feet in both camps, defended Rembrandt in the debates when they said he painted with treacle and told the house prefects the debaters were not really bad fellows. (p.142) Now when the Society of Arts was formed I had been made Secretary appropriately enough, that is, the kind of executive who does what the others tell him and has no importance. (p.167)

John Haye has no such reservations about the society:

Have just had a letter from the biggest swell I wrote to, saying he will come down to the Society on 14 November. It really is too splendid: he is the most flaming tip-top swell who has written thousands of books, as well as his drawings, which are very well known indeed. All these people are so nice and encouraging about the Society, which is splendid. . . . Last night was the gala invitation night of the Society, and was an immense success, where I had secretly feared failure. . . . The Society is now positively booming, even I.R.C. having thawed into enthusiasm. I think it is a permanency now. (Blindness, p.19)

On one point the two versions agree. The Arts Society did not win universal approval and Green states that many Eton pupils did not want to become involved with the "awful" lot. It caused a certain amount of official displeasure too but it seems that the sense of going out on a limb was largely contributory to the pleasure it gave its members. Robert Byron confirms this in his Cherwell review of Blindness:

The opposition of "a great public school" to the project was unanimous: and the attitude of the masters resembled that of someone discovering the first symptoms of leprosy in his mother. As shown above, [Byron has quoted an extract from Blindness] these suspicions were eventually quietened; though naturally not eradicated - the Society would have lost its incentive to existence, if they had been.¹⁴

Powell, however, views it differently:

Looking back now, the Eton Society of Arts seems essentially the group expression of certain individuals rather than a general need for the school. So far from Yorke's implications of hatred and derision, my own enquiries suggest that, among contemporaries and near-contemporaries, only a few boys had ever heard of the Society and its activities.¹⁵

The most significant venture of the Society of Arts was the publication in March 1922 of the first and only issue of a magazine called the Eton Candle, brainchild of Brian Howard. Strangely, or perhaps typically, Green made no contribution to this magazine, although in Blindness John Hays mentions writing a story called 'Sonny' for one of the Noat magazines (Seymour's Noat Lights, the title an obvious allusion to the Eton Candle). The magazine consisted mainly of poems, stories and pictures, work by a select group including the Actons, Sacheverell Sitwell, Alan Clutton-Brock and Anthony Powell. Brian Howard contributed poems and a story and put on the first page his article entitled 'The New Poetry', a rather precious and indulgent piece on Pound, H.D., Amy Lowell and the Sitwells.

Despite any published evidence of his involvement in the Eton magazine, the Arts Society seems to have been important to Green's development as a writer:

We were allowed to form a Society of Arts.

This point is a watershed, after this there was no turning back. I was determined to be a writer, the diary I began to keep with this in view was full of loud shouts about it, and a nom de plume was chosen, of all names Henry Michaelis. (Pack My Bag, p. 163)

. . . it gave me confidence even if there was nothing in it so that, like everyone else, I began to write a novel. (p. 172)

The discussions at Arts Society meetings and the writings of fellow Etonians may not have influenced Green at all; it was rather the atmosphere, the general interest in the act of writing, which caused Green to start work on his first novel.

The Arts Society itself did not outlast its founders. Powell says that after a while, as its more energetic members left for university, it lost its spirit and when the staging of puppet shows was suggested as an activity, Powell himself resigned (Infants of the Spring, p. 115). Green was still an active participant at this time: John Hays refers animatedly to a marionette show (Blindness, p. 31) and this is mentioned also in Pack My Bag (p. 112). Sir Colin Anderson

remembers a Society of Arts puppet show in which Henry Yorke did the electric lighting effects for a strange production, an amalgam of the story of Hansel and Gretel and the music of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite.¹⁶

It was in January 1924, a few months before leaving Eton, that Green began to write Blindness. It took him sixteen months to complete; an early typescript of the novel (now lodged in the British Library) notes the exact moment he reached the end - 11.30, May 30, 1925 - at which time Green was not yet 20 years old. The novel was partly written in France, where Green went for the summer of 1924 before going up to Oxford. He was sent by his parents to polish up his French which he no doubt did in the dance halls of the Rue Fontaine where, as ever "insatiable for conversation", he talked to French "tarts" commended by Green for their conversational rather than their seductive skills. After Paris he went to the South of France where "from one o'clock till three [he] would labour at the book" (Pack My Bag, p.191).

CHAPTER 3

Oxford: Blindness

The Alphabetical List of the Resident Members of the University of Oxford 1924-7 records that H.V. Yorke entered Magdalen in the Michaelmas Term, 1924 and for most of his first year he was working on Blindness. Early versions of the title suggest that the novel was clearly intended as a description of the maturing process: Young and Old was altered to Progression (at this time Green's pseudonym was to be Henry Browne, another variant on colour which is so important in nearly all of the novels), finally to become Blindness. The division of the novel into three parts, 'Caterpillar', 'Chrysalis' and 'Butterfly', which remained throughout writing, also indicates that the book is about growing up, about a boy coming to terms with himself. Of course the writer was scarcely grown up himself and the novel is naive in some ways, though whether it be character, author or both it is dangerous to speculate.

Although Blindness was written by May 1925, it was not published until late 1926. As previously mentioned, John Buchan's chilly reception of the novel was disappointing and must have shaken the young novelist's confidence in his work. Anthony Powell suggested that Green show his novel to Thomas Balston at Duckworth but he was not impressed and turned it down.¹ However, Dent agreed to publish Blindness and a Mr. Pocock gave some advice on revisions. Green, still worried about some parts of the book, wrote to Edward Garnett, then reader for Jonathan Cape, to seek his help.² In Garnett he found a sympathetic and helpful friend. Green describes their first meeting:

You met Garnett like this. You submitted a first novel, out of the blue, to the publisher of your choice after, in my case, my parents knowing John Buchan, had sent it to this writer who replied, probably rightly, that Henry would never make an author: then you waited in some agony for weeks, until at last you got a letter inviting you to call on his reader, a Mr. Edward Garnett, in Pond Place, Chelsea, London.

Green found Garnett's suggestions for changes invaluable. His respect for him is obvious:

But what did he know how to do, and yet - why is this? - could not do himself, was to write dialogue and narrative. In that field he was supreme.

He would take out a blue pencil and he would never go through more than one page. The words he struck out were magically unexpected; the result, when one had time to ponder it, was alchemy. He had a unique genius to show what could be done, and that, with his exquisite taste, became an inspiration which still, I am sure, remains with many of us now.³

So, with Garnett's assistance, Blindness was published by Dent. Its publication is noted in a history of the publisher.

Two first novels are worthy of recall here - both by young men, but representing life at opposite extremes of opportunity and environment. Henry Green's novel Blindness was published in 1926, but he started it while still at Eton, and it was finished at Oxford. F.C. Boden's Miner, on the other hand, was written out of the experience of a youth spent in the coal mines.⁴

Blindness did not attract much notice in England. However, it was published simultaneously in the United States by Dutton, Dent's American counterpart, and received several interested reviews. New Republic commented on its "imaginative power".

As a psychological document it is far too convincing for comfort in its classification as fiction. . . . The book is remarkable as the very inner sense of the experience of blindness is suffered by a person naturally hyper-sensitive to beauty in all its forms, material and moral. Reading it, we are sadder but much wiser in this revelation of subtler sense, more penetrating perception than that of sight.⁵

The Saturday Review of Literature was also complimentary, the anonymous reviewer finding it "an unusual and compelling book" and "frankly reminiscent of the Russians".⁶ The latter comment is an apt one for at this time Green was indeed impressed by Russian writing, particularly that of Dostoievsky, Gogol, Turgeniev and Chekhov.

At least one Englishman reviewed Blindness and that was Green's friend, Robert Byron. Under the initials B.G., the name given to the Byron character in Blindness, he wrote a piece in the Cherwell, which for a time he edited, about the Eton Society of Arts and some of its members which makes clear the similarity between events related in Blindness and the true facts of the situation. About the novel he says little, merely

recounting the story and drawing attention to Green's innovative approach: "Here is a further stage in the modern technique of writers. The 'complex' has been left behind. And the human mind, no longer a string-bag of momentary lusts and aberrations, functions as a whole."⁷ Blindness was also noticed by the Times Literary Supplement whose reviewer commented on its "individual style and a clever insight" and found the descriptive writing "able and delightful".⁸

It is a remarkable achievement that among all the future famous writers at Oxford with him, Green was the first to produce anything substantial. Although many others dallied noisily with literary efforts, little of lasting value emerged. Harold Acton brought out a few slim volumes of poetry, including Aquarium, and Robert Byron Europe in the Looking Glass but only Green managed a book which can stand critical analysis fifty years later. Byron's book, the first of a number of travel books, was reviewed by 'Henry Green' as the only contribution he made to the Cherwell.⁹ He is kind to his friend, the word 'brilliant' appearing several times. He says "it is a very valuable piece of work which it would be crass stupidity not to have by us".

Green's time at Oxford was not profitable in an academic sense. His son says that he did not go up with the intention of obtaining a degree and it is interesting that Sebastian did the same as his father in leaving Oxford after the second year. Green did not consider formal education particularly important. In his novels universities never feature and there are very few 'educated' characters. The exceptions are in Concluding but the scientist Mr Rock has at the beginning of the novel long ago abandoned academe for a life devoted to the care of his pig, his goose and his ailing daughter, and the 'school' featured is more like a factory for civil servants than an educational institution; the possibility for individual growth is denied in an atmosphere of regimentation and restriction. However, the instances of rebellion in the novel show

that Green saw that individuality cannot be totally repressed; the miscreant Mary is not reclaimed by the system.

Whatever Green did at Oxford, it was not the formal study of English literature. He was officially reading English but he treated the criticism of literature with contempt: "Literature is not a subject to write essays about." (Pack My Bag, p. 213). His tutor was C.S. Lewis and according to Maurice Bowra the two did not get on at all well: "He was irritated and bored by C.S. Lewis, and wanted material for his next book."¹⁰

Green describes in Pack My Bag the excesses of his first term at Oxford.

I was usually put to bed about two in the morning to be called at midday with an orange and a brandy and soda. Lunch was my breakfast, taken alone and always fried sole and sausages because I thought that by not varying my food I was giving my stomach less to do. I felt extremely ill and every day went alone to a cinema after which I tried to write. The novel was almost finished and it became the last foothold to write just one more page a day, the last line of defence because I was miserable in fits and starts and felt insane. (p. 201)

He maintains that for that first term only he was "as a friend said, 'the most popular man of his year' and dined out every night" (p. 201). This bizarre mixture of frantic, obsessive socializing and solitary days of film viewing and writing is focal in Green's personality: gregariousness and fascination with observation and conversation joined to a need for private experience.

After the revelling had subsided a little, Green settled to learning social and intellectual skills. "We played at being gentlemen", he says (p. 208), and he saw this time as "the blessed time of summing up what we imagined we were to find when the world was to fall at our feet upon our entry" (p. 209). Although he was not impressed by his studies, he was influenced by the people he met, both students and young dons, among them Bowra, Classics Tutor at Wadham, who offered "everything intellectually

the best": "We should have been fools if we had not jumped at the chance that contact with such minds offered." (p. 203). Green does not appear to have played a major part in formalized Oxford activities - debating societies, magazines, sport. In the Cherwell he is mentioned only twice, apart from the book reviews already referred to. His name is found on a 'gossip' page:

MR. HENRY "GREEN"

is said to have experienced that famous passage in Blindness which deals with Sardines within the precincts of the Club, and it was from the club window that Mr. Byron made his famous speech on Social Reform which was so grossly misunderstood by the authorities.¹¹

This paragraph obviously was included to give the editor a chance to keep his own name prominent. Otherwise we learn only that H. Yorke entered for the University Challenge Cue¹² which shows that he maintained the interest in billiards, which he played so competitively with his father.

Green's friends at Oxford included those he had made at Eton - Powell, Acton, Howard - and many others among his contemporaries later became well-known writers. Powell went to Oxford a year before Green but for a time both lived at 8 King Edward Street, accommodation shared with three other students long forgotten. Powell was at Balliol reading history and he did stay the course, obtaining a third in Modern History in 1927. Others who came up to Oxford with Powell were Peter Quennell, Cyril Connolly, Alfred Duggan, the historian and novelist, Graham Greene and John Heygate, who married Waugh's first wife, Evelyn Gardner, in 1930.¹³ Waugh himself left Oxford at the end of the Summer Term 1924 so, although they were later friends, he and Green would not have crossed paths at university. Tom Driberg, Louis MacNeice, John Betjeman, Kenneth Clark and, a year below Green, W.H. Auden, were at Oxford in the mid-1920s too. Among the influential dons, apart from Maurice Bowra who was undoubtedly important to Green and all his generation,¹⁴ Kenneth Bell, Moral Tutor to Powell and Alfred Duggan, Roy Harrod, Economics Tutor at

Christ Church, and F.F. Urquhart, Connolly's tutor at Balliol, played an important part in the lives of the 'aesthete' undergraduates of the mid-1920s.

A number of these people remember Green but their comments on him are usually brief and often ambiguous. In his autobiography The Marble Foot Peter Quennell lists Green among his Oxford friends:

Though much could be said in dispraise of the Oxford I knew, it proved a nursery of distinguished writers. Among my friends and friendly acquaintances between 1923 and 1925 were Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Cyril Connolly, Anthony Powell, the brilliant ill-fated Henry Yorke (who wrote under the pseudonym Henry Green), David Cecil, . . . 15

Green is the only one amidst this glittering group to be favoured with a qualifier. When I asked why he described Green as "the brilliant ill-fated", Quennell referred to the latter years of Green's life, the time he "fell victim to a particularly disabling form of melancholia - I suppose that is the right word". He emphasizes, however, that the young Green was likeable and "good company" but he cannot remember Green ever taking part in any literary projects at Oxford.

Maurice Bowra says that Green made a "powerful impression" on him and asserts that Green had little in common with the "startling flamboyance" of the Etonian aesthetes with whom he mixed. He comments on his "powerful and perceptive mind" and the "strange originality of his outlook". He also reveals through several anecdotes Green's fascination with women;¹⁶ this is echoed by both Quennell and Goronwy Rees and is marked in most of the novels.

Harold Acton makes a reference to Green in his memoirs and brackets him with Powell as a "discreet" participant in the Acton/Howard activities.

Henry had started a novel called Blindness, of which he never spoke, about an Etonian adolescent going blind and adjusting himself to his loss of sight. . . . Among the fiction of the 'thirties his novels stand apart.¹⁷

In Brian Howard Sir Roy Harrod reminisces about Howard and his 'Oxford Set':

Then there was Henry Yorke, . . . He did not talk very much in those days. Handsome . . . and with dark hair, he would sit quietly at the table. When he did utter, it was always something very good, a little mordant. (p. 212)

Harold Acton also saw Green as something of an onlooker, "quiet, meditative, keenly observant, not much of a talker". Green himself explains his silence as shyness in the presence of so many brilliant people:

I had never watched myself before when talking and the effort made me differently shy, that is I mercifully talked less. It had this effect even outside the dons' circle, I began to carry it when amongst those with whom I had been the man of my year and for years afterwards . . . (Pack My Bag, p. 216)

Comments made on Green at Oxford have certain elements in common.

First, his physical appearance attracts attention; his almost Mediterranean dark looks are noted by Bowra too. "He was unusually dark and compared not inaptly with an olive."¹⁸ He is viewed with respect; despite his portrayal in Pack My Bag of his dissolute first term in Oxford, his maturity and detachment were recognized by his friends. He spoke only when he had something worth saying and this may have been the inception of his life-long habit of listening to the talk of others which helped develop his immense skill in writing convincing dialogue.

Oxford in the early to mid-1920s was an exciting place to be for those of the aesthete brigade. In his book Children of the Sun, which follows through the lives of the generation of Acton and Howard, Martin Green describes Oxford existence. It was hedonistic and elegant, its members, many of them very rich, devoted to buying clothes, collecting Victoriana, playing expensive and public jokes, attending parties and getting drunk, and, of course, reading, writing and discussing literature. Harold Acton started a new magazine, the Oxford Broom, which included Waugh's first published story, and wrote poetry which he declaimed "by megaphones from the balcony of his rooms, to groups passing below in Christ Church meadow".¹⁹

A number of clubs existed, or were started by the aesthetes, the most important among them the Hypocrites and the Railway Club. The Railway Club began in 1923 and Green refers to it in Pack My Bag:

Now at Oxford we had formed a railway club because one of us [probably John Sutro, its founder] knew by heart whole tracts of Bradshaw. Once in each term we hired a restaurant car attached to an outgoing train and had dinner on it until the time came to be uncoupled and sent back by another. We drank a great deal on these trips and wore dinner jackets. That is dressing to startle. (pp. 221-2)

In Evelyn Waugh and His World there is a photograph of the Railway Club 1925 including among the members Harold Acton, Hugh Lygon, Bryan Guinness (Diana Mitford's first husband), Brian Howard, Roy Harrod and Henry Yorke.²⁰

The Hypocrites Club is described by Anthony Powell:

. . . two or three rooms over a bicycle-shop in an ancient half-timbered house at the end of St. Aldate's, . . . The Club had been founded by a group of Trinity and Oriel men, relatively serious and philosophy-talking, so the legend ran, . . . When I first set foot in the Club transmogrification had gone a long way, though still short of the metamorphosis, on the whole regrettable, into a fashionably snobbish undergraduate haunt; before final closure by the authorities, ostensibly for being outside the University licencing area, but in effect for rackety goings-on.²¹

Green makes a veiled reference to this club in the autobiography. He describes a visit he made to Oxford while he was still at Eton:

The friends who had already left school took me down at night to a club which had its rooms in the slums of the town. The reason why it was out of the way in one of those back streets must have been that the members made so much noise. It was a drinking club but was more, in the terrific roar of its evenings, the quarrels the shouting and extravagance it was a sign of the times.

On this first visit Green became merely "tipsy" from "the noise, the heat, the smoke, the crowd and not so much the drink" but later visits were rather different. "I cannot describe the place any further because on all occasions I went there afterwards I never was sober once."

(pp. 196-7)

Of course not all Oxford students belonged to these clubs and many writers of the period speak of the hostility between the 'aesthetes' and the 'hearties', the sporting element of the university. This antagonism became explicit in the rowing club 'Bump Suppers' when the hearties would launch all-out attacks on aesthete victims. Green describes with horror these "orgies" and saw the hearties as a real threat to his well-being on occasion. Powell characteristically deflates Green's stories of attacks or near-attacks. "Yorke, quiet in demeanour and dress, with no reason whatever for being unpopular, was not in the smallest danger of being, say, debugged on the night of the bump-supper."²² This may be another example of Green's self-dramatization but the paranoid fears that obsessed Green later in life might have been present even in youth for Powell does acknowledge that he may have "underrated Green's neurotic pressures". Certainly Green did not spend the usual two years in college but moved out to the house in King Edward Street after his first year; the reason could have been dislike of the threatening atmosphere of the college.

Powell gives an interesting account of his friendship with Green at Oxford, in particular their association with Maurice Bowra. Green's family had connections with Bowra so Green immediately became acquainted with him and he and Powell "used obsessively to mull over together Bowra parties and Bowra lore".²³ They had lunch and dinner parties together at King Edward Street to one of which they invited Bowra and Kenneth Bell. Inviting these two together was a great risk for the two dons had a very different approach to students; both were popular but they belonged to "such disparate categories of don". However, the party was a success. Bowra's appeal to students is easy to see. He was notable for his wit and hedonism:

The Bowra innovation was not only to proclaim the paramount claims of eating, drinking, sex . . . but to accept, as absolutely natural, open snobbishness, success worship, personal vendettas, unprovoked malice, disloyalty to friends, reading other people's letters . . . the whole bag of tricks of what most people think, feel, and often act on, yet are ashamed of admitting that they do, feel, and think. 24

His very 'modern' attitudes were attractive to the young undergraduates. Bowra was in fact only twenty-six when Powell and Green knew him but he appeared "grown-up" to them.

Although by all accounts Oxford absorbed Henry Green and many aspects of it impressed and interested him, from his novels one would never guess that he had attended the university and mixed for two years with the aesthetes. Unlike Powell, who wrote about Oxford in A Question of Upbringing (Urquhart is a candidate for the real-life counterpart of Sillery though Powell wearily denies this) and Waugh, whose Decline and Fall and Vile Bodies bear witness to the madcap antics of the rich young people of the 1920s, Green draws on quite other sources for his work; even Party Going does no more than glance at the world of the Bright Young Things.

What is striking about Green's account of his time at Oxford is his sensitivity to the place: the Oxford bells, the architecture, the sense of history - he refers many times to the 'oldness' of Oxford - made a lasting impression on him. In some ways Oxford had a detrimental effect - "I thought I should go crazy" (Pack My Bag, p. 201) - but on the positive side he appreciated the freedom it offered and the valuable opportunity to meet and talk to people of like mind. After school it was a refreshing change:

. . . it was just what was needed by one such as myself after the sort of school I had been to. Having taken it in there was no more need to have to fight to be an individual, to punch a way out of that stifling room filled with cotton wool. There were no obligations and the standards at last were those of the grown up world, namely ability and character. It was like getting out of prison and that is one reason why, like many another escaped prisoner, for a short while I took to drink. (Pack My Bag, p. 205)

The metaphor of a stifling room filled with cotton wool recalls an incident in Concluding where one of the institutionalized girls, who has attempted an escape, is being unofficially interrogated about her disappearance. The girl, Merode, is looking at the black squares on the wall of the principal's office.

And while her horror at this interview increased, so the dado began to swell and then recede, only to grow at once even larger, the square in particular to get bigger and bigger till she felt she had it in her mouth, a stifling furry rectangle. (p. 69)

The vivid horror of the "stifling furry rectangle" encapsulates Green's sense of the restrictions not only mental but subtly physical too of school life.

Once Green had learned what he had to learn from Oxford, it was time to leave, to move on, and in December 1926 he did.

The Hunt Balls, the shooting, even my billiards, the intolerance, the ability to keep silent just learned, the convictions and these last above all, all were to be left behind; nothing was ever so easy again, we were never to be so sure of anything afterwards. I was never to have so much time to myself and what I was to have would be after a day's work in the factory or office. Being tired in the head was to be the brilliant fruit of my labours in the day to sour the evenings. But there were advantages. (Pack My Bag, p. 236)

CHAPTER 4

Birmingham and London: Living, Party Going

In the early months of 1927 Green moved up to Birmingham to join the family firm. He always was to enter Pontifex at some time, as was his brother Gerald, but instead of going into management immediately, he went on to the factory floor. He began as a sort of storekeeper, then a pattern maker and finally moved to the copper shops. His day was long - sometimes eleven hours - but he nevertheless managed to fit in two and a half hours' writing in the evenings. This new life in lodgings in Birmingham could hardly have been more different from Oxford. Saturdays were spent in typical working-man activities - football matches, the pictures, food, the pub - but Sunday was devoted exclusively to writing. Green found work in the factory satisfying and straightforward, structured, and he delighted particularly in the pleasure of working with his hands: "This has to be experienced to be believed, it is more than sensual and is obviously the purest form of self-expression." (Pack My Bag, p.240). Anthony Powell went to visit Green in Birmingham a few times and his impression was "that he was as content during this . . . period as I ever knew him to be".¹ However, Green does say that the knowledge that this was to be only a temporary state of affairs probably influenced his feelings about Birmingham. He describes the life of his workmates as "one of the best ways to live" but he does not romanticize it and offers as a proviso that financial security and health are vital prerequisites for the industrial worker if his life is to remain a happy one.

The men with whom Green was working obviously knew who he was and thought that he had been given menial work as a punishment, but this was

not true at all. He was partly gaining experience of the work done by Pontifex; Green's father also put him into an accountant's office later so that he could learn how to read a balance sheet. However, he was also working on a novel. He was fascinated by the way the men talked and told stories, and in Pack My Bag he quotes a number of examples of their turns of phrase, idiosyncratic but clear because "unadulterated by literature" and "unaffected when I was there by the B.B.C.". He describes them as "literally unsurpassed in the spoken word" (p.241). He was amazed by the directness of their communication, "simple words so well chosen and arranged", and it is this he tried to capture in Living, his novel about factory life.

Green spent two years in Birmingham, during which he wrote Living; then in 1929 he moved to London, 9 Mansfield Street, Marylebone, to become his father's assistant in the London office at 9-13 George Street, but he still visited the Birmingham factory fortnightly.

While writing Living, Green again received help from Edward Garnett who, in November 1927, discovered that he was attempting a second novel. In November 1928 Garnett read the manuscript.

Yes. Living is very clever. It gains on me, as one reads and the last third is best. At first I found the style difficult and a trifle affected. But one sees afterwards that you want to keep the tone and atmosphere free from the middle-class manner of writing.²

Garnett tentatively suggested that the very "unusual" style might be too difficult for the average reader and felt that a few passages of description to set the scene might help. Green was disturbed that Garnett should think his novel "clever" (the last thing he wanted) but he stuck to his original conception and did not include those descriptive passages. Garnett told Green that he had recommended that Dutton (U.S.A.) publish it so in summer 1929 Living came out in America and England (published here by Dent).

Living was reviewed in America by the New York Herald Tribune under the heading 'Cinematograph'. The reviewer commented on the cinematic quality of the book, "a constant flicker of abruptly shifting scenes. . . . To heighten the sense of immediacy the author throws overboard most of the articles and a good bit of punctuation".³ On the whole he found Green's style overdone, "mannered", and denied Garnett's assertion of originality, finding in Virginia Woolf and Joyce a similar use of juxtaposed scenes to establish atmosphere and setting.

In England Living seems not to have been well received though Garnett praised it in the Observer:

It was extremely kind of you to have written that appreciation of 'Living' I have just seen in the Observer. It is about the first kind word said about it yet except in the Birmingham papers.⁴

It received a brief note in the 'New Books and Reprints' section of the Times Literary Supplement whose anonymous reviewer described its technique as "an uncertain and desperate experiment", the omission of the definite article a childish trick. Although he found some scenes startlingly life-like due to Green's "intelligent" writing, these "are isolated, and, in their isolation, meaningless".⁵

However Evelyn Waugh was very enthusiastic about his friend's novel. Writing for Graphic nearly a year after the novel was published, he described it as "a work of genius", technically the most interesting book he had read, and he urged everyone with energy enough to tackle a truly modern book to read and study it.⁶ Waugh always had a high opinion of Green's writing ability and described him to Christopher Sykes as a genius.⁷ Other writers too showed an interest in Living. Stephen Spender commented in The Destructive Element, published in 1938: "One of the most interesting proletarian novels of the last few years is Living, by Henry Green, a book that seems to have been almost neglected."⁸ Green also merits a brief mention in Spender's World Within World:

Some of the writers who now came to interest me were: James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Robert Graves, Laura Riding, Ernest Hemingway, Osbert, Edith and Sacheverell Sitwell, Ezra Pound, Henry Green, Herbert Read - to name a few. What I admired was their hard clear imagery, their boldness of experimentation, and their search for means of expressing complicated states of consciousness and acute sensibility.⁹

Cyril Connolly included it in his chart of 1920s novels, classing it as 'Vernacular' (as opposed to 'Mandarin') and saw Green's "remarkable" novel as an example of a "revival in imaginative writing".¹⁰

It is a curious irony that this, and many of the later novels, was most appreciated by other writers and not by the general public at whom Green aimed. Auden was apparently impressed by it¹¹ and Walter Allen expressed admiration:

Henry Green is one of the very few pure artists among the novelists of the 'thirties'. His second novel, Living, pre-dated Auden's first book of verse by a year, and reading it when it appeared one was excited by it in much the same way as one was by Auden . . .¹²

Points of similarity between some of Auden's early poems and Living are worth noting.

Before the completion of Living, Green was working on another novel, called Mood, which he never finished. He began it when he had just fallen in love with a girl and the object of his affection was the subject of the book. Garnett gave him encouragement and advice on it but Green was not satisfied with his writing and the novel died when he ceased to love the girl.

The manuscript of Mood ends, forever here. As I remember it the love I had for the original of Constance died a week or so before those last words were written. And that, perhaps, is the whole explanation.¹³

Love was much on Green's mind at this time and on 25 July 1929 he married the Honourable Adelaide Biddulph, elder daughter of Lord and Lady Biddulph of Ledbury, Herefordshire, always known to friends as 'Dig'. Dig was distantly related to Henry: her grandfather, the first Baron Biddulph, had taken as his second wife the daughter of the fourth Earl

of Hardwicke. Gerald was his brother's best man and a reception took place at 36 Lowndes Street, Knightsbridge, attended by John Sutro, Robert Byron, Nancy Mitford, Edward Romilly and a fair selection of the English aristocracy.¹⁴ Green says nothing about his marriage - Pack My Bag ends in 1929, the last words of the book being "there was love" - and one can only suppose this to be an area of his life he wished to keep entirely private.

In the late 1920s and the 1930s, despite the two-year absence in the provinces which must have seemed unaccountable to his friends, Green kept in touch with his Oxford acquaintances. In January 1929 he attended the wedding of Diana Mitford and Bryan Guinness;¹⁵ his friendship with Diana (later) Mosley¹⁶ lasted many years. In her autobiography she makes many references to him:

Our friend Henry Yorke, who wrote under the name of Henry Green, had just published Living, his novel about a factory. We gave away twenty copies of it that Christmas; now they would be rarities, I imagine.¹⁷

Diana Mosley was, and still remains, a fan of Green's novels: "I think he had a wonderful talent, all his novels are brilliant. My own favourites are Caught and Loving." The Yorkes stayed with the Guinnesses in Ireland and attended "innumerable parties" in Buckingham Street, Strand, where the Guinnesses lived, with their "brilliantly amusing friends", mentioned among them the Acton brothers, Robert Byron, Waugh, Betjeman and other Oxford people. Green was clearly still a filmgoer for Diana Guinness mentions him as a cinema companion: "Henry Yorke, another hypersensitive cinema companion of mine, also detested sentimental scenes; once we had to go out in the middle of a film."¹⁸

Henry and Dig Yorke also saw Waugh frequently. They dined together often, Dig and Waugh would go shopping together and in 1930 Green took Waugh to the Birmingham factory, which impressed Waugh.

Lunch with Henry and then on to his factory where I saw brass and iron casting. I was chiefly impressed by the manual dexterity of the workers. Nothing in the least like mass labour or mechanization - pure arts and crafts.¹⁹

Also in 1930 Waugh visited the whole Yorke family in Tewkesbury.

Weekend at Forthampton with the Yorkes. Travelled down with Maurice / Bowra / who said the food would be bad and no champagne. . . . It was a very agreeable weekend. No one did anything all the time except Henry who played a little billiards. . . . Copious conversation. Henry and Dig left for Knockmaroon protesting their detestation of Bryan and Diana. (p.325)

This last comment about the Guinnesses seems inexplicable unless Green was still under the influence of 'Bowra lore' which allowed one to be malicious about one's friends. In April 1937 Green was best man at Waugh's wedding, when he married Laura Herbert, his second wife. However, in later years some antagonism seems to have developed between Green and Waugh and they had a number of silly quarrels. In his diary, under 21 February 1946, Waugh describes the "morbid parsimony" of the Yorkes: "no hospitality of any kind". Sebastian tells of the incident which may have severed the connection between the two writers. Green went to stay with the Waughs and one evening he lit a cigarette at dinner then went off to bed. Green was asked to leave the next morning. However, Auberon Waugh offered me another story still more bizarre.

Henry Yorke rather disappeared from my Father's life in his last 20 years. . . . They fell out after an incident in Brighton when my Father believed that Yorke had tried to have him murdered. It seemed unlikely, even as my Father told the story.

I only met Yorke once and he seemed slightly embittered by this incident. My Father, remained, however, a keen admirer of Henry Green's novels . . .

Whether this reflects on Green's sanity or Waugh's, it is hard to say, but as a tale it is marvellous, and oddly appropriate.

In 1934 Dig Yorke had their only child, Sebastian. He was born on 24 January at home, 12 Radnor Place, Bayswater, and his christening was at All Souls', Langham Place, on 21 March. His godparents included the Duchess of York, who was not actually present at the ceremony, and Maurice Bowra.²⁰

Green did not publish another novel for ten years. He was discouraged by the reception of Living and when his next novel, Party Going, was rejected by Dent, he left the manuscript lying in a drawer for some time. However, in the late 1930s Green's friend, Coronwy Rees, and Rosamond Lehmann persuaded Green to show the novel to John Lehmann, who was then working with Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press. Lehmann asked Christopher Isherwood to look at it:

"I believe I've found a really first-class novel. I long for you to read it. . . . I'm longing to hear what you have to say about Henry Green's MS. . . . I - and many others - think it is an amazing bit of work".²¹

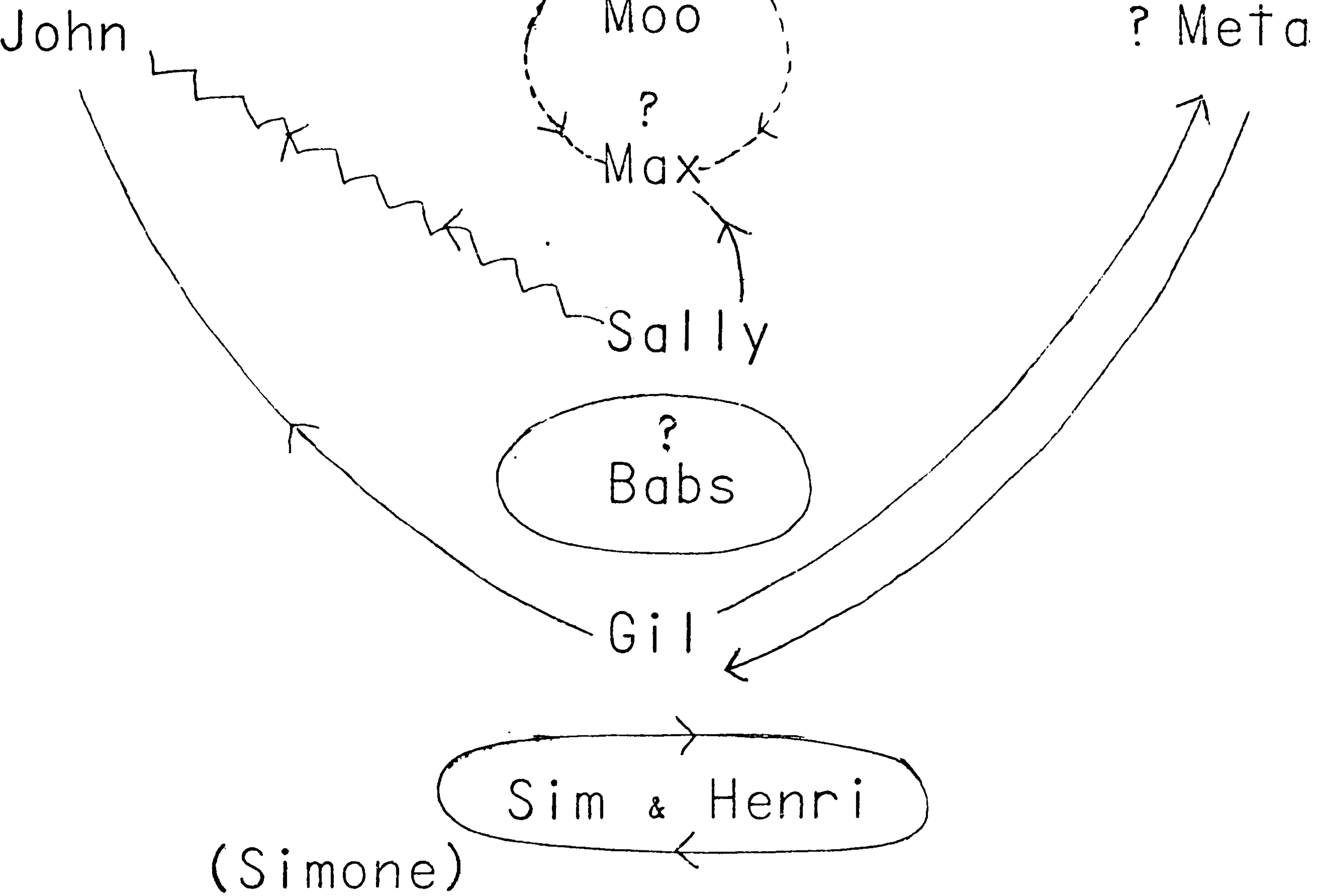
Isherwood liked it and, although the Woolfs were not keen,²² the Hogarth Press published Party Going in 1939. Lehmann saw the arrival of Henry Green as "the beginning of a new phase. . . . His arrival gave me confidence in the future".

Party Going is a fascinating novel. A group of young people, five women, three men, are going on a holiday to France hosted by one of their number, a very rich young man called Max. At the station fog prevents their departure and they adjourn to the railway hotel to wait. When the mass of travellers at the station attempt to enter the hotel, the privileged already inside are locked in for safety and there they remain. With the holiday party are the aunt of one of the girls, who came to see them off and became ill, and a jealous boyfriend who does not want his girl to go. About a quarter of the novel is concerned with arrival at the station, losing baggage and people, finding them again and finally gathering in the suite Max has taken. The party never catches the train, although they are preparing to leave at the end, and the novel develops as a subtle dance between the members of the group, their changing relationships, shifts of power, all in an uneasy atmosphere of vague threat established by the fog, Miss Fellowes' inexplicable illness and the claustrophobia of being barricaded in the hotel against a restless and occasionally unruly crowd.

A few early workings of the novel still exist. There are two typescripts in the British Library. One, dated 1931-8, is complete: the second consists of only pages 1 to 62 and is entitled Going in a Party; the change of title was a good one, allowing for the two meanings of 'party'. Some notes also remain, including a number of diagrams indicating the network of relationships between characters (see Figure 1).

Some interesting changes can be detected in Green's notes for the novel. Characterization stayed the same throughout - four men, five girls, including a married couple - but the names, apart from Max, are all different. Green had early on "the notion of an alien in the group - one who does not belong"; in the published version this is Robin, the unwanted and uninvited boyfriend who deeply disapproves of Max and his kind. There is one character (Babs/Evelyn) who is not romantically involved and a sometime girlfriend of Max (Moo/Amabel) who is there simply to check up on the errant playboy. However, plot was considerably pruned as writing progressed. The decision to allocate one third of the book to "dealings with baggage" was not much altered but an important modification is that originally the party was to reach its destination, a hotel by the sea. Much more action was envisaged than was finally included. They were to go swimming and Max was to save a girl, attend an auction where he "loses his head and bids wildly". Green had planned to have a character, probably Meta, one of the party, fall ill and perhaps die, but later he brought in Miss Fellowes, the aunt, who wanders eccentrically, carrying a dead pigeon she has found, and by the end of the novel seems on the point of death. The tangle of relationships, in which most of the characters have designs on more than one of the others, was clearly intended from the start, but the paring down of plot and the confinement of action to one place, the station, intensifies the conflicts and places attention firmly on the characters and their conversations.

(Monica)



(Simone)

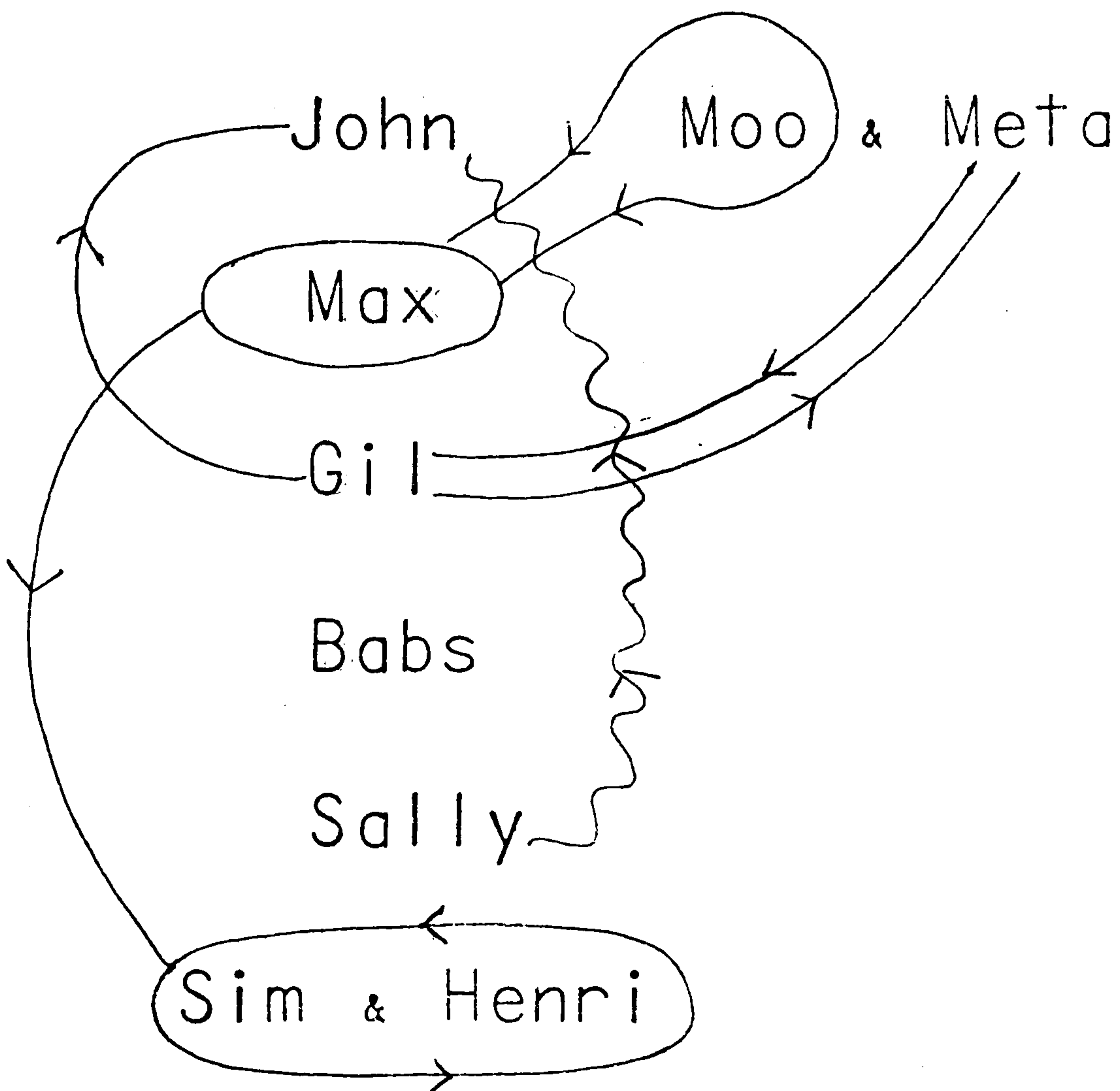


Figure 1 Transcript, MS, Party Going, BL, add MS Henry Green, Loan 67/2.

Party Going was reviewed by the Times Literary Supplement²³ and by The Times which damned it with faint, and patronizing, praise. The anonymous reviewer notes Green's "quiet satire", the "beautiful unreality" of the novel and concludes: "The complete seriousness with which Mr. Green makes his minute examination of their most trivial speeches and motives is delightful."²⁴ Graham Greene was rather more perceptive in his review for the Spectator. He quoted the astonishing opening paragraphs and commented on the "strange Steinish prose". "Even the oldest words taste new: the structure of his sentences is ever so slightly jostled, like the scraps of silver paper in a kaleidoscope, to form fresh patterns."²⁵ Once again it was the fellow-writer who appreciated what Green was trying to do. In the New Statesman and Nation David Garnett devoted a whole page to this novel by his father's protégé. He was struck by Green's perceptiveness about women: he "knows altogether too much about young women and presents his specimens with extreme skill".²⁶ I think he overstated Green's cruelty towards his characters in saying that the novel is not "a work of love . . . but shrewd and cold", equating verisimilitude with disinterest, but made a valid and useful point about the mixture of humour and unease the novel promotes, as if the events the reader laughs at are too close to the truth to remain funny when recollected later. On the whole the novel was received with more enthusiasm than Living and Lehmann says that it sold well.²⁷ American readers had to wait until 1951 for Party Going; it was not simultaneously published in the United States.

CHAPTER 5

War and the Fire Service: Caught, Loving, Back

In 1938, before the outbreak of the Second World War, Green volunteered for the Auxiliary Fire Service. He was thirty-four and he did not think that he would have been called upon to fight when war came but he was particularly keen to secure his residence in London so that he could help his father keep the business going; if he joined the Fire Service, he would be assigned to a fire station near his home and the problem would be solved. He chose the course of action which would make the least difference to his way of life - and his income:

. . . when the Board of Directors agreed to my joining the A.F.S. I was able to call in at the office every third day all through the war, for we worked two days on with one off, and if not at a fire was always available, if only in my case, to sign cheques. The Company also agreed to 'make up' my wage as a firemen, to what had been my salary with the Firm, which, when in another phrase 'hostilities developed', indeed, made all the difference; in fact I suffered financially not at all.¹

In this piece about the Fire Service which he wrote in 1960 he described the A.F.S. with a cynicism typical of his attitude to life at that time. He maintained that anyone with a doctor's certificate to state that he was unlikely to drop dead (this would mean paying the widow a pension - to be avoided at all costs!) and a couple of character references could join and that many volunteered for the valuables they might be able to steal from abandoned houses. An obsession with money, always important to Green but here unhealthily dominant, runs throughout 'Before the Great Fire'. According to Green, the regular firemen had only two concerns: "Loot and pension". Their anxiety about their pensions even led them, he says, to allow everyone through the examination which followed training, in fear that failures might attest to the inadequacy of their teaching and threaten the coveted pension. Training for the volunteers, 30,000 Londoners in all, took place just one hour a week for eight weeks. Green says he did not learn how to put out fires but discovered what it was to live a life entirely different from what he was used to.

In an anthology of poems and stories written by members of the Fire Service published in 1942² and including two stories by Green, Harold Ingham gave a rather less jaundiced view of the Service in his introduction to the book. He tells of the development of the force from an incongruous collection of untrained volunteers from all walks of life to an organized unit of men who were able to use their peacetime skills to effect in some of their fire service duties.

On one point Green and Ingham agree: being a fireman involved a very great deal of waiting, especially in the first year of war when life was, perhaps fortunately if Green is right about the training, uneventful for the A.F.S. It was not until summer 1940 that the London firemen had their first taste of firefighting. The experiences of firemen in the Blitz are described vividly by Green in his two stories in Fire and Water, 'Mr Jonas' and 'A Rescue'. In late spring 1941 came the "second lull" when again the firemen were not needed and this is the subject of Green's third short story of the war entitled 'The Lull' and published in 1943 in New Writing and Daylight. Then in September 1941 some order was brought to the A.F.S. when "the National Fire Service finally superseded the hopelessly ramshackle arrangement of fourteen hundred different brigades and as many varieties of auxiliary firemen. Brighton College was instituted and regulations imposed".³ Harold Ingham concluded his introduction to the Fire Service anthology on a confident and morale-boosting note but of course he was writing in the middle of the war while Green wrote his article from the comfort and safety of 1960.

Even during the war, politics did not enter Green's life. Sebastian's opinion is that although his father voted Tory and did not welcome change of any kind, he was not interested in political ideas, indeed in ideas in general. This total lack of political awareness is conclusively demonstrated by his attitude to friends in the early 1940s. He had maintained his

friendship with Diana Mosley and her imprisonment in the war did not affect his feelings towards her. Diana Mosley was not at first allowed to receive letters then the rule was relaxed and she was given the letters which had been sent to the prison: "The friends whose letters were post-marked the day my arrest was reported were Henry Yorke, . . . It was brave of them to write."⁴ In 1943 (when she was permitted more than the regulation one visitor a week) Green and his wife visited Diana Mosley for the simple reason that she was a friend of theirs and they had not been able to see her for some time.

At the other extreme Green was still very friendly with John Lehmann whose Communist sympathies seemed equally unimportant. Coronwy Rees thinks Green could be seen as a "topsy-turvy Marxist".

Diana Mosley's Fascism seemed no more serious to him than John Lehmann's Communism, and he looked on each as an unfortunate aberration in people he was otherwise fond of. He liked Diana Mosley because she was pretty and gay and generous and clever, which was what he liked in girls, and he liked John Lehmann because he thought him a good publisher.

The war was very productive for Green in terms of writing. In addition to the three stories already mentioned, he wrote Pack My Bag (1940) and three novels, Caught (1943), Back (1946) and, what is probably his most well-known novel, Loving (1945). All these novels draw on war experience: the hero of Caught is a member of the Fire Service in London; Loving is set in Ireland during the war; and Back is about a soldier's return to his old job and his search for his girl at the end of the war.

Before Pack My Bag was published Green wrote to his mother for her approval of the typescript.⁵ He told her to let his father and brother read it "if they want to" but characteristically it was his mother's opinion he really wanted. He described the book as a "rather gloomy autobiography" which he had written so that he could feel he had had his say, but he was no more specific than that about what he aimed to do. He gave his mother the opportunity to object to "any purely family reference". Mrs Yorke's

suggestions for alterations were few and concern minor factual details: the Australian soldier mentioned was Canadian, her dog a spaniel not a retriever. She asked for only one omission, a reference to Green's dislike of his housemaster: "He is one man I would gladly trip up if I saw him run though I would only do it if he was not looking." Green did not take a great deal of notice of his mother's corrections; the spaniel remains a retriever, the Canadian soldier an Australian though he did moderate the malice in the reference to the housemaster, saying simply "I hated him".

Pack My Bag was reviewed in the Spectator by Richard Church⁶ who thought the book puzzling and irritating. The irritation was occasioned by the style in which he saw "every possible puerile inadequacy". He adopted the tone of a schoolmaster in declaring that a man of Green's education really should be capable of more than this "infantilism". He was puzzled by the personality that emerges from Pack My Bag, the contradiction between the culturally sophisticated life and education Green had and the "bleak and bare" existence he described, with "no riches of scholarship, no historical joy". A brief and harshly critical paragraph concluded his review:

Through this execrable maltreatment of English one sees that the author is capable of reaching many vivid half-truths.

Church obviously expected a product, its style and content appropriate to a scholar and semi-aristocrat, but Green specialised in defying preconceptions and offered something quite different.

Walter Allen was also critical of the autobiography.⁷ Though he was not disturbed by the prose, which he saw as "richer and more consciously poetic" than that of the two preceding novels, he found Green's lack of interest in the world at large unsatisfactory. Green's passivity, his apparent inability to take a political position and failure to concern himself with any analysis of the issues pertaining to the war is "an index of the dangers that confront the pure artist writing in a political age". One can understand Allen's exasperation with one who refuses to acknowledge

that we live in a political world yet it is impossible to imagine a politically conscious book coming from a man of Green's personality.

Green was not alone in writing an autobiography in the early 1940s. Others, though not necessarily of Green's generation, displayed a similar concern. Erik Linklater and John Masefield wrote autobiographies in 1941. Elizabeth Bowen wrote a family history in 1942 and a number of writers published novels about childhood: L.P. Hartley The Shrimp and the Anemone, Denton Welch Maiden Voyage and In Youth is Pleasure, Joyce Cary Charley is My Darling and A House of Children. Robert Hewison, in his book about the wartime literary scene, offers a reason for this trend: writers were looking to the past to find an explanation for the current crisis:

Both fictional and autobiographical childhood took writers back to just before the First World War, and it was in the Edwardian period, seen part-nostalgically, part-critically, that causes were sought.⁸

This may be true of other writers but it is not applicable to Green for in his "self-portrait" he is entirely personal. He is concerned only with the development of his own life, anticipating that the reader will find something in the writer's memories of childhood and adolescence which will accord with his own experience.

Caught was written between June 1940 and Christmas 1942 and published in 1943. It is semi-autobiographical in that the main character/narrator through whose eyes we view the action, Richard Roe, is an 'educated' auxiliary fireman alone in London; his wife is dead and his young son is staying in the country with his grandparents and his aunt, Dy. Originally Dy was to be Roe's wife but this was later changed.⁹ Green too was without his family in the war; at the end of 'Before the Great Fire' he tells us that his wife and son were with her parents in Herefordshire and he "was alone in London that dreadful morning, forty-eight hours before war was declared, and dressed alone into the still unfamiliar uniform with prickly trousers, alone, frightened, sickened, sure of nothing" (p.27).

There is a great deal about the A.F.S. in Caught and Green's intention was to give an idea of life in London at the beginning of the war. There is a note at the front of the book: "In this book only 1940 in London is real. It is the effect of that time that I have written into the fiction of Caught." Quite prominent too is Roe's relationship with his son, Christopher; Sebastian would be about six years old then and the novel is in fact dedicated "To Sebastian". The father/son relationship in Caught is an awkward one, each very unsure of the feelings and reactions of the other, but it seems very much a consequence of the fickleness of a child when away from the parent for a long time and the fatigue and anxiety of the father.

This novel was published, as were all Green's subsequent books, by the Hogarth Press at a time when printing of new works was difficult. The Hogarth Press's paper ration was small and nearly all used up in reprints. Lehmann had to decide what it was important to print: first priority was Virginia Woolf's posthumous papers (she committed suicide in 1940) and second was Green's work, "a sequence which seemed to me to be excitingly exploring new territory as they came out of his workshop".¹⁰ People other than Lehmann were interested in Caught. It was favourably reviewed by a number of papers: Tribune, the Spectator, the Times Literary Supplement, Time and Tide, the New Statesman, the Listener.¹¹ A number of points recur in reviewers' comments. Most agreed that Caught is an accurate and effective portrayal of the early war years: "His account of the first fire blitz is terrific." (John Hampson). Green's talent for writing realistic conversation was also praised: "The language is immediately convincing. . . . Without any first-hand information about fireman, I knew (and subsequently confirmed) that this is how they talk." (Philip Toynbee). Green's study of Pye, the officer at the fire-station, was much approved but several reviewers found the characterization of Roe "insubstantial"; this difficulty was said by Edwin Muir to arise from the "uneasy position" given Roe by his being half-character, half-narrator. It is true that we never see

Roe very clearly, from the outside, and our perception of events is determined by Roe's but this is intentional and gives the novel a confusing quality which is quite appropriate for the subject matter.

Approval of Caught may have something to do with the fact that the style of the novel is not so obtrusively 'original' as that of Blindness or Living, though it does have a few of Green's idiosyncracies. It also has a plot, action, description, features subsidiary in Party Going and almost absent in Green's last novels, Nothing and Doting. The Tribune reviewer, though sympathetic to the novel, began his review like a school report (a schoolmasterly tone is quite common in writing on Green): "Mr Henry Green has made good progress." He was pleased to see that Green had passed the stage of "wilful, cleverboy obscurity" and declared that if "there is no relapse" into "mere cleverness", Green may in time be worthy of consideration alongside Continental and American authors. That Green had not quite merited public acceptability is shown by a comment from Toynbee that Caught is in a way a "'novelist's novel'", this judgement based curiously on the observation that "many of its most satisfactory effects are achieved by a thoughtful originality of technique". However, despite reservations reviewers were unanimous in their view that Caught is a good novel, "the best book Henry Green has yet written" (Toynbee). Walter Allen, in an article written on Green in 1945, stated that it is "by far the best novel dealing with that period"¹² and Robert Hewison points out that it is one of the few 'blitz' novels to have stood the test of time.¹³

John Lehmann says that Green worked "with extraordinary speed" in the early 1940s, which he found surprising in view of his circumstances.¹⁴ Certainly, with working for the A.F.S. and continuing as a businessman, it is remarkable that Green found time to write not only Caught but three short stories. All the stories were published by Lehmann in the magazines he was then editing. In 1935 he had set up New Writing, a hardcover twice yearly

magazine devoted to prose and poetry by new, young, often foreign, writers which would not be suitable for the existing monthly and quarterly magazines. When the magazine encountered financial problems during the war, it became New Writing and Daylight, backed not only by the Hogarth Press but also by the Czechs who gave support with paper supplies. The first volume came out in 1942 and it was to the Summer 1943 edition that Green contributed 'The Lull'. 'Mr. Jonas' appeared in Folios of New Writing 3 (Spring 1941); the Folios were collections of work from New Writing produced in book form from Spring 1940. 'Mr. Jonas' was also included in Fire and Water and a wartime anthology, Diversion.¹⁵ Lehmann also had a hand in Penguin New Writing, sponsored by Penguin Books, which began as another 'best of' New Writing, then became a monthly containing some new work, plus articles, and, as the war made things more difficult, became a quarterly. Green's 'A Rescue' was published in this magazine, in March 1941, and also in Fire and Water.

'A Rescue' is set in the third week of the blitz. It is written in the first person and the narrator is called Henry. Henry is a fireman in charge of an operation to pump out the basement shelter of a store which has recently been burned down. The narrator and his crew are delighted to be given this job because it will mean "very little work, a good supper and better breakfast provided by the management of the store and, above all, no firefighting". However, the firemen are stopped by a policeman and asked to help a man trapped down a manhole. The narrator goes down for the man, forgetting that he should have breathing apparatus because of the sewer gas, and brings him up.

The story is written in an uncharacteristic style: sentences are mainly short and simple and most of the story is descriptive. It is a very short story and no characters are developed; conversation is limited and functional. The last paragraph is indicative of both the style and the tone of the story:

The injured man was taken away in an ambulance. We have not heard anything of him. He may have died.

Three staccato, factual sentences tell us, or rather do not tell us, the consequences of the incident. Had the trapped man been identified and a relationship established between the man and the firemen, it would be a cold and heartless conclusion, but this story is an account of an everyday event which merits no special attention. It is quite unheroic - the potential dangers of being gassed, of the man falling from his precarious perch on a half-open cover fifteen feet down the shaft are underplayed and Green concentrates on the mechanics of securing the man and pulling him out.

Before sending 'Mr. Jonas' to Lehmann, Green tried it out on friends (predictably young and female) and received a mixed response:

When he sent me Mr. Jonas, Henry wrote: "I have just let a girl read it and she laughed herself into a state of tears she thought it so bad. . . . In fact she laughed so much at the first page that she put it into her mouth as you can see from the lipstick on the first page. . . . On the other hand another one three days ago liked it. Anyway I thought I'd put some commas in this time. I've tried to do it in a more spectacular way to suit the more spectacular blaze. It's true, of course, as the other one was."¹⁶

The reference to commas is a little obscure, unless it refers to the fact that this story is not written in the short-sentence style of 'A Rescue', but it certainly contains more "spectacular", elaborate prose than the previous story. It is about fighting a fire and begins with the narrator (again it is first-person narration) and the rest of his crew watching three fires and waiting for their orders. The first page, which unaccountably provoked uncontrollable laughter in Green's friend, describes to great effect the "tiger-striped hoops, great wind-blown orange pennants, huge yellow cobra tongues of flame", the jets from the fireman's hoses like "flags of water rippling in a breeze". This tense situation has both the familiarity of a sight frequently seen and the strangeness of an unreal world, a region "between living and dying". Then the narrator's crew is sent out to the third, unattended fire and the firemen are thrown into confusion. No one

seems to know their destination and on arrival at the fire all that can be seen is a "thick mass of smoke or steam, it was impossible to tell one from the other". The narrator stumbles on blindly, disorientated by the smoke and the noise, constantly veering from the belief that this must be in his imagination to an acceptance, forced upon him, that it is all too real.

Suddenly the noise ceases - "The guns had given up firing" - and the narrator finds himself alone and unbelieving in the unearthly silence until the leader of the Rescue Squad tells him that a man is trapped and his help is needed. The man is brought out of the hole in which he is stuck and everyone rushes to help him but strangely he vanishes, probably in a state of shock.

As he came up and out, almost without assistance, we all began talking to him, telling him where to tread. He said absolutely nothing. He climbed right into that archway and disappeared. Coughing, the rescue men climbed out. They thanked us. There were no more victims below.

This interlude over, the firing begins again and in a brief, bald paragraph Green describes the never-ending job of getting the blaze under control. After twelve hours they had reached the point once more where Mr Jonas had emerged and the story ends in remembering the bizarre 'rebirth' of the trapped man.

. . . we had fought our way back to exactly the same spot above that hole out of which, unassisted, once he had been released, out of unreality into something temporarily worse, apparently unhurt, but now in all probability suffering from shock, had risen, to live again, whoever he might be, this Mr Jonas.

'The Lull' was praised by George Orwell in a review of New Writing and Daylight.

. . . in the latest number of New Writing the critical essays are better than the stories. But there is one notable exception, and that is Henry Green's brilliant short story, The Lull. Describing life in a fire-station which has not seen a blitz for eighteen months, this story accurately pins down one of the minor horrors of war, and does it almost entirely in dialogue with barely a word of comment.¹⁷

Quite different from the other stories, 'The Lull' is, as Orwell says, mainly dialogue. It foreshadows Nothing and Doting in its short conversational scenes (it is divided into seven parts) which sometimes begin with 'stage directions': "Another evening. The same bar. Five or six firemen sat around. Two were without a drink."

The story opens in a fire-station bar. A fireman comes in and begins a conversation with the barman, desultory talk about mutual acquaintances. A third, then a fourth, man enters and they continue to talk until summoned for supper by "a sad cry of 'Come and get it'". The second part is dominated by a fifth fireman who tells a macabre tale of his aunt who used to strangle cats for fun until she met an appropriate death from fright while chasing a decapitated duck which would not die.

In section 4 Green continues the numbering of firemen - the sixth and the seventh firemen talk to the barman - but the fifth departs from the pattern followed up to this point. On a hot Sunday afternoon a middle-aged fireman off duty sits in Hyde Park with a young girl, the friend of his youngest sister. She quotes Verlaine, teasing 'Henry' with the challenge that he is the worst-read man she has ever met. Henry is sleepy and distant, content to watch the girls go by. But their leisurely afternoon, devoted by Henry at least to one of Green's favourite occupations, is marred by the sound of the sirens and they escape arm in arm to the cinema.

The final two sections return to the firemen who voice their despair at having to sit around endlessly. As they walk along discussing imminent mental breakdown, they are seen by the people in the street:

The passers-by despised them in this uniform that, two years ago, was good in any pub for a drink from a stranger.

Neither Loving nor Back inspired quite the enthusiasm elicited by Caught, although Loving is now generally regarded as the best of Green's novels. Daniel George said, almost prophetically, in his Tribune review

of Loving that "America ought to know about Henry Green"¹⁸ and a few years later it was this novel which excited a number of American critics and sparked off great interest in Green's life and work in the United States. Loving is also one of the only two Green novels to have been published by Penguin (August 1953); the other is Concluding (August 1964). Both are out of print at the time of writing.

The subject of Loving is as the title indicates. Set in an Irish mansion during the war, it describes the relationships between the owner, Mrs. Tennant, and her daughter-in-law, who is having an affair with a neighbour while her husband is away fighting, and between the servants, and the subtle power struggles among the servants themselves and of the servants with their masters (or mistresses rather). It is one of the three novels (the others are Party Going and Concluding) to be confined to one place - all the action goes on in the house or nearby. Of course, as with all Green's novels, a brief plot summary does little to convey the power of the book, which lies in dialogue, in the elaborate, joyous descriptions of fantastic décor, of ecstatic moments in the characters' lives, and in the symbolism (mainly in the use of birds, particularly doves and peacocks), all of which are closely tied to the themes of the novel.

Henry Reed was one of few reviewers to be unreservedly complimentary about Loving, the technique of which he saw as an improvement on Caught: it "is more tightly and more successfully knit, and its characters are more brilliantly interwoven with one another. . . . There is a greater subtlety in Loving. . . . It is a most satisfying novel."¹⁹ Reed was generally impressed by Green's work. In a British Council pamphlet published in 1946 he included several pages on him and reiterated his admiration for Loving.²⁰

Daniel George was also quite receptive to Loving but his review maintained the indulgent, almost patronizing tone he used to write about Caught.

"You never know quite where you are with him [Green]. . . . But you can't be cross with him." He gave Green full marks for his dialogue "which preserves miraculously the phrases and rhythms of the characters' ordinary speech". This was echoed by John Hampson in the Spectator: "He has many gifts, but among the most brilliant is his flair for conversation."²¹ He was also pleased to include Loving with a number of recent novels - Between the Acts, Put out More Flags, Mr. Norris Changes Trains and others - which maintain "our native forte . . . for the comic . . . the absurd and the fantastic".

However, several reviewers found Loving a disappointment after the promise of Caught. Edwin Muir believed that Green had succumbed to the charms of his theme to such an extent that he could not stand back from the work, suggesting that it is a self-indulgent novel. He noticed the different styles of speech given to each character and mentioned the book's "power of mimicry" but complained that "it goes on without much variation; the characters speak like maids and children and men-servants without intermission, whatever happens".²²

Rayner Heppenstall sensed a disintegration of vision and method from Party Going through Caught to Loving and was disappointed that such a "considerable talent" was not being used to the full.²³ Reviewing a year later for the New Statesman, he found Back a still greater failure to live up to expectation. Although he maintained his view that Green was one of the most interesting writers of the time, he found little to commend in Back and felt that "Mr. Green's readers are entitled to sulk".²⁴

Back concerns a soldier, Charley, who returns from the war, having lost a leg in action, determined to find Rose, the girl he loved. In fact Rose is dead but by coincidence Charley comes in contact with Nancy, her half-sister, and despite obvious physical differences (though they do look alike) he is convinced she is actually Rose. A relationship develops

between them and the novel ends, for Green conclusively, in the consummation of Charley's love, for Nancy and for Rose. The strangeness of the novel resides mainly in Charley's distorted view of the world in which everything he sees leads to Rose, from all accounts a superficial woman who did not even care for him but who becomes for Charley the very meaning of life.

Critics were not inclined to praise Back apart from Philip Toynbee who was fascinated by the "strange hallucinatory angle" from which Charley, the hero, sees the world. He made a very interesting distinction between obsession and hallucination:

Hallucination may be a new revelation of the real world; obsession is the exclusion of reality. In the case of Green, one feels that he has stepped confidently through a looking glass and is looking back at us with a certain calm and appraising satisfaction.²⁵

No one else was impressed by what Toynbee saw as an important and difficult achievement. In the Spectator Kate O'Brien wrote one short paragraph about this "small, grey, personal book" and virtually warned readers off: "It is not for all readers, and it is distressing; greyly and coldly misted in small, mad sorrow."²⁶ Henry Reed bemoaned the decline of plot in recent fiction and found Back too sadly lacking as the improbable plot (which he does not object to) peters out. He concluded by saying that it was less successful than the previous two but nevertheless worthy of being re-read.²⁷ Daniel George found something worrying about Back. He gave credit for the "development in [Green's] skill in creating character through inexpressive, almost inarticulate conversation" but said that this is done at the expense of the "dramatic situation" and the novel is finally perhaps nothing more than "a literary parlour-game not worth the candle that keeps going out".²⁸

It would be very interesting to know the sales figures of Green's war and pre-war novels but the Hogarth Press was badly damaged by enemy action and they have few records.²⁹ Not only did the Hogarth Press lose

its premises in the 1940s and have to operate from its printers, The Garden City Press in Letchworth, for some time,³⁰ it also lost John Lehmann. Having failed to gain control of the Press, Lehmann left to set up his own publishing firm and he tried to persuade Henry Green, among others, to come with him. Much to his disappointment Green stayed with the Hogarth Press, as did William Sansom, a friend of Green. Green's reasons for staying were to do partly with propriety, partly with the sheer bother of obtaining release from contracts:

I tried without success to get Henry Green to follow me: I had been responsible for his coming over to the Press, and had nursed him, as publisher-editor, through the swift career that had already proved so dazzling. Rightly, however, though full of sympathy for me, he pointed to ineluctable contracts and the awkwardness of leaving half a dozen of his books behind when there had been no quarrel.³¹

This split did not affect the friendship between Lehmann and Green; they continued their acquaintance into the 1950s.

C H A P T E R 6

Success in England and Abroad: Concluding

Green continued his spell of prolific writing with Concluding, published in 1948. Concluding is set some time in the future in the Institute, a training school for 300 novice State servants, all girls. The Institute is managed by two spinsters, Miss Edge and Miss Baker, whose constant concern is to follow to the letter the Directives and Regulations which circumscribe their actions. In the vast grounds of the Institute lives Mr Rock, a retired scientist of great repute given a cottage by the Founder, with his granddaughter, Elizabeth, who has recently suffered a mental illness. The plot, such as it is, has two linked strands - the Principals' attempts to remove Mr Rock, who with his goose, his pig and his sick granddaughter is an embarrassment to them, and to find two girls who have gone missing. The action is restricted to the Institute and the grounds and covers just one day, the occasion of the Dance to celebrate Founder's Day. One thing the novel does not do is 'conclude'. It begins with Mr Rock getting up and closes on him going to bed. In between, in an atmosphere of beauty, innocence, threat, madness, happiness and anxiety, problems are discussed, confronted, avoided, but never solved. One of the girls remains unaccounted for; Mr Rock is still in his cottage and his worry about the future of Elizabeth, who is having an affair with the economics tutor, Sebastian Birt, is not diminished by the events of the day.

Concluding was Green's own favourite of his novels¹ and it certainly received the most critical attention. By this time Green had built up a reputation as an 'experimental' writer and several papers took the opportunity the publication of a new novel offered to trace his development and try to establish his place in English fiction. In the Times Literary Supplement he captured the lead review, three and a half columns devoted to Concluding and the work which led up to it. The reviewer was most interested in Green's technique: "It is principally his qualities as technician and stylist which, in a decade of undistinguished prose, make this

writer remarkable."² Although he did not consider Concluding Green's most satisfying work, he rated its writer highly enough to find it an interesting novel "from the point of stylistic development alone" and he stated that Green "cannot be spared from the present-day literary scene". He acknowledged Green's failure to appeal to a wide audience but predicted that in the future he would achieve popularity, a prediction which has yet to come true.

In the New Statesman too Green was accorded serious critical attention of a kind he had not received before in reviews and it appeared that Green had arrived. Simon Harcourt-Smith used two and a half columns to evaluate the twenty-two years of his work.³ He described Green's development as a halting one. Irritated by the "mannerisms" of Blindness and Living, he saw in Party Going the first appearance of features to become prominent in later work - masterly dialogue and "arbitrary calamities" - and in Caught an indication of Green's growth as a novelist, although even in 1948 he saw the book as dated. With Loving Harcourt-Smith believed Green reached his peak, with Back an aberration, a return to affectation. He placed Concluding on a level with Back: his criticism is that the novel has an embarrassing sentimentality and an over-insistence on what he calls trivial detail. However, Harcourt-Smith was convinced by Green's "powers of magic" and defined him as a "writer of highly adult fairy tales". Many critics are struck by this element of Green's writing, sensing an unreality about the worlds he creates while acknowledging the perceptive truths he reaches, and Green must have, consciously or not, encouraged this with the 'once upon a time' opening of Loving.

Simon Harcourt-Smith referred at the beginning of his review to the literary impoverishment of the late 1940s in which a new novel by Henry Green should be gratefully received and this point was made also by Jean Howard in the first paragraph of her lengthy review for Horizon.⁴ While

she did not feel that Green is in the mainstream of contemporary English fiction, his books are "related in the strictest sense to contemporary life" and "are the steadiest strain in the literature of two sparse decades". The difficulties she experienced with his novels stem from the demands Green makes of his readers - active co-operation is required if one is to understand them - and the strain of following his "uncomfortably close-range view of life". She also felt perhaps that they are almost too personal to be comprehended fully.

Jean Howard related Concluding to the previous novels, particularly with regard to colour and imagery, but maintained it was a departure from earlier writing in the degree to which the fantastic is dominant; we are taken out of a familiar world. She emphasized the poetry of Green's writing; indeed she said Concluding could almost be seen as an epic poem. She made a number of allegorical interpretations of the novel in an attempt to render it unified and saw a strong mythic element but did not simply reduce it to allegory: "He suggests the shadow of an allegory behind the individual."

In the Listener Concluding pushed Waugh's The Loved One into second place in George Painter's review.⁵ Painter confessed to the understandable "difficulty of disentangling what is really going on - who does what, and with whom, and to whom?" but recognized that there is no point in trying to sort it out. The novel is not a problem to solve; the difficulty is, as he said, "the chief theme of the novel, and forms, in the reader's emotions, its specific atmosphere". He obviously found Concluding fascinating and was perhaps right in detecting the influence of Kafka in the concern with distant bureaucracy and the atmosphere of unspecified threat. He finished his comments on a note of admiration and returned at the end of his brief review of F.L. Green's Mist on the Water to make an unqualified assertion of Henry Green's value:

It has been said that Green is an occupational name among English novelists. It is no longer true. Mr. Henry Green is a leader, and writes novels of untarnished legitimacy: Mr. F.L. Green is a lost leader, and writes scenarios.

Robert Kee in the Spectator was also enthusiastic about Concluding but would not commit himself to a definite judgment on Green. Perhaps equivocal writers attract equivocal reviews. He hinted that people were making out that Green was a genius:

Has Mr. Green, in fact, done anything to deserve this? After reading his latest novel, Concluding, the wary reader will continue to suspend judgement, and lest this should seem disparaging let the wary reader also ask himself how many other writers he is prepared to keep an open mind about after their eighth books.⁶

It seems that Mr Kee feared that he might be taken for a ride. He commented on the "practical joker" in Green and maybe he was unsure how seriously to take a writer whom he described as "one of our very few really funny writers".

In May 1949 Philip Toynbee wrote an article called 'The Novels of Henry Green' for Partisan Review to introduce Green to America.⁷ Although Blindness and Living were published in America, subsequent novels appeared only in England and Canada (Clarke, Irwin and Co.). However in 1949 the Viking Press decided to bring out Loving; it was published in October of that year. Toynbee, obviously aware that Green was again to be tried out on the American public, felt that they needed to be prepared. His article is interesting not only because it makes some pertinent points about Green's position among modern English novelists but also in that it seems quite directly to have affected American critics' reviews of Loving.

Toynbee's most important point will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter but it needs to be mentioned here. He divides modern English novelists into four types; two of these, the Dandies and the Archaists, are represented, he says, by only a small number of writers, but the other two, the Terrorists and the Men in the Street, account for most of the important novelists of the first half of the twentieth century. He describes their conflicting approaches:

The Terrorists are those writers who confront their language as a wrestler confronts his adversary, knowing that they must twist it and turn it, squeeze it into strange shapes and make it cry aloud, before they can finally bring it to the boards. . . . another, and perhaps the predominant view among modern novelists, is that the language of contemporary speech must be directly transcribed into literature, since any deliberate avoidance or transmutation of it will lead inevitably to something either dead or at best unnatural. (p. 487)

Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh and Christopher Isherwood he classes with the Men in the Street - no doubt many American writers of that time could also be included - but he maintains that Green, along with Joyce, Virginia Woolf and others, is an Arch-Terrorist and he asks the American reader to prepare himself for a shock.

He describes Green as the "most mannered" and "least digestible" of modern English novelists but - and he admits the paradox - also "among the most natural" and "conceivably the most important". The article is by no means uncritical for Toynbee sees the language of Green's early novels particularly as verging on the contrived, pointlessly idiosyncratic, but he feels that the reader must be indulgent for any failure of method is merely a condition of the difficulty of making clear a new and fresh vision:

Green has never written a book with the sole and deplorable purpose of exhibiting linguistic oddities. A sympathetic reading even of his worst novel reveals that his motive in writing it was that he had seen something and that he wished others to see it too. In this case he has failed to make his vision clear, but the reality and the freshness of his vision cannot be doubted. (p. 490)

Toynbee emphasizes the strange, elusive and sensuous qualities of Green's writing, his subtlety, his 'magic', his freedom from moral or political concerns and, a point taken up by several reviewers, his detachment and lack of compassion which Toynbee sees as "both his strength and his ultimate limitation". This odd and innovative English writer may well have seemed fresh and attractive to American readers, his novels a welcome change in a period of gloom. Novels published in preceding years could hardly be guaranteed to entertain: in 1945 Orwell's Animal Farm, in 1946 Camus's The Outsider, in 1947 Bellow's The Victim, 1948 Mailer's

The Naked and the Dead, 1949 Orwell's Nineteen Eighty Four, 1947-50 Sartre's Roads to Freedom trilogy. Green's "hallucinatory" vision (Toynbee's term), permeated through a novel called Loving which begins "Once upon a day" and ends "they were married and lived happily ever after", must have offered a pleasant escape from solemn, sometimes despairing moralizing and soul-searching. Certainly most of the American reviewers commented on the fairy-tale quality of Loving.

In early October, the month Loving was published, the United States was given two more introductions to Green and his 'cover' was broken. Green had been persuaded by Viking to come over to launch his novel and while he felt that it would be "ostentatious" to appear as Henry Green, neither did he want to use his real name. So he registered at the Hotel Gotham in New York as 'Mr. Yonge'. "When approached at a cocktail party by an editor who cried, 'Why, Henry Green! I never thought to see you here!' he answered coolly, 'You haven't. You have seen a ghost.'"⁸ However his identity was discovered and publicized by Time magazine on their books page in a gossipy and cheerful review headed 'Molten Treasure'. The writer was much struck by the incongruity of the nephew of Lord Leconfield engaged to the Honourable Adelaide Biddulph, publishing a "proletarian" novel (Living) under the name of Henry Green:

The truth came out with a minor bang: PEER'S NEPHEW AS FACTORY HAND. Proletarian Mr. Green, it seemed, was simply the pseudonym of socialite Mr. Yorke.⁹

He pointed out, perhaps predictably for an American, the unusual social breadth of Green's novels - they "bubble like a social melting pot that can boil down everything from cutaways to galluses" - and gave a lively and enthusiastic account of Loving, which, he felt, would make a wonderful film:

Hollywood could make of Loving a movie almost as stunning as the novel simply by faithfully following Green's sharp, quick series of glittering scenic plays and his natural, jumping dialogue.

A more critical assessment of Green's work was contributed by Mark Schorer to the New York Times Book Review whose review of Loving was entitled

'Introduction to Henry Green's World' and sub-headed 'The Pseudonymous Novelist locates His Naturalism in a Framework of Mystery'.¹⁰ He began on a similar topic to Toynbee in saying that the American novelist had been hampered by a "fear of prose" and had limited himself to a journalistic style, unlike a number of English writers such as Joyce, Lawrence, Forster, Virginia Woolf, and now Green, who were prepared to experiment and take risks in their prose writing. He then gave a brief biography of Green and a survey of his novels up to the present. He noted, as the Time reviewer did, Green's scope in subject matter - from servants to Mayfair youth - and defined what he considers to be Green's characteristic:

. . . his inclination to locate compact naturalistic observations in a framework of mystery, of connotations from fairy tale and fable. The general thematic preoccupation of his work justifies this device and often lifts it into what we must call vision.

He stressed the difficulty of conveying through summary the special flavour of Green's work because his prose is such a vital element of his novels. Finally he offered encouragement to the reader about to try Green for the first time.

"Loving" may not be Green's best book, but it is probably the best with which to start. That many American readers are now able to make this start is, it should be obvious, an occasion for great pleasure.

Following these introductions, reviews were enthusiastic and Loving became a best seller. In his review of Nothing Peter Quennell said that he had not expected Green's novels to do well in America but had been proved wrong. "They have scored a triumphant American success and have joined tweed and whisky and Georgian silver among favourite British exports."¹¹ Some reviewers clearly had no previous knowledge of Green's work - both the Virginia Quarterly Review¹² and the Nation¹³ said it was his first novel to be published in the States and Irving Howe in Partisan Review¹⁴ admitted Loving was the only one of Green's novels he had read - but their evaluation of the novel was generous. Ernest Jones described

it as "the richest and most entrancing novel that has come out of England since Virginia Woolf's 'Between the Acts'". Theodore Kalem, writing in the Christian Science Monitor, said "1949 is not likely to bring us a better novel than 'Loving' or a more brilliant writer than this little-known Englishman with his gift for sensory perception".¹⁵ Both Irving Howe and John Farrelly referred to Toynbee's article and Kalem alluded to the accusation of lack of compassion; they had obviously been influenced by what he said. John Farrelly perhaps offered the most hostile view of Green.¹⁶ He was familiar with the earlier work and was impressed by the three wartime books, of which Back was his favourite, but found Green's chief limitation in the "often crippling distance" from his characters he maintains. When "his sheer brilliance becomes a bit tiresome, a repellent chill pervades Green's novels". However, he did not apply this to Loving which he described as a 'picture' rather than a 'drama'; what is important is the creation of the "bewitched atmosphere".

Loving, incidentally the only Green novel to be published in American paperback (Doubleday), was quickly followed by the other novels. Nothing came out in March 1950 (the date of U.K. publication), then Back (September 1950), Caught and Concluding (December 1950), Party Going (September 1951) and Doting (May 1952); Living was not reprinted in the United States until 1971. Reception was mixed. Brendan Gill viewed with approval Green's movement against the current in writing funny novels. He humorously scolded Green for having the nerve to write a light and witty novel (Nothing) about love affairs of middle-aged upper middle-class Londoners: "We accept them at once, realizing with a start how long it has been since we were allowed to be amused."¹⁷ Diana Trilling said of the same book that in a time "when we look to literature to be the voice of our conscience", an entertaining writer like Green might be supposed not to be "saying anything useful or truthful".¹⁸ However she

advised readers to take Nothing seriously because it does have something to say; it is "more, much more than meets the eye". Not everyone saw it in this way though. It was described as a "dry and sparkling wine, a wine with no body at all"¹⁹ and a "divertissement".²⁰ Ernest Jones, obviously expecting some soul-searching, was disappointed by its lack of penetration. In a comparison with James's last novels he criticized Green for failing to allow the characters, through conversation, to come to the "heart of the matter", that is, to reach self-awareness. Interestingly H.P. Lazarus made a similar point about Doting; again a comparison with James was made. He said that Green's characters "destroy the whole fiction of self-knowledge" and he felt that the danger of the novel is that characters' "unexpressed" feelings (he is referring to Pack My Bag) remain unexpressed because Green has a distrust of the reality of feeling.²¹

Isaac Rosenfield took it upon himself to undertake a re-appraisal of Green.²² He put the "over-evaluation" of Green in the United States down to American provincialism, which overestimates "fine sensibility". He grudgingly acknowledged Green's literary skills which could, one day, make him a major novelist, but criticized Green for refusing to take a moral stand on his characters' behaviour, to condemn or approve either parents or children in Nothing. He bemoaned the lack of ideas in Green's novels and the coldness of Green's sensibility: "The characters are never shown in direct possession of a feeling."

Curiously, in view of English reactions, Back was much liked. Charles Rolo described it as "the most satisfying novel I have come across so far this year"²³ and the New Republic reviewer was impressed by the innovation of Green's writing: "The old patterns of writing and telling are broken up."²⁴ Caught and Concluding were also approved, particularly by Mark Schorer who remained an admirer of Green's "odd and beautiful

imagination".²⁵ Party Going was appreciated for its subtlety and perception but thought less good than later novels because more limited in its aims.

American reviewers seemed to have the desire to 'place' Green amongst fiction writers and their opinions of his place and his value vary. Martin Greenberg ended his review of Caught and Concluding: "Henry Green is clearly a minor novelist, though in a work like Concluding one of the first rank".²⁶ George Mayberry tried to fit him into contemporary British fiction. He saw two opposing strains: the religious/political includes Graham Greene and George Orwell and the other, stemming from Jane Austen, consists of those who write of "trivia" but with "grace and skill"; he thought Ivy Compton-Burnett the best of these, with Nancy Mitford occupying the "lower reaches" leaving Green somewhere in the middle.²⁷ He asserted that if Green did not take a new direction, he would remain nothing more than a "literary juggler". Rosenberg saw him in the tradition of D.H. Lawrence - "the tradition of sensibility, manners, and the brilliant image, at the expense of everything else". On the other hand, Charles Rolo had a high opinion of Green; Back convinced him that "Henry Green is one of the most rewarding and important of contemporary novelists".

Risking charges of chauvinism, V.S. Pritchett in his review of Back wondered if American readers appreciate fully the subtlety of Green's dialogue:

I don't know whether the subtlety of this rendering of English speech will strike the American reader or be fully grasped by him for its rich half tones and social nuances which are clear to the English reader and a great comic pleasure. 28

Perhaps certain elements of Green's writing do elude American readers, resulting in an underestimation of the 'conversational' novels, Nothing, Doting and to an extent Party Going.

Interest in Green's dual existence as businessman and novelist continued. In February 1950 Harvey Breit's 'Talk with Henry Green - and a P.S.'

appeared in the New York Times where Green insisted he did not feel any great excitement about his sudden popularity in the States: "'Been writing too long a time,' he said in explanation." Newsweek's review of Nothing in March was far more concerned with discussing the identity of 'Novelist X' who came to New York as H.V. Yonge than in discussing the novel. Two short paragraphs on Nothing concluded with yet another reference to Green's full-time occupation:

Readers may enjoy it wholeheartedly and still feel that they would rather not have the author on the board of directors of a company they worked for.²⁹

At the beginning of October 1950, just after the publication of Back, a short autobiographical piece appeared in the New York Herald Tribune Book Review, an article remarkable for its lack of information. Then in 1952 a long article on Green, entitled 'The Double Life of Henry Green' and subtitled rather overdramatically 'The secret 'vice' of a top British industrialist is writing some of Britain's best novels' was written for Life by Nigel Dennis who went to visit Green in his London office.

Green did not attract attention only in America: a number of foreign language editions of his novels began to appear in Europe. In Italy Loving and Pack My Bag were published by Longanesi, translated by Marcella Pavolini as E vissero felici (and they lived happily ever after) and, a charming title, L'amante timido in 1954 and 1953.³⁰ Suhrkamp Verlag in Frankfurt translated three of the novels: Dämmerung (Blindness) came out in 1953, Schwärmerei (Doting) in 1954 and Lieben (Loving) in 1964, all translated by Friedrich Burschell.³¹ In Spain only Loving was brought out, by Seix Barral, translated by Caridad Martínez. It was published first in 1957 and a second edition was produced in 1973.³² Even the Russians and Yugoslavs seem to have been interested in Green. In 1963 an article entitled 'Henri Grin' was included in Forum (Zagreb)³³ and John Lehmann tells that the Russians wanted information on Green's writing:

When he was working for the Ministry of Information in the war he received the following request: "I was abruptly bidden to send DETAILED CHARACTERIZATIONS WORK OF MANY WRITERS MENTIONED UNFAMILIAR TO US HENRY GREEN NORMAN CAMERON LAURIE LEE WALTER ALLEN EVELYN WAUGH ELIZABETH BOWEN WILLIAM PLOMER."³⁴ Apparently a Japanese enthusiast attempted to translate Loving but was forced to give up because he found it impossible to arrive at a translation which lived up to the original.³⁵

It was in France that Green's novels were most enthusiastically received. In 1945 Nagel published Caught under the title Orage Sur Londres (M. Wauquier); it is at present out of print.³⁶ Gallimard published four of the novels: Party Going, Concluding, Nothing and Loving. Loving was translated by Michel Vinaver as Amour in 1954 and has reached its fifth printing. Nothing, as Rien by J.R. Vidal, appeared in 1955 and has run to three printings. Conclusion, translated by Michel Vigny, came out in 1964 and En Gare, by Renée Villoteau, in 1979. Michel Vinaver also wrote a long article on Green in 1953 which deals comprehensively with Loving.³⁷ This was paraphrased and discussed by Anthony Quinton in London Magazine. Quinton contrasts England, where lengthy critical attention is rarely paid to contemporary fiction, with France where it is quite usual for recent novels to be discussed at length. This is his explanation for the existence of a remarkable thirteen-thousand-word piece on Loving.³⁸ However Vinaver must have been quite deeply affected by Loving for his play Iphigénie Hôtel (1963) is based partly on that novel: it is described as "Pièce en trois journées, en partie tirée de 'Amour', roman de Henry Green".³⁹

D.S. Taylor offered another reason for Green's popularity in France; it is, he says, Green's "existentialist value system" which appeals to the French critic.⁴⁰ Whatever the reason, Green has been viewed in France with a respect he has not always received in England. Terry Southern's

Paris Review interview was translated and printed in Lettres Nouvelles in 1965⁴¹ and Maurice Pons wrote an article entitled 'Pour Saluer Henry Green' for the Revue de Paris in 1956. In her chapter 'Conversation et Sous-Conversation' of L'Ere du Soupçon (1956) Nathalie Sarraute described Green as "un des meilleurs romanciers anglais actuels" and expressed great interest in Green's notion of the 'dialogue' novel, finding similarities between Green's aims and her own. English fiction writers did not share her enthusiasm.

CHAPTER 7

Novel Theories: Nothing, Doting

The 1950s brought changes in Green's writing and his business life. In a way much came to a halt: in 1952 he wrote his last novel, Doting, and in 1958, aged only fifty-three, he retired from Pontifex and handed the business over completely to Sebastian. However, the early 1950s were productive in that he ventured into new areas of writing. For the very first time he revealed some of the theory behind his fiction in explaining the aims of his last novels, Nothing and Doting, which are written almost entirely in dialogue - a logical progression from earlier work. He gave three radio broadcasts on this subject, all of which were printed in the Listener, and wrote an article called 'The English Novel of the Future' for Contact. He also wrote three book reviews, the only critical pieces he did apart from the Cherwell review of Byron's book and an article on Doughty's Arabia Deserta in the 1940s¹, and took part in a radio review-programme. But imaginative writing more or less ceased after Doting and many critics believe that even in Doting Green's marvellous inventiveness had dried up in that it is not a technical advance on Nothing and is similar in subject matter. Several projects were begun then dropped in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1957 he was commissioned to write London and Fire 1940 which was to be a documentary account of the blitz²; the few pages that were completed appeared as 'Before the Great Fire'. The new book started in the 1960s and dictated to Goronwy Rees's two daughters was a continuation of Pack My Bag but progress was slow and painful and nothing has ever been published.

Clearly encouraged by his success in America and his growing, though still small, band of devotees in England (though he did not acknowledge that this pleased him), Green was in good spirits in the first half of the 1950s. Although he told Nigel Dennis in 1952 that he did not believe in the "literary life", he continued to have some involvement with literary circles. Lehmann included Green among his guests at a number of literary lunches and dinners. In 1950 he gave a party for David Gascoyne

and Carson McCullers. He describes it as an "extraordinary party" in which the guests formed into cliques and refused to mix. Henry Green, he says, spent the whole time cracking "esoteric jokes" with William Sansom while Carson McCullers looked on in "puzzled misery".³ On another occasion Green was introduced to Eudora Welty, the American short story writer, who was an admirer of Green and in fact wrote an article on him for Texas Quarterly in 1961.⁴ The meeting went well: "Henry could not have been more recklessly ebullient, and swept Eudora Welty off her feet."⁵ It was the publication day of Nothing.

A third party shows Green's occasionally disturbing eccentricity. The party was for the novelist Paul Bowles who was at first perturbed by the London literary set (including Cyril Connolly) he found himself in, then both astonished and delighted by a monologue from Green.

Henry Yorke . . . talked almost without stop at the top of his form, developing fantastic theories . . . about the coming invasion of Britain by coloured peoples from former colonies, culminating in a negro prime minister in 1984, and questioning Elizabeth Bowen about the Royal Commission on Capital Punishment (on which she was serving at the time) in a way that managed to make even that macabre subject grotesquely amusing.⁶

Such oddities in behaviour and conversation were standard with Green. Mr Rock's method (in Concluding) of dealing with letters - piling them into a trunk and using them to light fires - was not invented for the character: his creator did much the same.

He was . . . impressed when M.R. James, author of supernatural stories, assured him that "letters always answer themselves." Now, when letters come to his home, they are put beside his breakfast plate, where he regards them coldly until he leaves for the office. Then his wife takes them to the bathroom, still unopened, and puts them on the floor. When they have formed a large heap and are beginning to obstruct the bathroom traffic, she throws them out with the garbage. "Every one of those thousands of letters," says Henry Green, "has managed to answer itself."⁷

I wonder if that procedure is quite what M.R. James had in mind. Another of Green's idiosyncracies is mentioned by John Russell. He maintains that Green always wore bedroom slippers beneath his conservative suit on

business trips abroad, which must have confirmed foreign views on the peculiarities of the British upper classes.

In 1952 Green was apparently still active and in good health. He spent his days as he had for years, writing rather than eating at lunch-time, adjourning to his desk at home after a drink and dinner to complete the 1,000 words he demanded of himself each day. He enjoyed watching dancing, though he did not like to dance himself (Powell says, "Yorke . . . long set his face against even learning to dance"⁸), and listening to jazz, an interest he shared with his son. He did not listen to the radio and had given up going to the cinema but spent much of his time in pubs. These he much preferred to clubs whose formality he loathed. He related the story of his one experience with a club to Nigel Dennis:

"I only became a member of a club once," he says, "and then I resigned after three days. They had the impertinence to put a small boy behind a pillar, to watch me. They thought I wouldn't behave with the proper obsequiousness of a new member. And then they made me pay 15 pounds for the privilege of resigning! It's been pub, not club, for me, since that."⁹

Most of the pleasure Green derived from sitting in pubs came from the conversations he participated in and overheard, conversations about people and not art. He considered this vitally important to him as an artist for he believed that one can learn about art only from those who are not themselves artists. Art comes from life therefore it is with life and "living conversation" that the artist must be concerned.

. . . conversation is the principal way of learning anything about life, and so it is absurd to waste good talk on topics, such as art, that come after life, not before it. ¹⁰

Green's work with Pontifex in the 1950s took him on a number of trips abroad. When he became managing director of the firm, his main interest was in exporting large process plants for the distillation of alcohol. This took him to India and Japan, among other places, and in 1950 he went also to Canada with twelve other industrialists on a "goodwill" mission.¹¹ His writing too involved foreign travel. Meetings took place with

European publishers and he was once to have gone on a lecture tour of America but by that time he had become quite ill and so was forced to cancel the tour.¹² Goronvy Rees had joined Green in Pontifex some time after the war; he stayed for about four years. It was a job he found fascinating due mainly to the metamorphosis he watched daily of Henry Yorke, managing director, into Henry Green, novelist.¹³ During his time in the firm he and Green would take it in turns to visit the factory in Birmingham once a week and what Rees remembers most about these outings is the place where they used to stay. In those days of rationing they frequented a hotel kept by a woman who had been the madame of a brothel in Brussels, and both he and Green found her conversation a constant source of amusement and interest.

Green maintained contact with other old friends and in January 1952 he organized a luncheon for John Lehmann at the Trocadero which was attended by about thirty writers including T.S. Eliot and E.M. Forster. The lunch was intended to give moral support to Lehmann in a time of crisis. His publishing firm, John Lehmann Limited, had come under the control of Purnell who, after a disagreement, had given Lehmann the sack. As a gesture of friendship and loyalty the lunch was a success and Lehmann records that he was very moved by the tribute.¹⁴ However Cecil Beaton mentions a meeting with Green, an "old friend", at about this time, in which Green "exclaimed sympathetically, 'My God! You must be bored with that racket [photography] by now!'"¹⁵ Beaton denied that he was bored by his profession and Green's comment may to an extent be projection: perhaps even in 1951 he was tiring of his own way of life.

The mid-1950s were quite eventful for the Yorke family. In 1953 Vincent Yorke, at last conceding to age, resigned from his position as Chairman of the National Provident Institution after being on the board since 1906 and his death followed four years later, in November 1957.

He did not leave a vast fortune to his family - £125,000 according to The Times (5 March 1958) - but enough to cast doubt on Green's repeated complaints of poverty and the ravages of the taxman. Though not exceedingly wealthy, the family was far from poor and in the 1950s Green still kept a manservant.¹⁶ 1957 was also the year Sebastian married. Coincidentally it was the day after his grandfather's death, 28 November, that his wedding to the Hon. Emma Tennant, daughter of the second Baron Glenconner, took place. They had a son, Matthew, a year later, who studied agriculture at Edinburgh and intended to go into farming rather than his father's business. However, the marriage did not last and was dissolved in 1962. Sebastian has since remarried.

It is, I think significant that soon after his father's death Green decided to leave Pontifex. In 1958 he went alone on a cruise to South Africa and on his return he announced his intention to retire. The cruise was his first holiday in years and he seems to have taken it as recuperation. However, soon after leaving port an abrupt movement of the boat threw him against the wall of his cabin and he cracked a couple of ribs. He told this story to Bruce Johnson, who visited Green in 1960, with typical morose humour. A nurse who tended his bandaged ribs was somehow convinced that he was "the kind of romantic Englishman who slips quietly over the side and ends it all" and Green was forced to spend the entire voyage assuring people that he would not ruin their holiday "with a vulgar leap into the sea". He came home exhausted.¹⁷

Sebastian succeeded his father as Managing Director and immediately made changes in the work of Pontifex. Being far from convinced of his father's ability and commitment in business, he had already disagreed with Green's enthusiasm for export, feeling that competition was too great. So he abandoned this and other projects and, probably in the interest of economy, closed the London office. Pontifex is now based in Leeds and has consolidated a limited range of products. It has very few

lines, mainly vats used in brewing, and employs about forty or fifty people in a factory situated in an industrial wasteland totally devoid of the romance of Green's Birmingham in Living.

Green said to John Lehmann that Nothing was the "first entirely funny book he had ever tried to write" and he found it very difficult to bring off.¹⁸ It is often referred to as a 'comedy of manners', portraying as it does the love affairs and family problems of a group of upper middle-class Londoners, the middle-aged John Pomfret and Jane Weatherby, lovers of old, and their children, Mary and Philip, serious and dull civil servants with none of the sparkle and shrewdness of their elders who at the end of the novel revive their alliance in marriage.

English critics were reserved about the novel although they found it witty and entertaining. By this time Green's reputation as an 'experimental' novelist was such that people had expectations, and suspicions, of him and even though Nothing did something new, critics were concerned primarily with what they saw as its triviality. Angus Wilson expressed a wish that Green would return to his old style: "One can only hope for a return to the brilliant strain of Mr. Green's earlier work."¹⁹

Marghanita Laski made a rather petty attack on Green's unorthodox way with commas and summed up this otherwise "delightful" book as "the very quintessence of triviality".²⁰ After a sympathetic discussion of the plot and method of the book, John Richardson concluded with a dismissive comment: "Nothing is, as its title suggests, a book of no weight or importance."²¹

Nothing was published in May 1950 and two months later Lehmann gave a fifteen-minute talk on Green in a series called 'The Contemporary

English Novel'; it was broadcast on 4 July. He was very anxious about the content of his talk but Green was well pleased with what he said, especially his emphasis on the humour of the novels.²² Lehmann also spoke of Green's "extraordinary ear for the tone and temper of ordinary conversation" and the "poetry" of his descriptions. He defended Green on the charge of being 'mannered' by saying that what appears to be affectation in his punctuation and sentence construction is in fact an attempt "to shock the lazy ear into attention", an important and perceptive observation. Nothing he described as "the most frivolous but by no means the least accomplished" of Green's novels and pointed to Green's penetrating understanding of class structure: "This is inherent in the situation [of Nothing] when in the levelling of the Welfare State the differences of classes have become the differences of generations."²³

In August Green's Contact article appeared. Green maintained that he wrote this piece only because Contact offered him such a large fee that "for the sake of wife and child" he could not refuse,²⁴ a joke which displays once again Green's inclination to adopt defensive postures. The article consisted of an extract from Nothing followed by his views on the novel of the future. The editorial introduction suggests that Contact recognized Green as a legitimate innovator.

Henry Green is the creator of the novel of the spoken word. The pages above from his latest novel, 'Nothing', illustrate the deftness of his dialogue. Green is enjoying a sudden best-selling vogue in New York.²⁵

Green's article is the odd mixture of unsubstantiated and perhaps unjustifiable generalizations, illogical deductions, intelligent observations and interesting ideas which pervades all his theoretical writings. He begins with an unqualified statement, which he feels requires no further comment (because he believes it to be self-evident), that the major theme of the novel is "falling in and out of love". The remainder

of the piece is devoted to method: how in future will this theme be communicated?

His first point is that the novel should be "non-representational", that is, it should not aim at verisimilitude, but it should have a "life of its own". This relates directly to Green's comment on prose in Pack My Bag.

Prose should be a long intimacy between strangers with no direct appeal to what both may have known. It should slowly appeal to feelings unexpressed, it should in the end draw tears out of the stone, and feelings are not bounded by the associations common to place names or to persons with whom the reader is unexpectedly familiar. (p. 88)

The reader's imagination and responsiveness are vital elements of the communication between writer and reader; through imagination the reader must allow himself to be taken 'to a new reality beyond his experience'. Green makes a comparison between writing and modern painting, also 'non-representational', but says that the act of imagination required by a reader to 'create life' is easier to achieve than that of a viewer of a painting because it is unconscious and automatic: language is an essential part of life whereas painting is not. Everyone has language and everyone, as his knowledge of language increases, becomes aware of the many areas of meaning a word may have. This leads Green to his next point concerning the aim of prose, "the piling up of the context of words which alone has meaning". So the writer's task is to create a work which has life of its own and "re-challenges" the reader's imagination.

Much of this had been implicit in previous work, but what was new here was Green's predilection for dialogue. He explained this by saying that he finds communication in its purest form in conversation. His rationale is slightly dubious. First he says that communication through talk is "easier" because "we do not have time to define what we mean in conversation and that we thereby arrive easier at a general understanding

of what is being said". Surely a "general conventional understanding" is just what Green does not want. He then puts forward the theory that conversation is all we have left anyway since the advent of the telephone, radio and television.

What he seems to be trying to say is that dialogue suits his desire to avoid "intrusion", that is explanation, between writer and reader. He acknowledges that some explanation of what is happening is necessary in a novel but such "interruptions" should be few and the dialogue should constitute most of the 'action'. A further qualification he makes about explanation is that it must not be in what he calls "good English", the undistinguished and undifferentiated prose of the journalist. The novelist must write each sentence "as if only he could have written it". He must establish a "personal prose" and this goes for characters in novels too; each must have his or her individual voice. However, the 'personal' must not extend to ideas for a novelist should not use his book to try to persuade readers of his points of view; the reader must be given the opportunity to make his own imaginative interpretation.

This article prompted a reply from C.P. Snow, a writer whom Sebastian described as "anathema" to Green, in the Spectator, 22 September.²⁶ Snow saw Green as a prime example of the deterioration of modern writing. He found Green's theory muddled and totally mistaken and regarded with horror his view of where the novel was going. He attacked Green with 'facts', pointing out, quite rightly, that many great novels are not about falling in love - of course this is the main theme of most of Green's novels - and accused him of lacking "intellectual control". He acknowledged that Green was a clever man and then used this as ammunition for his contention that he was severely misguided: this, he said, was the only possible explanation for Green's obvious confusion. He appeared not to believe that Green was himself convinced of the validity of his arguments. There are certainly

grounds for criticism in the Contact article but the fundamental points he makes are clear and offer an interesting and important insight into the writing of novels, Green's in particular.

Snow supposed that Green's "perverse aesthetic" could lead only to novels that are "tedious and unilluminating" and concluded by comforting himself with enumeration of young novelists who did not exhibit this "tendency" - he makes it sound like some obscene aberration - and challenging Green's prophecy in saying that only time will tell if he or Green is right. In fact few novelists have followed Green's example, perhaps because it is extraordinarily difficult, but the very existence of Snow's article must indicate that he saw Green as a force worth opposing.

Green never commented publicly on Snow's criticism but he made a passing remark in his article for The Times, 'Unloving': "Of course it is no use finding complaint against one's contemporaries, even C.P. Snow." He continued regardless to present his theories in radio broadcasts which were published in the Listener on 9 November 1950, 15 March and 23 August 1951 as 'A Novelist to his Readers: Communication without speech', 'A Novelist to his Readers - II' and 'A Fire, a Flood and the Price of Meat'. Green's theories received quite extensive airings on radio for in January 1952 he was again heard, on John Lehmann's programme 'New Soundings'. This, the first radio literary programme, had forty-five minutes once a month on the Third programme and was instituted to give attention to new authors and new ideas on literature. Green contributed to the first programme, reading an extract of Doting, which was soon to be published, and giving a commentary on prose style. Lehmann was nervous about 'New Soundings' and his qualms were not relieved by seeing Green on the day of the broadcast: "This sense of dismay was increased as I observed Henry Green on the other side of the microphone table, looking as if he had reached the ultimate point of

dislocated world-weariness."²⁷

Lehmann introduced Green as "one of the most brilliant and original stylists in the novel today" and expressed confidence that Green would have some good and imaginative critical comment to make. In fact Green's talk is rather confusing and insubstantial.²⁸ He begins by discussing, as he had briefly in Contact, journalistic style which he believes must undergo some change. He attacks the "staccato drum beat" prose of journalists and makes a plea for the "longer sentence" which will bring some "depth, or light and shade" into the severe, black and white statements of fact which fill newspapers. This seems reasonable as a comment on style but he goes on to say that this short-sentence, unadorned journalese renders what the writer is saying incomprehensible. He gives no example of this but appears to be suggesting that what is required is further explanation - journalists should "relate" facts not "rattle" them out "in a stutter" - which seems inconsistent in view of his opinions on explanation for he does not make clear the obvious differences between journalism and fiction-writing in terms of aims and appropriate style.

His comments on fiction were limited to a brief reiteration of his beliefs that dialogue should be predominant in novels and that the God-like narrator who sees into the heads of the characters is "as dead as the Dodo". He then read from Doting but instead of choosing a passage of pure dialogue, as one might expect, he picked one of the few descriptive passages. He explains his choice by saying that he wished to show that in the novel too the "longer sentence" is important.

Green's reading of a description of a belly dancer from the beginning of Doting was prefaced by several obviously defensive comments. The example of his writing was "offered, let me tell you, not entirely seriously" and just before the reading he expressed his hostility to the idea in saying: "This extract is offered you on the understanding

that I disapprove of my work being read aloud." The repeated use of the word 'offer' is interesting. It gives the impression that Green feels he is laying himself open to possible rejection: an offer may be accepted or refused.

Green thought that Doting, published in May 1952, would be considered decadent: "They will call it decadent, . . . but it is not. In fact, in fifteen years' time it will be thought quite soppy."²⁹ This criticism was not one of those prompted by the novel; reviewers' major objection was that Doting was too much like Nothing. Many references were made to Green's reputation and to his band of admirers, seen as a snobbish élite. Arthur Calder-Marshall addressed himself to the group of people who believed Henry Green to be the "saviour predestinate" of the English novel, assuring them that, if this was their belief, they would be "sorely disappointed" by Doting.³⁰ Reviewers generally enjoyed the book very much, finding it subtle, funny and lucidly written but several concluded with a hope for change. It is sad and ironic that it should be this, Green's last novel, which caused critics to speak with such confidence of his next.

In his relentless investigation of every twist and turn of their manoeuvring, Mr. Green shows a brilliance and sureness of touch which few, if any, of his contemporaries could equal, but for that reason alone we must demand a change of scene in his next novel. The provisional title might be Something.³¹

With a writer of Mr. Green's quality one is entitled to expect, at this stage in his career, some new departure, the reaching of some new level. Mr. Green has made two such departures, such advances, already; in Living and in Loving, and the time has come for a third. When it comes it will, I believe, be shown forth, among other ways, in a cleaning up of Mr. Green's style, . . . ³²

Between 1953 and 1955 Green wrote three book reviews, two of which were on subjects pertinent to Green's current interests. In September 1953 he wrote 'The Spoken Word as Written'³³ on The Oxford Book of English Talk, an anthology of dialogue from plays, novels, trials - conversations in print. Green approved most of the passages the editor,

James Sutherland, chose for inclusion (particularly the extract from one of his own books). He discussed the difference between spoken and written conversation and wondered if art distorts 'real' conversation: does literature really tell us how people spoke in the past? He reached the conclusion that "written dialogue is not like the real thing, and never can be", although at moments we see words in print which have the "real ring of speech". In February 1954 Green reviewed Virginia Woolf's A Writer's Diary³⁴ in which he expressed his admiration for her writing but his reservations about Leonard Woolf as editor. At the end of his review he declined to evaluate Virginia Woolf as a writer, his excuse being that not enough time had passed since she wrote, but he acknowledged that she had a "profound effect on her time". Gower's The Complete Plain Words³⁵ aroused mixed feelings in Green, as it probably does in most people. He admired much of the first half of the book but found difficulty with 'The Handling of Words'. His concern was that so much of what Gowers talks about is simply a matter of taste and he found some of Gowers' corrections of syntax intolerable because they just do not sound right. He picked out a number of Gowers' examples to examine and offered his own alternatives, all simpler and much pleasanter on the ear than the originals. He gave a kind of apology at the end: "Perhaps writers ought not to review books. They only, if interested, see another way of doing it."

Green continued, and concluded, his brief career as a literary critic with an appearance on 'Recent Novels', broadcast on the Third programme on 20 June 1958. Karl Miller, W.W. Robson and Henry Green came together to discuss six new novels: Lawrence Durrell's Balthazar, C.P. Snow's The Conscience of the Rich, Terry Southern's Flash and Filigree, Jack Kerouac's On the Road, Nadine Gordimer's A World of Strangers, and James Gould Cozzens' By Love Possessed. The conversation³⁶

reads very strangely since Green rarely appears to be on the same (mental!) wavelength as the two critics. Green's comments are brief, personal, idiosyncratic and occasionally bizarre but now and then they have the effect of making the conventional and articulate literary criticism of Robson and Miller seem ludicrous and redundant. Green insists on taking a contrary view to the others on every novel, liking what they do not, disliking what they approve. Whether this was conscious perversity or heartfelt opinion it is impossible to tell.

When talking of Flash and Filigree, Green said: "I've got a great weakness for this novel. And it made me laugh as much as any book's made me laugh.. oh, for ages." It was in 1958 that Terry Southern interviewed Green for Paris Review³⁷ and the two seem to have formed a liking for each other; Green's feelings about Flash and Filigree, Southern's first novel, are immortalized in a quotation on the back of the Panther edition (1974): "Dazzling, brilliantly funny, yet truly frightening" (Henry Green). Green's comment about the funniness of the novel did not in any way further the discussion of points made by Karl Miller in his introduction and W.W. Robson tried to steer Green back to the critical issues by bowing to Green's superior knowledge (as a novelist himself) of the techniques of writing fiction:

I wonder, Green, if you could tell me how this curious dream-like quality of the book is created. Because I agree with Miller, that it has a very odd, distinctive flavour . . . and I wondered what devices he'd used in order to create this peculiar quality of a dream.

Green carefully avoided answering the question, put at such length by Robson.

Well, I know the man, I think it's just like him. It's a very very good expression of his personality, I think.

Robson made one more attempt.

D'you think it's just his way of seeing things, and it isn't a conscious stylisation?

Green's cryptic reply, "'Not a bit'", was perhaps the answer to two questions in one deserves, and this time he was not encouraged to expand on his answer.

Robson found On the Road an "engaging" but pretentious and insincere book which should not be taken seriously. Miller found it boring and the standards of behaviour it upholds "pretty rotten", though he acknowledged it has charms. Green liked it. He made no comment on the morality of the characters' way of life but based his evaluation on two things. First, he was not bored - "he kept my attention to the end" - and second he loved the romance of travel through America: "It's got all the romance of the States to me. He really does [?], when he gets to a town with a lovely name like Laramie, it means something to him."

Nadine Gordimer's novel about a young white man's experiences in South Africa was introduced by Green who found the book hard to relate to: "While, no doubt, this is a picture of a world which does exist it is so remote from any experience of mine that it leaves me at a loss." Green believed that there must be some shared experience between reader and writer if communication is to take place and this novel struck no chord in him. The critics did not agree and continued to discuss what they found interesting about it without Green's participation.

The final novel was introduced at great length by Karl Miller and then defended against the charges levelled against it in America of being pretentious, inflated and aimed at capturing the best-seller market. Green's only contribution to this part of the discussion, and in fact his last words on the programme, followed and it seems very much as if he was speaking not about James Gould Cozzens but about Henry Green.

The great thing about him is that he's been in solitude more or less - for many years producing novels which have had only a very limited group success, and now producing this. And this can only be done by a man who is deeply convinced of his way of looking at experience and who feels utterly committed also - even to prejudices which most people, I think, quite justifiably would strongly object to.

Green's penchant for the incongruous and circuitous was also in evidence in the interview he gave to Terry Southern in 1958. In his talk with Southern he gave lucid explanations of his methods and ideas but was well able to deflect questions he did not want, or found too boring, to answer. Southern is remarking that some say Green is too subtle for American readers:

MR. GREEN

I don't follow. Suttee, as I understand it, is the suicide - now forbidden - of a Hindu wife on her husband's flaming bier. I don't want my wife to do that when my time comes - and with great respect, as I know her, she won't...

INTERVIEWER

I'm sorry, you misheard me; I said "subtle" - that the message was too subtle.

MR. GREEN

Oh, subtle. How dull!

The concluding exchange between Green and Southern, which surely must have been pre-planned or edited in, stresses that the "oblique approach" is always prevalent.

INTERVIEWER

London and Fire, 1940 - a commissioned historical work. Well, well; I dare say you'll have to give up the crabwise approach for this one. What's the first sentence?

MR. GREEN

"My 'London of 1940' . . . opens in Cork, 1938."

INTERVIEWER

. . . I see.

One of Southern's questions concerned Green's opinion of critical writings on his work. Green said they were "invariably useless and uninteresting" but made an exception of Michael Vinaver, the French translator of Loving, and Edward Stokes whose book on Henry Green was about to be published by the Hogarth Press. This was the first critical work on Green and Walter Allen called it a "perspicacious study" in his New Statesman review³⁸.

Stokes's book formed the basis of a conversation between Alan Ross and Green in 1959 and Ross began his article with some comments on Stokes's work.³⁹ Ross felt that even allowing for his dislike of critics Green could not fail to be flattered by such an exhaustive study of his work. He thought its "obsessive and single-minded concentration" rather morbid and perhaps a threat to the "romantic, elusive spirit" of the novels themselves but described it as a "pioneer work".

Ross's interview took the form of his quoting or paraphrasing points made by Stokes and asking Green for his comments. On the whole Green agreed with Stokes's interpretations and answered in simple affirmatives; very few statements were amplified. Perhaps he was bored.

Green spent the 1960s largely as a recluse, as I have described, but his 'retirement' did not go totally unnoticed. In April 1961 a short piece about him appeared in The Times in an article by George Cloyne with a suitably Green-like title, 'Resting?'.⁴⁰ Cloyne regretted that a number of books and articles had recently been published on Green which attempted to examine and classify Green's work as if it were complete and to fit Green into his allotted place in twentieth-century fiction. He called upon Green at least to write Struck to explain why he had been silent for nearly ten years and then to go on to write more "small masterpieces" to prove to the exegetes that they had catalogued Green too early.

Green did not act on Cloyne's suggestion but he did write an article with the rather bitter title 'Unloving' for The Times in August 1961.⁴¹ It is a depressed and depressing article which returns constantly to the subject with which it begins, age and deterioration. It deals mainly with reading rather than writing: what Green looked for and valued in a novel. He was scathing about professional critics of novels and implied that he felt hounded by them. He gave a series of warnings to readers

against being taken in by critics :

Forget . . . the nattering in so-called high places. Remember also that novelists who read and review current work can usually only see how they would do it themselves. Believe that on the whole novelists who use English on both sides of the Atlantic are writing to a higher general standard than ever before.

Critical work on Green in this period included two books, by John Russell and A.K. Weatherhead, both Americans, and many articles in journals, again most of them American. America also thought Green's secluded life worth commenting on and Bruce Johnson wrote 'A Note on Henry Green in Retirement' in 1960, an article which presents a pleasant picture of Green's leisurely life but makes no mention of any writing in progress.

A few events of consequence occurred in Green's life in the 1960s - the death of his mother in 1963, the receipt, (along with W.H. Auden) of an honorary D. Litt. from Birmingham University in 1967⁴² - but most of his time was spent out of the public sphere. Three hours a day were spent in the pub, according to Sebastian, and 'Unloving' suggests the range of his reading, as ever, current novels, For an insight into his state of mind one can only return to 'For Jenny with Affection.'

CHAPTER 8

Death - and a P.S.

The last newspaper feature on Green before his death, 'Silent Green', appeared in the Guardian in August 1973. A photograph accompanied the article, a rare thing in itself though Cecil Beaton photographed him several times, but still more unusual in that it is full-face; Green was notorious for being photographed from the back or with his hands covering his face. Tight-lipped and forehead wrinkled above slightly raised eyebrows, he looks away, into the distance. Beside the picture is this caption:

He is one of the best of living novelists, but it is 20 years since he has published a book and fashion has passed him by. Henry Green shuns personal publicity. 'It would, I suppose, be a miracle for Green's gestures of self-effacement to arouse interest in a society conditioned by advertisements.'

Green emerges from this interview with Simon Blow as saddened but resigned to ending his life virtually forgotten, his work largely unrecognized.

The sad, fatigued eyes stare ahead: "I'm forgotten now. It's disappointing, but there it is. Nothing to be done about it. I thought I made some statements. . . . It's not fame one wants, recognition perhaps."

He seemed to have given up on life, to be ready for death, and it was only four months later, on 14 December, that Henry Green died. The Times obituary said little about the man, merely chronicling the stages of his life - Eton, Oxford, Birmingham, his work as a fireman in the war - then surveyed the novels, concluding with a definition of his work:

His art, it has truly been said, is one of acceptance. In his novels the human lot is presented as sad but comic: and objectivity never precludes sympathetic understanding. 1

In his life sadness took over from his sense of the comic and circumstances deadened his sympathy for fellow men. However, he certainly was a kind and understanding man in earlier years as a letter to The Times a few days after his death reveals.² James MacGibbon, the publisher, wrote to point out the deficiencies of the obituary. He said that exclusive concentration on Green's work as a novelist meant that something

equally important in a consideration of his life was missed out - the help he gave to young novelists. MacGibbon portrays Green rather as another Edward Garnett and perhaps it was that example which Green was taking. He commended Green's "remarkable kindness and the quick insight of his critical faculty" and he cited one instance of the encouragement and practical assistance Green gave to a writer who had written a successful first book but could not get his second published. Green read the novel and within a few days phoned MacGibbon and asked him to send the young writer round to his house. What the novel needed, in Green's view, was a plot; so he gave it one. The plot was added and the book published.

On 12 February 1974 a memorial service was held for Green at St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, and an address given by V.S. Pritchett, a friend of Green and an admirer of his work. He spoke of both the man and his writing; the amended version of his speech, which appeared in London Magazine³, begins: "There was Henry Yorke and there was Henry Green - two friends in one." The man he found "a strange mixture of dash and melancholy", the "unlikely conjunction of the engineer and the poet" a mystery; indeed he wonders if Green saw himself as mysterious. He remarked on Green's great talent for listening which enabled him to include such "exquisite" talk in his novels and also commented on him as a social anthropologist in search of the peculiarities of the group or class about which he was writing at the time.

A year later a dramatization of Doting was broadcast on the radio. Adapted by Denis Constanduros and produced by Michael Rolfe, the play was transmitted on 3 February 1975 as the Monday Play on Radio 4 and repeated on 9 February in Afternoon Theatre. Fenella Fielding played Diana and Frederick Treves Arthur in a play which lacked much of the subtlety and formal patterning of the novel. A number of scenes were omitted but otherwise the action of the play was faithful to the book

apart from several places where long scenes from the novel were broken up by later short scenes. For example the lunch shared by Annabel and Peter at the Indian restaurant is interrupted in the play by the scene which follows in the novel: Arthur and Diana discussing their son and Ann. On the whole the dramatization of Doting only proved Green's point that his dialogue novels are not plays.

In December 1975 'Drawing Tears out of the Stone' appeared on Radio 3. This was a discussion on Green's novels chaired by Paul Bailey and with contributions from A.S. Byatt, V.S. Pritchett, Anthony Quinton, Alan Ross, Angus Wilson, and Francis Wyndham. The programme was repeated on 3 January 1977.

Henry Green's name would have been seen by a great number of people in January and February 1977 for Frank Kermode wrote a series of fortnightly articles on him in the Daily Telegraph.⁴ In his first article he pointed out how Green has been neglected in consideration of novelists of his period - he is not so much under-rated as not rated at all - and he feels that the omission of Green's name from lists of important modern British novelists is a grave mistake. He went on to try to correct this error by evaluating Green's achievement in this and a further article. A third article appeared because of the enthusiasm of readers' reactions:

The warmth of readers' responses to what I have written here about Henry Green emboldens me to say a word more, before leaving it to them to see that his books will remain among those that are always considered when we reflect upon the achievements and possibilities of the novel in our time.

Before starting the first article, Kermode felt that he needed to re-read the novels and as his books were all in boxes and hard to retrieve, he set out to find them in shops but met with no success. In 1977 they were all out of print and a copy of Doting, occasionally Caught or Concluding, was all anyone was likely to find and then the search would be a long one. However, Kermode noted that some of Green's novels were

about to be reprinted: Living, Loving and Blindness by the Hogarth Press, Back, Party Going and Pack My Bag in a one-volume Picador paperback.

Kermode's information was not entirely correct, or maybe the publishers changed their minds, but certainly in late 1977 reprints of Green's novels began to come out and at present all are in print, either in hardback or Picador paperback. It is very sad that Green did not live to see his novels once more available but perhaps he would not have been overly impressed for in 1981 a Green novel is still quite a rarity in English bookshops.

The first of the reprints was Blindness, out of print since the early 1930s and virtually impossible to find even in libraries. It came out in August 1977 and was gratefully welcomed by many critics. Reviews were lengthy and without exception enthusiastic. Many commented on the scandalous neglect of Green by both literary critics and general readers, and evaluation of his writing tended to be higher in retrospect than it was in Green's lifetime. John Holloway in the Times Higher Educational Supplement described Blindness as "a major novel"⁵; in the Spectator Sebastian Faulks said that Green "may now again be recognized as a major English novelist . . . it could be that fame is about to come to him. . . . There is a great upsurge of interest in his work".⁶ Other reviewers too were given to making predictions. Angus Wilson, a reviewer of Green's work of long standing, said that if readers were given the opportunity to read other Green novels, "it will prove a notable event in the history of English literature in our century".⁷ A noticeable element of reviews of Blindness is the sheer pleasure with which the writers contemplated rereading Green. Christopher Driver said in the Guardian: "How extraordinary that it should have been out of print, and how pleasant to have it republished!"⁸ Several people urged others to investigate Green if they know nothing of his work and even the Observer colour magazine included a reminder that in the week to

come Blindness was to re-appear half a century after its original publication.⁹ Blindness was also reprinted in 1978 by the Viking Press in New York, and Irving Howe, who reviewed Loving in 1949, wrote about it for the New York Times Book Review. He gave a "quick snapshot" of Green's work followed by a discussion of Blindness, which he found enjoyable if not the best of Green's novels. He concluded with an appeal:

There ought to be some people willing to push past the mounds of rubbish that fill bookstores these days and find their way to the light of "Blindness".¹⁰

In February 1978 a paperback containing Loving, Living and Party Going was published by Picador. The introduction was written by John Updike who had revealed his admiration for Green in the 1977 edition of his novel The Poorhouse Fair (Knopf, New York) which, he confesses, shares an "embarrassing number of particulars" with Green's Concluding. His introduction to the Picador paperback shows that he rates Green very highly, almost reverently:

If I say that Henry Green taught me how to write it implies that I learned, and it is not a business one learns - unlearns, rather, the premature certainties and used ecstasies unravelling as one goes, with each day new blank paper to confront. Including this blank paper, where reverence gives me pause. For Green, to me, is so good a writer, such a revealer of what English prose fiction can do in this century, that I can launch myself upon this piece of homage and introduction only by falling into some sort of imitation of that liberatingly ingenuous voice, that voice so full of other voices, its own interpolations and the matchless dialogue twisted and tremulous with a precision that kept the softness of groping, of sensation, of living.

Caught and Concluding came soon after the paperback, in June 1978.

The Guardian reviewer was rather apprehensive about reading Green again. As a "yesterday's cult figure" Green might now seem to have been over-rated. However he found something quite different from what he remembered. He expected a writer concerned with "stylised dialogue" but discovered a writer who is "elusive, original, highly visual [rather than aural] and even painter-like".¹¹ Valentine Cunningham was also impressed by

these two novels from a writer "ever sensationally versatile"¹² but Julian Symons, in a review for the Times Literary Supplement called "Doubting"¹³, launched a vigorous attack on Green and, by implication, his admirers. Of the first page of Caught he says it is "bad writing, clumsy and dull" and he admits he cannot understand how Green has been admired as a stylist by "respected critics". He assumes that critics "have been deceived by the timid originality of his technique, and the impressionistic shifts from one aspect of story and character to another, into failure to observe his peccancies as a stylist and the basic sentimentality of his work". Symons says that there have been "a few dissenting voices" in the past where Green is concerned - Snow is the only one he mentions - but in reviews of the reprints of Green's novels his is the only hostile voice.

The next two novels to be published, in April 1979, were Back and Pack My Bag. Kingsley Amis reviewed Pack My Bag and recalled a time when he and his friends were enthusiasts: "My crowd read him in the 1940s, when he was still producing, and found him marvellously original both in vision and voice."¹⁴ In his re-assessment Amis does not commit himself to an evaluation of Green's writing. He asks a question - "Was what we took for originality no more than mannerism?" - but does not answer it, simply expressing the hope that young readers who have never heard of Green "will think him worth a first reading".

In Books and Bookmen Frank Granville Barker wrote a long article on Green in celebration of his apparent return to favour.¹⁵ Like Amis he remembers his student days in the late 1940s when Green was "quite a darling of the Eng Lit departments" but this was followed by quarter of a century of "cruel neglect". He feels that anyone interested in the English novel should read Green's novels now that the opportunity is there. Back and Pack My Bag were also discussed by Paul Bailey and

A.S. Byatt on the Radio 4 programme, 'Kaleidoscope', on 12 April.

With the publication in December 1979 of the second Picador paperback containing Nothing, Doting and Blindness Green's entire oeuvre was in print. In the Sunday Times Jeremy Brooks included this volume in his pick of December paperbacks.¹⁶ So Green's work is now accessible and it may be that when the official biography, which Paul Bailey is working on, is published, his life will be divested of some of its mystery.

PART II :

HENRY GREEN

CHAPTER 9

Building Meaning

The biographical account I gave in Part I included discussion of Green's personality and attitudes. I remarked in Chapter 1 on the double life he led and on his ambivalent view of his two apparently conflicting roles, as conventional English businessman and eccentric, innovative novelist. I referred also to the strangeness of his mode of perception (his at times almost hallucinatory vision), his affinity with the odd and absurd, and his appreciation of the mystery and ambiguity of human relationships, which affected directly his writing, in particular the stance of his narrators: "And do we know, in life, what other people are really like? I very much doubt it. We certainly do not know what other people are thinking. How then can the novelist be so sure?"¹

Green was an inveterate observer of people, fascinated especially by the intricate workings of conversation. Everyday occurrences aroused his curiosity far more than ideas and it is routine activities which occupy his novels. Like Henry James, he recorded or remembered impressions which provided ideas for characters or situations. In 'A Fire, a Flood and the Price of Meat' he shows how a seemingly trivial event may contain good material. He tells of an incident in a bar where the fire brigade was called in to attend to a chimney fire. Green comments: "The thing was suddenly alive that morning in the saloon bar; there was tension, attention, and amusement. What author could hope, or plan, for more?" Green shares with James the desire to exploit the resonant situation.

I intend in Part II to apply to the novels some of the conclusions I have reached about the man, and also to consider statements Green made about his intentions. I shall concentrate on those aspects of Green's writing which seem most interesting and relevant — it is largely as a stylist that I am studying him since it is in his use of language that his strength, originality and priorities as a novelist are to be found. I do not intend to examine each novel separately, but to isolate specific

features of style and technique, using the texts to illustrate and amplify my points.

The novels of Henry Green are in some ways unremarkable - he has, for instance, only a limited concern with plot and makes no attempt to explore fascinating characters - yet they are experimental in technique and language; his style is strikingly individual. One of his stated aims is to reawaken the lazy reader through use of language, to make him think anew; the ordinary is to be rendered fresh and vivid by the manner of presentation. He says in 'The English Novel of the Future' that many readers are "dulled by clichés which have become meaningless through being used in too many contexts". The result of this is that "reading has become for us an unrecognized act of imagination", meaning that the writer "has to induce the reader to make an act of conscious imagination to fuse the narrative, if this is capable of it, into a work of art with a life of its own". (p.23) In Chapter 11 I shall look at Green's narrative style and show some of the ways in which the reader is jolted into fresh perceptions by the often quite minor, but nevertheless significant, deviations Green makes from the norms of English prose.

Green feels that it is the quality and personal nature of writing which will establish communication between author and reader. His intention is to take the language of common use and to give it new contexts: "In narrative prose it is the piling up of the contexts of words which alone has meaning." (p.22) In Pack My Bag he describes prose as a "gathering web of insinuations" and this encapsulates the experience of reading one of his novels. The reader must hold in his head words and phrases, building meaning round them as the novel progresses. I shall discuss later in this chapter the idea of 'building' meaning and show that a novel by Green may not be read only sequentially; as far as possible all must be seen simultaneously. His novels have to be read almost as if they were poems.

Green wanted his work to be accessible to the general reader: "The writer cannot use too much material that has to be explained. If he does, I suspect he will bore his audience."² However, his method does demand effort on the reader's part. Meaning must often be inferred; the reader has a great deal of work to do in interpreting the unspoken. Green believes that in conversation the unsaid is as indicative as what is actually being spoken, or sometimes more so. One cannot expect to learn the truth directly, or immediately:

It is only by an aggregate of words over a period followed by an action, that we obtain, in life, a glimmering of what is going on in someone, or even in ourselves.

The fascination in words is that by themselves they can mean almost anything; dictionaries get longer every day. It is the context in which they lie that alone gives them life. They should be used as painters use colour, to give tone. For it is the tone in dialogue which carries the meaning, as, in life, it is what is left unsaid which gives us food for thought.

Thus in my study of Green's dialogue in Chapter 12 I shall pay attention to the "unsaid", to the possible tones and undertones of conversations.

The "unsaid" features not only in dialogue. Much of life is touched on in the novels only by implication or suggestion; even sexual relationships, which are depicted in all the novels, are not analyzed. Although he declared that his novels deal with "the theme of falling in and out of love", love is not accorded Laurentian intensity. Green's devotion to the indirect approach, which was a source of humour in Terry Southern's Paris Review interview, was expressed categorically in 'The English Novel of the Future': "The novelist's approach must always be oblique." (p.23) It is a Jamesian position. What R.P. Blackmur said of James could go for Green too: "The subject of art was life, or more particularly someone's apprehension of the experience of it."⁴

I have implied that Green does not intend to give his reader at any time an objective 'truth', a correct way of interpreting character

or action, and this impression of Green's aims is reinforced by his maintenance of multiple points of view, of which the narrator's is just one among many. In Chapter 10 I shall refer to the relativity of perception in Green's novels and show how sometimes imagery is used to identify viewpoint. Imagery manifests too some characteristics of Green I have frequently stressed. The hallucinatory quality of his vision is apparent, and both patterns of imagery and symbolism can offer ambivalent, or ambiguous, overviews.

Green's novels are riddled with ambiguities, both localised and general, and the ambivalence he felt towards his own life is obvious in his work, particularly in tone; it is difficult to determine whether humour or pathos prevails. His goal is a prose which creates an infinitely interpretable reality: "Narrative prose in future must be as diffuse and variously interpretable as life itself."⁵ Of course the infinitely interpretable novel is inconceivable but his articulation of the idea indicates the extent to which Green wishes to involve the reader in his fiction. He hopes that the novels will engage the reader and stimulate his imagination, eliciting an active, not merely a receptive response. A revealing method of dealing with Green's novels is to consider the means used to make the reader a participant in the fiction and this requires close scrutiny of structure and style which often leads to the discovery of the book.

The remainder of this chapter will be an examination of a structuring device Green uses involving repeated words. I shall refer mainly to Caught and shall make a brief comparison with James who uses a similar device

Green's notion of conveying meaning by the "piling up of the contexts of words" is put into practice most successfully in Caught and Party Going where certain 'key' words are not merely repeated words for they have a structuring purpose which is not typical of novels. Most novels have a linear form, event building on an opening situation, but Green, and James, while operating at one level on a sequential basis, at another introduce a kind of simultaneity into their work. Encounters with recurring words which shift slightly in meaning and context cause the reader to read forward and backwards, making links and experiencing the words as events in themselves.

Caught is one of Green's most naturalistic novels. While Party Going and Concluding are limited by time - each relates the events of just one day in the life of an exclusive community - and Nothing and Doting are defined by formal patterning, the three novels whose action takes place during the early 1940s, Caught, Loving and Back, are notable for their success in capturing a realistic war-time, or post-war, atmosphere. Many of Green's novels could be set at almost any time in the last four decades but Caught is rooted in the early months of the war. Yet in spite of the 'present' quality given the novel by the nature of its action, Caught depicts inward-looking characters who are constantly considering their positions in respect of their pasts. On the first page of the novel the narrator says: "War puts men in this position, however, that they can do little about their own affairs, they have no prospects . . ." (p. 5). People at war, with no security and possibly no future, look to the past to review their lives; this is the activity which fills the time of the characters of Caught. The significance of the title is twofold. The characters are caught in the war, carried along by inescapable forces over which they have no control - thus the present compels them to acknowledge its threat - but paradoxically they

also become increasingly caught in a past which reveals to them what they have hitherto refused to accept. Pye admits to himself the incestuous relationship which has probably caused his sister's mental breakdown; Roe assesses his relationships with his son, his wife, his sister-in-law. Because they are in an unusual situation which requires new kinds of relationship and a different way of regarding themselves, the characters are led, either as a bid for stability or as a result of the heightened condition of their lives, to compare the present with the "old days", "old times". Perhaps for Roe it is the marked difference between past and present which enables him to study his position. Yet in spite of this possibly liberating trend towards self-scrutiny neither Pye nor Roe can be said to achieve anything positive. Pye drives himself to suicide; Roe simply continues, his relationship with Christopher and Dy unrelieved of its awkwardness and inhibition.

The novel is about private versions of reality which bear little relation either to other people's versions or to the objective fact (as far as that can be established). The gap between the imagined and the real is constantly revealed in a number of ways: in the comments of the narrator, the disparity between characters' descriptions of the same event and especially through the significance which accumulates round certain words, 'imagine', 'forget', 'remember', and also 'secret', 'know', all of which become keys to the relative truth of what is being said. The distinctive quality of characters' rendering of events shows both their own inadequacies - the way in which they colour stories told on them - and the impossibility of establishing any close relationships. Characters are locked in their imagined worlds and even the impact of war at the end of the book does not bring them into shared contact with reality; this occurs also in Gerhardie's The Polyglots.

I shall discuss word repetition later but first I should like to mention a related structure to be found in the novel and that concerns chronology. Green usually conforms to a linear time-scale but in Caught chronology is difficult to establish. The only thing that is clear is that there are constant leaps from present (that is, the date of the start of the narrative) to past and back again. Chapter 1 takes place in September to December 1939, Chapter 3 January 1940, Chapter 5 September 1939 again. However Chapter 2 goes back to autumn 1938, to Christopher's abduction, and beyond that to reminiscences of Roe at the age of sixteen, and Chapters 4 and 6 concern the same time, when Roe first joined the Fire Service. The rest of the book follows a similar, if less consistent, pattern. Edward Stokes pays close attention to the time-sequence of Caught and recognizes its complexities but he makes the mistake (and it is a mistake he repeats throughout his book) of attempting unnecessary rationalization. When he finds incongruities he attributes them to authorial error. For instance: "In Chapter 10 it seems that Green has (temporarily at least) lost control of the time sequence . . . by some magical feat, four days for Mrs Howells have been equal to four weeks for Richard. This is perhaps no more than an unimportant accidental slip, like the one in Chapter 6."⁶ It seems unlikely that such a painstaking writer would make so many elementary "slips". These apparent errors occur for several important reasons. The novel is about memory and memory is always suspect, therefore one would not expect every detail of the action to correlate. This is reinforced by the fact that it is not only one person's memories that are described so consistency would be unrealistic and uninteresting. As Stokes points out, the time sequence becomes more and more incoherent as the novel proceeds; this is because the private narratives of Roe and to an even greater extent Pye form much of the subject matter. The private, non-linear time sequence which coexists with the historical period of autumn 1938 to

autumn 1940 becomes more prominent. The author's errors in establishing the exact date of particular events are not accidental slips but indications of personal notions of time.

Most of Caught consists of events that are described in the past rather than rendered as present and this leads to a further complexity in the time-sequence. Through comments by the narrator we discover the major events of the novel before they have been described in full. Particularly in the first half the narrator constantly projects the action forward, revealing what is to happen, so that when it arrives it is already for us the past and has the kind of inevitability which Green associates throughout the novel with war (see Caught pp. 49, 63).

. . . he could, at the time, feel nothing stronger than irritation when, some months earlier, as will appear, Christopher had really been lost in London. (p. 10)

Later on he carried out his promise. He was to regret it. (p. 47)
(my emphases)

Almost twelve months to a day after this conversation Richard was number one, that is in charge of a pump, called during the night blitz to an incident at which two heavy bombs had fallen within a hundred yards of each other. (p. 95)

The effect on the reader of this projection into the narrative future is that the action of the novel decreases in importance and the attitudes expressed towards it become the focus of attention and their interweaving the plot. It also has the effect of disrupting one's own sense of time. When future, present and past follow one another without any apparent rationale and when the same event can be at once future, present and past, it is virtually impossible to retain a consistent perspective. In this way Green draws his readers into the web of memory and imagination, forcing them to make the same efforts of recollection and judgment as the characters make.

The most resonant word in Caught is 'imagine' or 'imagination'. The first instance is in the second chapter. After a visit to Christopher, Roe recollects the time when his son was lured away from a department

store by a stranger. Before relating the story he goes back further into his past to visits he made as a boy to Tewkesbury Abbey. This memory is aroused by a connection made in Roe's mind between the high platforms of the towers in the fire station and the open ledge from which he viewed the windows of the Abbey. With another leap of imagination the bright colours of the windows lead his thoughts back to Christopher's abduction. Roe forms a deep affinity between himself and his son, finding a common attraction to colour and also, though it is not specifically stated, creating a bond in age; Roe's memory of Tewkesbury is a youthful one.

Fire engines attracted the father, but deer, then sailboats, had bewitched the son. For both it was the deep colour spilled over these objects that, by evoking memories they would not name, and which they could not place, held them, and then led both to a loch-deep unconsciousness of all else. (p. 12)

Although this appears to be authorial narration - certainly "evoking memories they would not name" harks back to Green's comments on prose in Pack My Bag and the relationship between writer and reader - it is also a description of Roe's attempts to find common ground for himself and his son. Roe tries to relive Christopher's experience in the store, to cement an imagined relationship which we have seen from Chapter 1 does not exist. Father and son are "shy of each other" and Roe's self-conscious efforts to create a relationship by making secrets between them (this method of establishing relationships is prevalent throughout the novel - it invariably fails) is not a success. He maintains that he is revealing to Christopher a place known only to him but Christopher's response is deflating, "'but nanny knows, Rosemary knows, oh everybody knows'" (p. 9).

Finally Roe begins to tell the story: "He imagined that, his pink cheeks grape dark in the glow, Christopher had leant his face forward, held to ransom by the cupidity of boys." (p. 13). His impression of Christopher's feelings is sophisticated and romantic. He portrays the

child as Ulysses:" . . . lost in feelings that this colour . . . could not have failed to bring him who could have visited no flower-locked sea on the Aegean, and yet . . ." In a bracketed paragraph the narrator gives an alternative version of the scene, that of Christopher himself:

At scarlet-painted fire engines, and he was so close that he saw them full size, he said "dad," and was satisfied. Until he came before the boats, "ships," he had said. He was done. (p. 13)

The child's view is simple but intense and has little correspondence with Roe's image. Although Roe has tried to capture his son's emotions he remains distanced from the experience.

The pattern continues. The second appearance of 'imagine', "the father imagined his son must have pointed a finger", is followed by the bracketed version, which corrects Roe's statement and in this instance takes over from Roe as storyteller. Six bracketed paragraphs precede Roe's next appearance. Within the narrator's description of how Pye's sister took away Christopher there are two more examples of imagination, which again is shown to be false.

"Where's Nan?" he asked as they went. He was thinking of food. She imagined he must mean a little sister. If she had but known it, he was an only child. (p. 15)

He imagined this was a party. He could not think where the other children could be playing. (p. 15)

The climax of this scene involves intuitive understanding, expressed by the word 'know'. "Then he saw. For he knew he had no sister." (p. 16)

These flashes of insight are quite different from imagination for they allow the character to understand the truth of a situation rather than continue to believe a distortion. A few pages later Roe remembers how Dy told him of Christopher's abduction by the sister of a fireman named Pye.

He had not known that Pye had a sister. For days after he did not dare go to the station, telling himself there must be many of the same name in the Brigade, but experienced enough to know that there was no escape. The moment she told him he had known. (p. 18)
(my emphasis)

Instinctive understanding is again proved to be correct.

However it is not enough simply to say that imagination of events not witnessed and memories of events experienced are false or clouded and that often memory and imagination becomes synonymous in that both provide versions of reality which are defined by the individual in such a way that they are removed from reality. Up to now I have implied that there is an absolute truth, a real version of the action which the reader is intended to discover through close reading. What actually happened is not of overriding importance and if the narrator sometimes points out inaccuracies - "But he was wrong" (p. 105), "It had not been like that at all" (p. 176) - it is usually to draw attention to the idiosyncracies of the character's narrative. There is only one occasion on which the truth does matter and in being contrary to the pattern it stands out from the rest. It is of course Pye's realization that he has committed incest. In this context the narrator's remarks on the falsifications of memory take on a tone of foreboding. Early in Caught the narrator points out to the reader that Pye has only partial knowledge of the night he came home from making love to "Mrs Lane's little girl" only to find his sister also creeping back.

He called to mind how disgusted it had made him, the sight of his sister, like a white wood shaving, when she darted, huddled, across the last still stretch of moonlight, intent on her next difficulty, the creep upstairs. (What he did not know was the year after year of entanglement before her, the senseless nightingale, the whining dog, repeating the same phrase over and over in the twining briars of her senses.) At that, not interested, he fell asleep. (p. 42)

This paves the way for Pye's agonizing discovery in the office of the doctor who is treating his sister.

In a surge of blood, it was made clear, false, that it might have been his own sister he was with that night. . . . So in blind moonlight, eyes warped by his need, he must have forced his own sister. . . . And he had always known, and never realized. (p. 140)

In this one instance memory is not a distortion of the facts; but acknowledging the truth (which he has repressed) destroys Pye. This would seem to suggest that the novel advocates the need for illusion in memory

as a protection against the horrors of reality.

There are two sides to the question of memory in Caught. On the one hand characters are caught up in their private visions which they are unable to communicate to others. Near the end of the novel Roe is describing to Dy a fire he has attended. The narrator comments: "As he gave this inadequate description he was avidly living that moment again." (p. 178). For Roe the description is effective because it triggers off his feelings and thoughts of that time, allowing him to relive the experience, but for Dy it is inadequate - we read later that "there was nothing in what he had spoken to catch her imagination" (p. 179) - and objectively it is inaccurate. While it defines Roe's experience, for Dy it is a "dull" description; the two cannot in any way share the experience and communicate successfully with each other.

The positive of memory is that it moulds and defines personality. The narrator says of Christopher that he was "beginning to spin his own, to create his first tangled memories, to bind himself to life for the first time" (pp. 33-4). Memories are a measure of experience and contribute to growth. No one can experience and remember in the same way as another person. The opposite of an inability to share is a capacity to have memories that are a proof of individual identity.

Neither was sorry to go his own way. The boy would be building up memories peculiar to himself. The father had his own of that kind. He could not add to them. (p. 33)

This aspect of memory is closely connected with the presence of war. The need to 'bind oneself to life' becomes more pressing when one may be about to die and death is all around. One of the few generalizations in the novel describes this activity, carried out by girls left behind.

As they were driven to create memories to compare, and thus to compensate for the loss each had suffered, he saw them hungrily seeking another man, oh they were sorry for men and they pitied themselves, for yet another man with whom they could spend last hours, to whom they could murmur darling, darling, darling it will be you always. (p. 63)

In the last chapter of the novel there is an important passage which has bearing on all that has gone before.

"The extraordinary thing is," he said, "that one's imagination is so literary. What will go on up there to-night in London, every night, is more like a film, or that's what it seems like at the time. Then afterwards, when you go over it, everything seems unreal, probably because you were so tired, as you begin building again to describe to yourself some experience you've had. It's so difficult." (p. 174)

The "literary" aspect of Roe's imagination is prevalent throughout the novel. Many of his descriptions have a kind of self-conscious poetic quality: "flower-locked sea", "dark cupidity", "boats fishing in the senses" (pp. 13-14). Yet this paragraph takes the point further for Roe maintains that even reality has this quality. Events are "like a film . . . at the time"; involvement in war has the effect of a scenario. Green describes exactly the same feeling in his war story 'A Rescue' where the main character cannot quite convince himself that the spectacular events going on around him are not the product of his imagination.

The speech about literary imagination is also a self-conscious joke about Henry Green the novelist writing about his own experiences as a fireman and this semi-identification between Roe and the author goes throughout the book. In a way Green depicts Roe ironically as a sort of failed Henry Green. When he describes the fire to Dy and fails to keep her attention, he is failing in Green's major aim as a novelist, to arouse the reader's imagination so that he can make the scene live, achieve a personal experience through the catalyst of prose. Dy feels that in Roe's story there was nothing "to catch her imagination"; communication between 'writer' and 'reader' has not taken place.

This feature of Caught is shared by James's The Bostonians. The two novels are similar in that each occupies a midway position in its author's development and each has a stated aim of capturing a characteristic atmosphere of its time; but beyond these superficial resemblances they are alike in the extent to which particular words are given

prominence. As Caught is given perspective by the repeated use of 'remember', 'imagine', 'know', The Bostonians is, to a less intense degree, defined by the words 'union', 'personal', and 'brilliant'; but I shall discuss only the first two of these. Ambivalent meanings accrete to these words to give a viewpoint on the action that does not emanate directly from the narrator or the characters.

It is worth pointing out that while in Green key-words are on the whole verbs, that is they describe action, though the action is more often mental than physical, in James they are invariably adjectives or nouns; they serve to comment on the characters and their behaviour. This points to an essential difference between the two writers. Green allows his characters to speak for themselves and rarely intrudes: James's narrators inevitably enter at some point to give judgment, though it is usually ambiguous or understated. Judgment forms an important part of novels such as Washington Square (dominant words are liberty, reason, judgment) and What Maisie Knew; in Green's novels judgment is, with a few exceptions, left to the reader's discretion. James finds it impossible to be unobtrusive; he cannot merely present. For this reason the reader has a constant awareness of a teller, reinforced by a pervasive use of irony, both of which contribute to a controlling point of view. Nevertheless, the very ambivalence of the narrator's position - he does not give his approval to any one character or group of characters, especially in the late novels - leaves the novels open to the alternative or parallel points of view which are revealed through language.

David Howard has pointed out the importance of the word 'union' in The Bostonians; it "is a novel about union, even 'The Union'".⁷ He describes how the novel is an ironic reconstruction of the Civil War, in which the South, Basil Ransom, gains victory in a passionate confrontation with the North, Olive. The proof of victory is the winning of Verena. Union has a sexual connotation as well, which is particularly

relevant to the fight over Verena. Olive feels that she has a "union of soul" with Verena but it is more accurately emotional, even physical, possession. Indeed possession is another word used frequently in the novel.

'Personal' comments on the novel, on the equivocal values of the age and of the individual characters. Almost all the main characters are referred to as or use the word personal. It has three primary connotations, all of which have bearing on the others. Mrs Luna is ascribed one of them. "There was nothing in the world so personal as Mrs Luna"⁸ has the same implications as "Mrs Luna was familiar - intolerably familiar" (p. 6). She shares this attribute of unsettling inquisitiveness with Matthias Pardon, the newspaper man:

For this ingenuous son of his age all distinction between the person and the artist had ceased to exist; the writer was personal, the person food for newsboys, and everything and everyone were everyone's business, (p. 107)

As the "son of his age" Pardon is representative of a society dominated by publicity and performance, where nothing is private, everything is public property. His is a time in which everyone is like Selah Tarrant "a moralist with no moral sense" whose greatest desire is to see his daughter advertized in the newspapers "among the 'personals'" (p. 89). It is the time of Miss Birdseye who sees the world through "undiscriminating spectacles" (p. 158). It is interesting to find in The Portrait of a Lady that Henrietta Stackpole, a rather more acceptable kind of newspaper person, is criticized by Ralph Touchett in the same terms as are used to describe Pardon and Mrs Luna: "'But it's a very strange type. She's too personal . . . I persist in thinking her too familiar.'"⁹

For Basil personal means 'private', quite the contrary of what it means in reference to Pardon and Mrs Luna. In the scene at the Memorial Hall Verena says to Basil: "'The interest you take in me isn't really controversial - a bit. It's quite personal!'" (p. 207). Basil rebels against the public world of speech-making and newspapers and believes

that Verena is made "for privacy, for him, for love" (p. 233). Basil's meaning of personal is really 'exclusive' (while for Pardon it means 'inclusive'); and so is Olive's. This shared feeling leads the reader to discover a link between Basil and Olive; both stand in opposition to the behaviour of the rest of their society. Verena finds out of Olive as of Basil "how personal, how exclusive" she is. Olive professes to abhor the personal; she says of Mrs Luna that she has given herself up to "a merely personal, egotistical, instinctive life". Both 'instinctive' and 'personal' could in another context be terms of praise but when the derogatory "egotistical" is interposed and all three adjectives are preceded by the disdainful "merely", personal takes on the meaning of 'thoughtless' and 'selfish'. Yet one of Olive's expressed fears is that Mrs Farrinder will think her "too personal, too narrow", which of course she is. Though she embraces the feminist cause and approves of public speaking, at heart she is absorbed in her private interest in Verena. Basil is perhaps similarly compromised, though this is less certain, in that the disapproving private man is also an ambitious writer seeking publication and fame.

Verena herself combines the public and the private, which is the secret of her success. Even when talking to a crowd she can still be personal in the sense of 'intimate', "smiling over her shoulder at the whole room, as if it had been a single person" (pp. 55-6). She can give, in Basil's words, "an intensely personal exhibition". She is the true representative of the society portrayed in the novel, embodying all its ambiguities. She could either be - and the reader never really knows - ingenuous girl, accomplished actress or simultaneously both of these.

The instances of word repetition I have discussed are readily observed by the reader and although Caught and The Bostonians contain perhaps the most interesting and the most clearly defined examples - it would be difficult to ignore the implications of memory in one and brilliance in the

other - Green and James maintain the practice of using the reference of particular words to convey meaning in other books. There are of course other novelists who put special stress on certain words; Jane Austen comes to mind. Yet for all the apparent similarities Jane Austen does not use these recurring words in the same way as James. In his introduction to the Penguin English Library Mansfield Park Tony Tanner discusses abstract words much used in the novel and the way they set up oppositions.

We are shown the need to distinguish between what is 'sweet' and what is 'sound', between what is 'pleasant' and what is 'prudent'. 'Duty' of course is deeply important, but superadded to it there must be delicacy. 10

It is Tony Tanner's use of words here which reveals the difference between Jane Austen and James. He says "we are shown", "superadded to it there must be". Jane Austen uses key-words, in Mansfield Park contrasting pairs, to indicate the right point of view and to isolate the qualities which are necessary for "preserving true moral consciousness". The reader is finally in no doubt as to which characters are to be approved. Emma and Knightley, Elizabeth Bennett and Darcy - in every novel we are subtly directed to value the 'correct' couple and thus acknowledge Jane Austen's morality.

I shall give one more example of word recurrence in Green, from Party Going. One word seems to dominate throughout, 'wonder'. It occurs at least forty-seven times with most of its appearances in the first hundred pages. It does not have a number of different connotations, it is not even ironic and it is usually part of similarly expressed speculations. It describes the principal 'action' of the novel and encapsulates stasis in its very lack of range. Green's key words do not usually change their meaning; they are not ambiguous but have a different effect depending on their place in the novel. Their lack of ambiguity has reasons to be found within the individual novels but also finds justification in that such words are made fixed points. In indefinable novels with no constant narratorial point of view the words tell us something about the dominant

action and act as indicators of what to look out for. They form a kind of structure, that is, points of reference which take the place of a controlling narrator.

At some point in the novel each of the main characters 'wonders' about what someone else is doing, what is going on. They wonder about their friends' actions, their motives, their thoughts. Here is a telling example of the aimless, unthinking activity the group of holidaymakers indulge in while awaiting their train; 'wonder' appears three times.

If Julia wondered where Max was taking her as they went upstairs together Max, for his part, had wondered where she was taking him. With this difference however, that, if she had done no more than ask herself what room he was taking her to, he had asked himself whether he was going to fall for her. Again, while she had wondered so faintly she hardly knew she had it in her mind or, in other words, had hardly expressed to herself what she was thinking, he was much further from putting his feelings into words, as it was not until he felt sure of anything that he knew what he was thinking of. (p. 107)

The characters wonder but they do not voice their questions. Angela will not ask whether Alex 'helped' Amabel in her bath, or what is the secret everyone is keeping from her. Julia continues her private speculations on Max's relationship with Amabel; Claire and Evelyn speculate on Max's relationship with Julia. Most of what they wonder about is of very little importance or interest; there is nothing to discover. For instance Amabel does not actually allow Alex into the bathroom but encourages the others' (mainly Angela's) belief that she does.

A section near the middle of the book concludes: "All three Alex, Angela, Amabel wondered and dreaded a little perhaps in their different ways but no one said anything, there was nothing to say." (p. 149).

The following section ends similarly: "'But surely that's just it,' said Evelyn, 'there's nothing to do.'" (p. 157). Given the circumstances and the characters, wondering, which often leads to fantasizing (especially for Julia), becomes the only possible activity. Only in illness does wondering stop and real feeling take over.

. . . her aunt, who had given up wondering and had given up listening and whose only feeling was of exhaustion as though she had been

pounded for days, had enough strength left to know she had always disliked Claire, just as she had never got on with her mother. (p. 214)

I have commented at some length on Caught in this chapter and shown how paying attention to certain words and structures can help lead to an understanding of the novel. In the following three chapters I shall continue to examine aspects of style with the intention of both describing Green's prose, making occasional comparisons or contrasts with other writers, and offering interpretations of the novels. I shall maintain throughout my concentration on the following: Green's desire to evolve a "personal prose"; the interpretation of what is, in Green's terms, "left unsaid"; Green's concern with perception; ambiguity and ambivalence; and the extent to which the reader has to make "an act of conscious imagination" in reading a novel by Henry Green. Chapter 10 will focus on imagery and symbolism, Chapter 11 on style in narrative, and Chapter 12 on dialogue. Green has always been noted for his considerable skills in writing dialogue and he devoted a great deal of attention to it, especially in his last two novels, to which the theoretical writing, referred to in Part I, relates.

CHAPTER 10

Symbolism and Imagery

Throughout Green's work particular objects and, important in Green, colours keep recurring and often they seem to take on a symbolic function.

Northrop Frye's definition of a symbol is:

. . . any unit of any literary structure that can be isolated for critical attention. A word, a phrase, or an image used with some kind of special reference (which is what a symbol is usually taken to mean) are all symbols when they are distinguishable elements in critical analysis.¹

This suggests that it is the frequency of recurrence which is most important in a consideration of what is symbolic. If in a novel the word 'moon' appears consistently the reader might begin to wonder what special significance it might have. The ring in Loving, birds in Living, Loving and Party Going, flowers and the colours red, white and black in Concluding, the juggler and the dancer in Doting, roses in Back, all feature prominently but many of these 'symbols' are baffling. Green does use a number of traditional symbolic objects, particularly birds: doves and peacocks in Loving, sparrows and pigeons in Living; but he also has many private and puzzling ones, the charms in Party Going and the girls' names in Concluding among them. Julia's charms must have something to do with repressed sexuality, the uniformity of the names (they all begin with M) is one of many forms of regimentation in the book, but as symbols they always give the impression of having further meaning which cannot be grasped.

Bruce Johnson describes Green's method as "the peculiar wedding of symbolism and comedy"² and compares him with Joyce, in that they both use "unlikely things" for symbols. This means that in both cases there is an inbuilt mechanism for deflation. "Both men are reluctant to inflate a scene with significance without intimating that there is a needle somewhere ready to puncture the sublimity." He adds that Green goes further than Joyce in his undercutting until the reader cannot be sure what, if any, is the serious significance of his symbols. Johnson's view marks a feature of Green criticism; critics are often wary of interpreting Green's symbols for

fear of taking seriously what is meant as a joke. Joyce certainly provokes a similar reaction. In Ulysses there is a large number of objects - kidneys, flower, stick, potato - which constantly come up and seem to have only a humorous function. It is hard to tell whether their purpose is thematic or structural, whether they are symbols or motifs. Sometimes Green does wryly encourage our eagerness to find meaning by overloading us with possible significant objects but his symbolism, and his use of motif and metaphor, have a serious aspect too and he uses them rather differently from Joyce.

Back offers an interesting example of Green's use of symbolism. The dominant symbol is the rose, which has particular meanings commonly associated with it. The important point about symbols of this kind, as compared with private symbols which have to be interpreted purely from context, is that the reader brings to the work in which they are used a body of preconceived notions. So when the reader of The Magic Mountain notices the prevalence of the number 'seven' he does not search only within the novel to find its meaning but uses existing knowledge of number symbolism to help him discover the points Mann is making. Green uses the rose in several ways: as a conventional symbol it is used ironically, ambiguously, as Blake uses it in 'Oh Rose, thou art sick', and as a private 'sign' for the main character, Charley, it reveals his view of the world. The word 'rose' occurs frequently in three guises: the flower, the name of a woman and the past tense of the verb 'to rise'. On the opening pages of the novel especially, roses appear in bewildering abundance and for a while the reader may wonder why. For the narrative does not seem to originate in the mind of a character, which might suggest obsession, but is neutral in tone, a series of loosely connected factual statements. The novel begins like this:

A country bus drew up below the church and a young man got out. This he had to do carefully because he had a peg leg.

The roadway was asphalted blue.

It was a summer day in England. (p. 5)

However, this discrepancy is congruous with the method of the novel. Unlike many of Green's novels, Back gives the reader a double view of the action. We see the world as Charley sees it yet at the same time learn more than the main characters; so we know that Nancy is not Rose, that Rose's child is not Charley's. This position of superiority is not allowed the reader in Party Going or Concluding. We only see what the characters see and are confused as anyone about the whereabouts of Mary in Concluding, the identity of the 'hotel detective' in Party Going.

This double view is apparent in the symbol. It is seen objectively, that is, as it has bearing on the situation from the narrator's point of view, and subjectively, as it reveals Charley's attitude. Interpreted as the reader is encouraged to, 'rose' is full of ironies. Roses can symbolize beauty, purity, romantic love, yet the woman who bears the name Rose is shown to be selfish, flirtatious and to have used Charley merely as her messenger boy. We read in Rose's letters what Charley refuses to see. So on recollecting the first page of the novel which tells us that Charley "had lost his leg in France for not noticing the gun beneath a rose", we realize the possible message. Beneath the beauty that is Rose there is an ability to wound. Charley's lost leg, his physical deficiency, is a sign also of internal damage, the harm that Rose has done his mind. The sullied nature of Rose is shown early on when Charley is looking for her grave. There is an obvious allusion to Blake's 'Oh Rose, thou art sick'.

. . . her, of whom, at no time before this moment, had he ever thought as cold beneath a slab, food for worms, her great red hair, still growing, a sort of moist bower for worms. (p.8)

But we also see roses and Rose from Charley's point of view. Sometimes the overwhelming presence of roses displays his paranoia:

For there was a bicycle bell, ringing closer and closer by the church, clustering spray upon spray of sound which wreathed the air much as those roses grew around the headstones, whence, so he felt, they narrowly regarded him. (p.6)

The combined pressure of sight and sound (and "spray upon spray" suggests

flowers as well as sound) makes Charley feel that the world is closing in on him and persecuting him. Throughout the novel he feels that everyone is betraying or deceiving him - Middlewitch, Mr Grant, Nancy - everyone that is except Rose.

'Rose' is not only a symbol, for the reader to interpret, but for Charley a sign. His reactions to hearing the word 'rose' spoken are even more intense than his reactions to the sight of roses. A Kingsley Weatherhead gives an interesting explanation of this:

. . . the word rose, the past tense of the verb meaning ascend, he interprets as the word for his girl, and he interprets the verb grant as the man. . . . The misinterpretation of the word rose is an intellectual failure to attribute the proper referent to the sign.³

Although Weatherhead is right to consider Charley's response in terms of the interpretation of the sign 'rose', I think it is surely emotional rather than intellectual. His is a common reaction - an emotional shock sustained on hearing the name of someone loved spoken by a stranger - taken to confused lengths. Charley's problem is that he responds to the wrong words. On the second page of the novel Charley meets a child whom he later finds to be the son of Rose and James. The narrator says: "He sharply stared but, as he took in the child's fair head, he saw nothing, nothing was brought back. . . . And he forgot the boy who was gone, who spelled nothing to him." (my emphasis). The child could be a key to the truth, could take Charley back to the truth that Ridley is not his son (this is implied at several points) but, to use Weatherhead's terminology, he does not find the referent to match the sign.

For Charley 'rose' also becomes the word for identity and feeling. When on page 35 he finds that 'rose' no longer makes him react he is empty. "And now, it seemed, was autumn, for he felt nothing at all at her mention of Rose. Nothing. He was amazed. He blamed himself. But he felt nothing whatever." When he meets Nancy, however, feeling is triggered off again as he almost wills Nancy to be Rose.

She opened, almost at once. He looked. He sagged. Then something went inside. It was as though the frightful starts his heart was giving had burst a vein. He pitched forward, in a dead faint, because there she stood alive, so close that he could touch, and breathing, the dead spit, the living image, herself, Rose in person. (p.47)

Through the progressive stages of describing Nancy's resemblance to Rose one can detect Charley's effort, obviously not conscious, to create Rose out of Nancy. First she is the "dead spit", Rose's double, with the word 'dead' reminding us that this cannot in fact be Rose. Then she is the "living image", an exact reproduction of Rose and alive, and lastly Nancy is Rose. The transformation in Charley's mind is complete.

After meeting Nancy/Rose Charley begins to see roses everywhere he goes.

He fled Rose, yet every place he went she rose up before him; in florists' windows; in a second-hand bookseller's with a set of Miss Rhoda Broughton, where, as he was staring for her reflection in the window, his eyes read a title, "Cometh up as a flower" which twisted his guts . . . (p.56)

"Just two glasses of port," she said, "and something went through my nose right up to my head, I suppose it was the fumes rose . . ." she said, then fell silent as she saw the spasm pass across his face. (p.63)

There is another aspect of the significance of 'rose' which concerns romantic aspirations involving not only Charley. Middlewitch, apparently the least romantic of men, has a conversation with Charley which contains three of the dominant words of Back, 'rose' 'back' and 'moon'.

"When we were over in Hunland, thinking of home, didn't you and I imagine summer evenings and roses and all that guff, with a lovely little lump of mischief in the old car of course, but most of the time we were like kids dreaming for the moon, and perhaps for a little accident to happen to them with a girl. And what happened when we did get back? Why, we got stinking tight, old lad, and catted it all up." (p.28)

As in Caught the preoccupations of Roe and Pye with memory are extended to include all those involved in war, in this novel Charley's private, neurotic interpretations of roses and romance are enclosed in a general frame of reference of soldiers abroad dreaming of home.

In one of the more interesting articles on Green, Myron Turner asserts

that there are no "hidden meanings" in Green's work.⁴ His symbols and images have as their aim to make the reader understand the surface, the characters and situations as they appear. In Back Charley gives significance to things which seem to have no particular significance to us or gives them the wrong significance - his delusion allows things to take on private meaning which informs the reader of the nature of his perceptions, the hallucination of his vision. A similar network of personal significance can be found in the novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet, particularly La Jalousie to which Green's phrase "gathering web of insinuations" aptly refers. There might appear to be little in common between Green and the founder of the French nouveau roman, though Green was, as I have said, mildly influential in France and particularly interested Nathalie Sarraute. While Green favours idiosyncratic, complex and highly metaphorical prose, Robbe-Grillet seeks plain, unadorned language which will define the world objectively, without soaking it in significance by means of anthropomorphism. He feels that things should be described as they are, separate and independent of man. However, as has often been said, La Jalousie in fact contains the totally subjective view of an obsessively jealous man and nearly all the 'things' in the novel gradually take on significance to become motifs or symbols. In its musical structure and its limited point of view, its concern with perception and lack of "hidden meanings" which go beyond the action of the novel, La Jalousie is very similar to a number of Green's novels.

La Jalousie⁵ consists simply of a limited number of incidents, conversations, descriptions recounted over and over again, sometimes with slight variations, sometimes with total contradictions to previous and later versions. There is no detectable chronology; it has the kind of temporal inconsistency found in Caught. La Jalousie has a narrator who writes in the third person but the reader soon discovers that he is in fact the husband of A... whom he suspects of having an affair with their

neighbour and fellow plantation owner, Franck. The husband is never described as doing anything or saying anything; his movements are suggested by changes of scene, his words by reported speech, presented in an impersonal mode, interspersed in the conversations of A... and Franck. Since the narrator is also a participant in the drama, he has limited knowledge, as Green's narrators usually have; all he, and thus the readers, can know is what he sees and the way he interprets what he sees, shown in the variations in descriptions and the things he chooses to see. As is true of Green's novels, the reader is not led behind or beyond the novel before him to truths or even generalizations about life. Any submerged meaning relates only to the characters and the perceptions of the narrator.

The rhythmic structure of La Jalousie demands from the reader close attention to words which become the events of the novel. We are not particularly interested in discovering 'what happened', either during the time covered by the incidents described or afterwards; there is no definitive answer which can be found by following the 'clues'. The two novels by Green which have most in common with La Jalousie are Party Going and Concluding, Green's most mysterious novels, although Nothing and Doting too are similar in their patterns of repetition and variation.

Party Going is the least eventful of Green's books. As in Caught there are inconsistencies in time scale; it has also contradictions in different characters' recounting of incidents and quite inexplicable events which no one in the novel seems to find strange. In his admirable article on the structure and technique of Party Going Clive Hart points out a number of these inconsistencies.

Distortion works in another way in the case of an exactly repeated motif whose appearances do not seem to refer to the same moment in time. The conversation between Edwards and Thomson about Miss Fellowes's illness and its possible effects on the party is interrupted by the narrator:

At this a huge wild roar broke from the crowd outside. They were beginning to adjust that board indicating times of trains which had

stood all of two hours behind where it had reached when first the fog came down.

"Wild animals," Edwards said. (p. 205)

Inside the hotel Max and Amabel drop off to sleep:

They slept and then a huge wild roar broke from the crowd outside. They were beginning to adjust that board indicating times of trains which had stood all of two hours behind where it had reached when first the fog came down. (p. 227)

At first this may seem to indicate an ironic juxtaposition of the two events. But no: the moment depicted on page 227 is later than that on page 205. While Edwards and Thomson are talking, Max is still in Miss Fellowes's bedroom (p. 207). Life on the platform seems to follow a different time-scheme from that in the hotel. 6

Repeated motifs contain similar distortions in La Jalousie, the most powerful being the centipede which Franck kills in the narrator's house. First described as "une soutigère de taille moyenne" (p. 61), squashed against the dining-room wall, it is referred to many times throughout the novel with minor changes in the detail. Finally, when the husband's nightmare of his wife and Franck in bed together dominates his perception, the centipede becomes "gigantesque: un des plus gros qui puissent se reconstruire sous ces climats" (p. 165). The setting is no longer the dining-room but the bedroom - Franck "écrase la bête sur le plancher de la chambre" - and A... 's clenched fingers rest not on the tablecloth but on the white sheet.

Party Going has been considered by many as a symbolic novel: fog, birds, luggage and travelling seem all to have elusive significance. Clive Hart charts the development of a number of "groups of correspondences" and shows how through the changes and modifications coherent patterns of meaning emerge: but the reader must create those meanings for himself. Green rarely allows us to have confidence in our interpretation of any one statement; it is only when statements are juxtaposed, compared, contrasted that meaning begins to appear.

In discussing Green's symbols I have intimated that they are generally used to provide insights into the situations portrayed - to lead the reader into the novel rather than out of it. It is essential to establish connections, to respond to the novels in their entirety, in order to find coherence. Now I intend to look at Green's imagery, mysterious, ambivalent, which sometimes suggests a prevailing mode of perception, though

again it is largely up to the individual reader to define that mood.

Concluding contains some of Green's most bizarre, surreal imagery, much of it difficult to understand if taken out of context since the metaphor often takes the reader away from the thing with which it is being compared and achieves an independent existence.

Extremely shortsighted, she had taken off her spectacles and put these on Miss Edge's desk as though, in the crisis, at a time when she had been left in charge, she wished to look inwards, to draw on hid reserves, and thus to meet the drain on her resolution which this absence of the two girls had opened like an ulcer high under the ribs, where it fluttered, a blood stained dove with tearing claws.
(p.47)

The remarkable thing about this simile is its disproportionate violence which is given additional force by the structure of the sentence which seems to build up to it, to be waiting for it. The reader must be puzzled by the connection made between Miss Marchbanks summoning up the strength to cope with the crisis and the notion of a dove, bird of peace, clawing at her heart. Just a few pages later in the novel another interesting example occurs. Sebastian and Elizabeth Rock have been "meandering" in the wood, arms around each other, and the effect of the sunlight when they emerge from the trees is described as "a depth of warm water that turned the man's brown city outfit to a drowned man's clothes, the sun was so heavy, so encompassing betimes" (p.55). This simile does have a peculiar aptness, conveying the oppressiveness of the all-embracing sun which seems to drag them down as if into water, but what remains in the mind once the moment has passed is the notion of drowning, which seems out of place in an idyllic scene. Myron Turner notes this lack of immediate relatedness in Green's imagery and asserts that his metaphors are "images which are part of a larger pattern of imagery defining a state of consciousness, an attitude, a mood".⁷ So such images cannot adequately be discussed out of context for they have to be compared with like, and unlike, images occurring throughout the novel. As Turner says, they "take on meaning only as they move".

The mood or state of consciousness of Concluding is not easy to establish. There are a number of strands of imagery which are extremely ambivalent, carrying both beauty, vitality, magic, and decay, paranoia, death. Alongside imagery of birds and jewels three colours are predominant. According to Stokes, white is the most used (61 instances) followed by black (37) and red (31). Yellow also crops up frequently (30)⁸ - Stokes includes gold with yellow - but the colours one notices as one reads are white, black and red. White are dresses, curtains, sheets, arms, legs, flowers, the cat, the pig, the goose: black dresses, trees, hats. Black and white occur together too: black and white farm, black and white animals, black and white nettles, black and white handkerchief, black and white china-pig money-box, black and white tiling. Stokes mentions the traditional associations of black: negation and death; white: purity and abstraction; black and white: "restriction and regulation, precise definition, the strict letter of the law, the reduction of everything to formulas".⁹ These connotations are applicable to Concluding; black and white is obviously a symbol of bureaucracy in the Directive-obsessed Institute. Stokes sees red as one of the colours of nature, life, passion and finds an opposition between the reds, golds, greens of nature and the black and white of "legalism divorced from all human feeling".

There are oppositions between different colours and what they represent but there are also contradictions in the way specific colours are used. Colours have both the positive and the negative aspects of their symbolic force. White, for example, is the colour of the girls' dance dresses and by the contrast with the black dresses of the two principals (themselves described as "old black herons" by Liz) and the neurotic Liz (though she wears a yellow ribbon) the reader connects white with youth and innocence, black with age and experience. However both Rock and the principals have white heads and when Miss Edge, the more nervy of the principals, puts a wastepaper basket over her head to protect her from a bat, the anonymous

letter she had torn up lies "like flakes of frost on her white head" (p.12). This indicates the extended use of white in milk, ice cream, frozen milk, frost, chalk, salt, snow, moon. Milk and ice cream are associated mainly with youth ("that expanse of skin how like vanilla ice cream" [of Merode]) and light ("a great shaft of sunlight . . . bisected the kitchen, to show him air on the rise in its dust, like soda water through transparent milk", p.21). But frozen milk, frost, snow, moon are connected with cold, threat and death.

. . . raising eyes from a treacherous path, he saw the beeches like frozen milk, and frozen swimming-bath blue water, already motionless in a cascade, soundless from a height, not sixty yards in front. (p.249)

The moon was now all powerful, it covered everything with salt, and bewigged distant trees; it coldly flicked the dark to an instantaneous view of what this held, it stunned the eye by stone, was all-powerful, and made each of these three related people into someone alien, glistening, frozen eyed, alone. (p.189)

Red is similarly ambivalent. It is the colour of the beautiful azalias which the girls collect, of the girls' Institute pyjamas, of Merode's hair, this suggesting vitality, but it has a darker aspect in images of blood. The sergeant's face is described as "the colour of butcher's meat" (p.90), flowers are "the colour of blood" (p.98) and Miss Winstanley's comment on Liz's smudged lipstick is that it "wounded the whole face like a bullet" (p.96).

The prevailing mood of Concluding is one of violence, paranoia and death, especially by drowning. The metaphor of "drowned man's clothes" which I mentioned earlier is reinforced by further references to drowning - "Maira whirled past, hair spread as if by drowning" (p.196) - and to water, particularly lakes, as in this description of Merode, the runaway who was found, in her bath: "She felt it seemed to sway as to light winds, as though she were bathing by floodlight in the night steaming lake, beech shadowed, mystically warmed." (p.63). Sometimes water and blood are brought together as in a description of a flock of starlings who swoop down

"through a thickening curve, in the enormous echo of blood, or of the sea" (p.177). Constant allusions to blood and drowning are expressions of the largely unvoiced fears in the Institute of what may have happened to Mary: that she may have drowned in the lake or met some other violent form of death. Occasionally these fears are made explicit:

He had a vision of six hundred golden legs, bare to the morning, and said, "Yes, ma'am." At the same time he had not forgotten what had been hinted on the way, and saw one pair of dripping legs. (p.92)

The horror of the possible explanations of Mary's continued absence and the mystery surrounding the activities of the girls are manifested most clearly in a motif which appears about half way through the novel, the doll. The first mention of this doll seems harmless if rather strange. Mrs Blain, the cook, has noticed that her favourite, Mary, is missing. "'Did'nt you hear?' Moira asked, after a silence. 'She lost her Dolly.'" (p.114) This incongruous statement is seen as some kind of riddle by the cook but the girls gasp as if they know something the reader does not. A little later Dolly is given a new significance as a reason is offered for Mary's absence. "'Have'nt you heard? There was a telegram to say the sister Doll was badly ill at home, and she was to go at once. Muriel had it from one of the seniors, who was there when this wire came.'" (p.126) The explanation is definite enough but has clearly come a long way through the grapevine and the questions about hearing ("'Did'nt you hear?'"', "'Have'nt you heard?'"') may remind us of what we do hear, voices calling out "Ma-ree" early in the morning and later at night when Liz and Mr Rock are returning from the dance.

Finally an actual doll appears. The girls are putting up the decorations for the dance, looking and giggling at the mass of azalia and rhododendron. Miss Edge catches among their comments, "'It's the living spit of Mary'". She looks at what they have found on what the narrator ominously calls the "pyre" and sees a rag doll, at which sight she faints away.

And she saw, and it gave her such a frightful turn she straightaway fainted, a rabbit Rag Doll dressed gaily in miniature Institute pyjamas, painted with a grotesque caricature of Mary's features on its own flat face, laid disgustingly on a bit of mackintosh, embowered by these blooms. (p.140)

This immediately prompts questions. How can the flat face of a rag doll look exactly like a particular girl? Is Mary a freak? Miss Edge obviously sees the doll as a representation of Mary but it seems that she is responding to suggestion and this leads one to ask if the girls are deliberately trying to disturb the principal. For Miss Edge the doll becomes more and more horrifying and cannot be explained. She questions Marion about it who confirms that Mary lost such a doll but her information is imprecise.

Someone in the kitchen said she'd lost hers."

"Someone said ...?"

"Who was that, then?"

"I can't remember exactly. But she did know Mary had lost it," Marion explained. (p.141)

Miss Edge is deeply shocked by what Marion says and has a grotesque fantasy about the doll: "'Were there Pins in? Had it a painted Heart?'" (p.142)

The idea of black magic, of evil, is implanted in her mind and ours, reinforced by the last reference to the doll which indicates that the girls are not so innocent as they seem. A group of girls are discussing Mary and Merode, complaining that the latter's antics might have caused the dance to be cancelled. They appear not to know what Mary and Merode have done but their conversation suggests some conspiracy.

"If anyone wants to know what I think, in my opinion you were decent to cover for them as long as you might," a girl volunteered.

"Just you wait till I catch Merode," Marion commented.

"But need there have been all the embroidery with that silly doll business?"

"Who did anyway?" Moira joined in.

She was given no answer. Everyone feared her tongue. (pp.181-2)

Who did what? one wonders and why does everyone fear Moira's tongue? That the girls have secrets we discover later when Moira, undoubtedly the leader of the girls, leads Mr Rock along an underground passage to Institute Inn, their secret club. He pleads with them to tell him what has happened to Mary and their evasive answers are ominous.

"Oh she's all right, don't you worry your head," Moira answered. Unseen by him, she pouted with jealousy.

"But where is she, then?" the old man persisted.

"I thought just everyone had a very good idea," Moira replied.

"I'd not trouble myself if I was you. She's not worth it." (p.227)

Did Moira dispose of Mary, an acknowledged favourite, through jealousy?

Imagery and motif fill the reader with foreboding and suspicion and these emotions are increasingly felt too by the adult characters, who either feel persecuted or are determined to persecute someone else. Edge and Baker are plotting how to dispose of Rock and Liz; Liz feels threatened by Edge and Baker, who, she thinks, should be behind bars; Mr Rock suspects Sebastian of coveting his cottage and wanting to marry Liz so that he can have it; Adams is convinced that Mr Rock is after his cottage and becomes quite hysterical in his accusations:

"You never intended to give me the wire," he accused. "I saw through that like I look out of my windows, it was clear as day you sought how you might get me shunted, shift it over on to me, while up at the house as they're scheming to lay their hands on your place. Likely enough you or your girl done away with 'er yourselves, for a dark purpose." (p.160)

Miss Edge too has an exaggerated view of the threat posed by the crisis facing her. "'Now something, we do not yet know what, has occurred, and it is for us to stamp out the evil, or better still, get rid of it quietly, without fuss, as one does with swill.'" (p.165) The reference to "swill" brings instantly to mind Mr Rock and one wonders what awful fate Miss Edge has in mind for him.

The imagination of the reader is encouraged to run riot in Concluding but one accepts that conclusion is not at hand and feels with Mr Rock, "'We shall never know the truth'". As in La Jalousie threat and violence subside and the novel ends peaceably without further reflection on the events of the day.

He entered the cottage, switched on a light, began the routine he carried through each bedtime, set things to rights. When he was just about done he heard a cat discreetly yowl. He went to the door. It was Alice. After getting her in with some milk, he climbed the stairs to bed.

On the whole he was well satisfied with his day. He fell asleep almost at once in the yellow woollen nightshirt. (p.254)

I said earlier in this chapter that certain critics see Green as akin to Joyce in his use of symbolism and imagery. However I think the differences between the two writers are more important than the similarities and that their methods of portraying reality show conflicting concerns. The following two passages are apparently alike but can in fact be differentiated.

A girl stood before him in midstream, alone and still, gazing out to sea. She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird. Her long slender bare legs were delicate as a crane's and pure save where an emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself as a sign upon the flesh. Her thighs, fuller and soft-hued as ivory, were bared almost to the hips where the white fringes of her drawers were like featherings of soft white down. Her slate-blue skirts were kilted boldly about her waist and dovetailed behind her. Her bosom was as a bird's, soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some dark-plumaged dove. But her long fair hair was girlish: and girlish, and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face.

. . .
- Heavenly God! cried Stephen's soul, in an outburst of profane joy.¹⁰

Then he knelt by the bed, having under his eyes the great, the overwhelming sight of the woman he loved, for the first time without her clothes. And because the lamp was lit, the pink shade seemed to spill a light of roses over her in all their summer colours, her hands that lay along her legs were red, her stomach gold, her breasts the colour of cream roses, and her neck white roses for the bride. She had shut her eyes to let him have his fill, but it was too much, for he burst into tears again, he buried his face in her side just below the ribs, and bawled like a child. "Rose," he called out, not knowing he did so, "Rose."

"There," Nancy said, "there," pressed his head with her hands. His tears wetted her. The salt water ran down between her legs. And she knew what she had taken on. It was no more or less, really, than she had expected. (Back, p.208)

The first passage is the most well-known example of epiphany from A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. It represents a moment of sublime spiritual and intellectual awareness in the life of the hero, Stephen Dedalus. The extract from Back is the conclusion to the novel and can be similarly described as an epiphany for Charley. The two passages share certain features of style as well as content. Both rely heavily on symbols which have been established in earlier parts of the book: in Portrait birds - "seabird",

"crane", "darkplumaged dove"; in Back roses - "a light of roses", "cream roses", "white roses for the bride". Each passage displays heightened language and Joyce uses specifically poetic devices to create a hypnotic rhythm expressive of the effect the scene has on its spectator. The extracts combine romantic dream and reality: in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man the girl looks to Stephen like a "strange and beautiful seabird" yet she wears "drawers" and "slateblue skirts"; in Back a romantic pink glow falls on Charley but he "bawled like a child". There is also in each an element of magical transformation; the girl is "one whom magic had changed", while Charley's vision of Nancy is like a magic lantern show, an explosion of "summer colours" on a Christmas night. Yet despite these similarities, in effect the passages are very different, in terms of the nature of the experiences and their relation to context. Stephen's experience offers release, a vision of his life and art as it might be. His response to the girl is an expression of his theory of art and thus it draws him out of apathy and leads him towards the fulfilment of his dreams. The experience is a complete, untouchable moment of ecstasy into which reality does not enter; it is carefully set apart from Stephen's everyday life. On the following page a new chapter begins with a shifting of levels from the sublime to the sordid: "He drained his third cup of watery tea to the dregs and set to chewing the crusts of fried bread that were scattered near him, staring into the dark pool of the jar." Of course even this takes the reader beyond the depicted experience since the "watery tea" and the "crusts of fried bread" constitute a parody of the mass.

The difference in Green's writing is that reality is never forgotten. Although the sight of Nancy provokes intense emotion in Charley and it has the same importance in his life as Stephen's vision of the girl, the situation is firmly kept in accordance with the main subject of the novel: Charley's relationship with the past and with Rose/Nancy. While Stephen's epiphany involves him alone - the girl, though real, does not exist as an

active participant - Charley's involves Nancy too. Stephen sees only the present and the future, what is happening now and what effect it may have on what will happen; but the Back passage is a complex psychological confrontation between the past, Rose, the present, Nancy, and the future, the marriage. It is closely related to the action of the rest of the book and is therefore filled with its complications.

Edward Stokes's comment on the conclusion of Back suggests that he regards it as a Joycean epiphany. He says: "Here, at last, Nancy, now loved for herself, again becomes Rose; the real and the ideal merge, and what had seemed lost for ever is regained."¹¹ This is a simplistic view of what is really a much less optimistic ending which shows an acceptance of compromise. Although Nancy can make Charley happy (this is implied earlier on the same page: ". . . he went to her room, for the first time in what was to be a happy married life"), he is not yet fully cured of his obsession with Rose. It is in fact a much more moving and appropriate ending than that which Stokes sees. The final two sentences are strongly reminiscent of James: "And she knew what she had taken on. It was no more or less, really, than she had expected." Like the last words of Washington Square - "Catherine, meanwhile, in the parlor, picking up her morsel of fancy-work had seated herself with it again - for life, as it were."¹² - it is devastatingly effective. The nicely placed "really", the tone of understanding and knowledge mingled with resignation, the acceptance of a not altogether desirable future, the combination of understatement and melodrama - all comes from James.

The basic elements of the two scenes from which I have quoted would lead one to believe that the Joyce piece is the more natural. Stephen is outdoors in the sunlight and the bird simile is credibly established by the girl's presence on the sea-shore. Charley, on the other hand, is indoors and it is an artificial light which casts unnatural colours over Nancy's body. It is "because the lamp was lit" (my emphasis) that she has a "light

of roses" over her. Charley's image of Nancy is shown to be illusory, a trick of the light. Green emphasizes how unnatural the whole scene is, not only the light effects but Charley's behaviour. He is embarrassed, perhaps afraid, has to try to seem at ease: "In an attempt to seem natural, he said . . ." (p.208). But the major difference between the two experiences is that while Charley responds to an existing situation, Stephen creates his own. Although the image of the bird evolves naturally, the girl is seen to be transformed by Stephen's imagination into something she is not. He interprets and changes the image she presents to him. Joyce uses symbolism to give the reader the sense that the actual experience of the character has been heightened. The symbol can lift a whole section of the narrative on to a level above that of the rest of the book. Green simply presents ordinary experience in an intensified way.

His method has much in common with that used by William Carlos Williams in his novel White Mule, which begins:

She entered, as Venus from the sea, dripping. The air enclosed her, she felt it all over her, touching, waking her. If Venus did not cry aloud after release from the pressures of that sea-womb, feeling the new and lighter flood springing in her chest, flinging out her arms - this one did. Screwing up her tiny smeared face, she let out three convulsive yells - and lay still.

Stop that crying, said Mrs. D, you should be glad to get outa that hole.¹³

This contains the same contraries as the Back extract. It is at once a convincingly naturalistic description of birth, "Screwing up her tiny smeared face", and a metaphorical statement. The baby can be both Venus emerging from the sea and a screaming object lying in "prehistoric ooze", without one sense of the occasion being elevated above the other. This is not on the whole true of Joyce. In *Ulysses* Molly is either Molly or Penelope, Bloom either Bloom or Ulysses, depending on which layer of meaning is being investigated. In Green multiple meaning is localised, exists in specific situations, and a variety of points of view has to be held simultaneously. Although we are left in little doubt about the love that

exists between Charley and Rose and are assured that their marriage is to be a success, the elements of compromise and illusion which I have already mentioned cannot be ignored. The complexity of the relationship is increased also by the sexual ambiguity of the mother/child comforting - "'There,' Nancy said, 'there'" - and of the allusion to the creation of Eve - "he buried his face in her side below the ribs" - which appears to reverse the story of woman created from and for man.

Joyce would seem an obvious predecessor of Green, but in fact their methods of portraying reality are quite different. Joyce is concerned with presenting individuals' views of the world in a way which emphasizes how distinct and irreconcilable with others such views are. So, in Ulysses a progressive action is seen by the three main characters in turn; the individual is depicted as isolated within his own limited consciousness and his view becomes (temporarily) the reader's sole source of knowledge. The method is one which extols the individual; this is clear also in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man where the minor characters serve only as functions of Stephen and are not important in their own right, rather for the part they play in Stephen's development. Joyce perhaps bears out Jonathan Raban's point about modern fiction, that it deals primarily with "the conflict between the individual sensibility and the alien world outside. With such a subject only one point of view is possible - that of the sensitive, and usually suffering, hero".¹⁴

In Joyce, although no 'true' reality is posited, each character is enclosed within a private world which for the duration of his period of narrative control is the only one. Green's characters too can become trapped by their idiosyncratic views but this is always seen as something to be avoided. There is at no point only one way of looking at things; alternatives are ever there.

The following passage from Party Going is just one of many examples of multiple viewpoint indicated by the imagery used to describe perceptions.

As those people smoked below, or it might have been the damp off their clothes evaporating rather than their cigarettes, it did seem like November sun striking through mist rising off water. Or, so she thought, like those illustrations you saw in weekly papers, of corpuscles in blood, for here and there a narrow stream of people shoved and moved in lines three deep and where they did this they were like veins. She wondered if this were what you saw when you stood on your wedding day, a Queen, on your balcony looking at subjects massed below.

"It's like being a Queen," she told Max. He squeezed her.

"You didn't do anything about Edwards, did you?" she said and he did not reply.

. . .

Alex came up and said what they saw now was like a view from the gibbet and she exclaimed against that. (Party Going, pp.86-7)

Four responses to the sight of the mass of people in the station from the hotel are offered, five if Max's lack of reaction is included, and each is quite different from the others. None is an objective description and each is indicative of the character's state of mind and his or her natural mode of perception. The first description, "it did seem like November sun striking through mist rising off water", belongs to the narrator. It is the second occasion on which this simile has been used. It is earlier ascribed to the stationmaster: "With every third person smoking it might all have looked to Mr Roberts, ensconced in his office away above, like November sun striking through mist rising off water." (p.28). The implication of "might have" is that Mr Roberts does not have the kind of imagination that works in such a figurative way and the same suggestion is present in the later passage; only the narrator sees this way.

Julia's analogy with blood corpuscles moving through veins is put forward as an alternative; it is introduced by "or". From the lyrical, impersonal impression - by impersonal I mean that the simile cannot be traced to a character - the reader moves on to Julia's more mundane but nevertheless imaginative portrayal of the scene and then to a fantasy which reveals her state of mind: "She wondered if this were what you saw when you stood on your wedding day, a Queen, on your balcony looking at subjects massed below." At this point in the novel Julia is where she wants to be, with Max safely by her side, and thoughts of weddings are

uppermost in her mind. Of course it is only the notion of being Queen not the reference to weddings which she passes on to Max; her fantasies are always carefully edited or exaggerated to suit the occasion. Finally Alex strikes a less happy note with his characteristically sinister reference to the gibbet. The absence of Max's thoughts on the scene is consistent with Green's portrayal. Although Max is in a way the dominant character in the novel since it is he who organises, and pays for, the stay in the station hotel, and is the centre of attraction, at least up to the arrival of Annabel, he remains throughout strangely insubstantial; we do not know what he thinks, indeed whether he thinks at all.

I have remarked on the relativity of perception in Green's work and have indicated that this is true also of James; ambivalence renders conclusion impossible. A Joycean epiphany would also be incongruous. So it is interesting that the closest James comes to epiphany in his novels is when one character's understanding of another is total. For an instant an individual's view of reality is shared with someone else. A good example of this occurs in The Golden Bowl.

. . . their relation was altered: he again saw the difference lighted for her. . . . He became aware himself, for that matter, during the minute Maggie stood there before speaking; and with the sense moreover of what he saw her see he had the sense of what she saw him. This last, it may be added, would have been his intensest perception hadn't there the next instant been more for him in Fanny Assingham. Her face couldn't keep it from him; she had seen, on top of everything, in her quick way, what they both were seeing.¹⁵

A simple visual experience becomes a perceptual one as Adam senses a simultaneous understanding by Fanny and Maggie of his situation. We are not actually told what Maggie and Fanny are thinking; the scene is presented from Adam's point of view. Yet the process of seeing is rendered so powerful that it convinces the reader that it is not just sight but vision. The characters experience empathy and from the way they look can be deduced the way they are thinking.

C H A P T E R I I

Confronting Language: Narrative

Most critics agree that style is important in Green's novels; indeed its idiosyncracies compel attention. However there have been differences of opinion when it comes to evaluation of Green's use of language. While Richard Church writes of his "execrable maltreatment of English"¹ and Daniel George is one of many to disparage the "wilful schoolboy obscurity"² of the early work, reviewers of the later novels, especially Concluding, praise Green's stylistic innovation. The impression is given that Green somehow matured out of his youthful extravagances but in fact the characteristic deviations from the norms of English grammar and idiom found in Party Going and to some extent in Living are present in later novels too. They are rather less prominent in Nothing and Doting, not only because these novels are composed mainly of dialogue (Loving after all contains about the same proportion of dialogue), but also because Green's interest at the time was more in dialogue than in narrative. One can only assume that critics mellowed to Green's style with time, although even now there exist vociferous detractors.

Green has been called a mannerist which is usually a term of Anglo-Saxon disapproval, suggesting affectation and a mechanical approach to writing; certainly several critics imply that Green wrote as he did just to be different and not for a specific artistic purpose. Strangely Cyril Connolly did not include Green in his list of "Mandarin" writers in Enemies of Promise but chose to categorize Living as "Vernacular" (that is, colloquial) along with Hemingway's Farewell to Arms. Apparently he did not see as pretentious the omission of articles in that novel.

Most of those who have written at length about Green have made some analysis of style. Stokes has systematically charted most of Green's peculiarities and though his work is sadly lacking in subtlety and inspiration at times, it has proved a useful base for the work of others, notably Russell and Bassoff. Russell picks Green as one of the five modern stylists whose use of language he scrutinizes in Style in Modern British

Fiction:³ Bassoff devotes much of his book on Green to detailed linguistic analysis. Bassoff and Russell offer many valuable insights to which I shall refer but I intend to approach the subject of language from the reader's point of view and to describe how one encounters such language.

First I want to illustrate Philip Toynbee's distinction between two kinds of modern writer, the "Terrorist" and the "Man in the Street", to which I referred in Chapter 6, comparing Green's writing with that of Christopher Isherwood, a typical "Man in the Street". Isherwood's is a functional prose by which I mean that the aim is to convey as clearly and concisely as possible the necessary information; the reader has the straightforward task of comprehending rather than interpreting what is being communicated. Juxtaposing a passage from Isherwood's Mr Norris Changes Trains (1935) and the opening paragraphs of Party Going highlights the disparate methods of the two writers.

1 The first week in November came and the traffic strike was declared. It was ghastly, sopping weather. Everything out of doors was covered with a layer of greasy, fallen dirt. A few trams were running, policemen posted fore and aft. Some of these were attacked, the windows smashed, and the passengers forced to get out. The streets were deserted, wet, raw, and grey. Von Papen's Government was expected to proclaim martial law. Berlin seemed profoundly indifferent. Proclamations, shootings, arrests; they were all nothing new. Helen Pratt was putting her money on Schleicher: 'He's the foxiest of the lot,' she told me. 'Look here, Bill, I'll bet you five marks he's in before Christmas. Like to take me on?' I declined.

Hitler's negotiations with the Right had broken down; the Hakenkreuz was even flirting mildly with the Hammer and Sickle. Telephone conversations, so Arthur told me, had already taken place between the enemy camps. Nazi storm-troopers joined with communists in the crowds which jeered at the blacklegs and pelted them with stones. Meanwhile, on the soaked advertisement pillars, Nazi posters represented the K.P.D. as a bogy skeleton in Red Army uniform. In a few days there would be another election; our fourth this year. Political meetings were well attended; they were cheaper than going to the movies or getting drunk. Elderly people sat indoors, in the damp, shabby houses, brewing malt coffee or weak tea and talking without animation of the Smash.⁴

2 Fog was so dense, bird that had been disturbed went flat into a balustrade and slowly fell, dead, at her feet.

There it lay and Miss Fellowes looked up to where that pall of fog was twenty foot above and out of which it had fallen, turning

over once. She bent down and took a wing then entered a tunnel in front of her, and this had DEPARTURES lit up over it, carrying her dead pigeon.

No one paid attention, all were intent and everyone hurried, nobody looked back. Her dead pigeon then lay sideways, wings outspread as she held it, its dead head down towards the ground. She turned and she went back to where it had fallen and again looked up to where it must have died for it was still warm and, everything unexplained, she turned once more into the tunnel back to the station.

She thought it must be dirty with all that fog and wondered if it might not be, now it was dead, that it had fleas and they would come out on the feathers of its head but she did not like to look as there might have been blood. She remembered she had seen that with rabbits' ears when they had been shot and she remembered that swallows were most verminous of all birds - how could it have died she wondered and then decided that it must be washed. (pp.7-8)

The Isherwood passage forms the beginning of Chapter 11 of the novel though it could easily be mistaken for a first page, while Green's paragraphs, which actually do open Party Going, are far removed from the scene-setting which often occupies that position. Isherwood is intent on describing a situation, acquainting the reader with what has been happening in the world at large before returning to the group of characters with whom he is primarily concerned. Green's aims are more difficult to define except through negatives. He does not provide us with background information: no times, places, people. He does not introduce the main characters; we might expect Miss Fellowes to play an important role in the story but in fact she remains peripheral. In this his method is similar to Waugh's in A Handful of Dust where the fire mentioned in the first paragraph turns out to have no significance and the two characters discussing it, John and Mrs Beaver, are not the major ones. Waugh's intention is to avoid narrator intrusion; opinion on the personalities and situation of the Lasts is established through the conversation of characters rather than through judgments given by the narrator. The opening of A Handful of Dust is intriguing: the opening of Party Going may seem to many utterly bewildering. While in Waugh's novel clarification soon follows, in Green's we are left wondering. The "crab-wise" approach adopted by Green in Party Going is

daring, even risky, for its success depends heavily on the reader's ability, and more important desire, to read closely and carefully to detect what he is attempting to do. Isherwood's language is easy to read and understand: Green's is not.

The passage from Mr Norris Changes Trains is written primarily in short, simple sentences. Longer sentences are, apart from one, compound not complex, strung together with conjunctions, commas, semi-colons rather than relative pronouns. These paradoxically reinforce the impression of short, bald sentences since the semi-colons in particular serve to pare down not build up. Emphasis is placed on nouns and adjectives, with verbs usually confined to 'was' and 'were'. Most of the nouns are plural, indicating a general situation with reference to no one in particular. Adjectives are physically descriptive and come in pairs, a feature which contributes to the uniformity of the prose: "ghastly, sopping"; "greasy, fallen"; "damp, shabby". Vocabulary is very ordinary. Common words are used which have no established connotation and have no special associations in the novel. The narrative is linear and evenly paced; the reader has no need to dwell on certain phrases or go back to re-read a difficult section.

Isherwood's narrative is not charged with resonance but is a kind of journalese, almost shorthand. It is concise, precise and matter-of-fact, impassive as a voice-over on an old film. The writing does not provoke questions or differing interpretations; it is objectified statement which has only to be absorbed. Green's prose, on the other hand, as Toynbee says, is a "confrontation" with language which has to be carefully analysed. The view of some critics is that Green's innovations are either unimportant or an irritating nuisance to readers. Stokes points out some of the more noticeable irregularities which are present in the Party Going passage - "his unusual trick of introducing a relative clause with a redundant conjunction" and his replacement of the article or possessive pronoun with a

demonstrative - but he gives little explanation of their effects and concludes dismissively that they are "minutiae and perhaps trivia".⁵

The word "trick" reveals Stokes's attitude: Green is some kind of conjuror playing with words.⁶ Marghanita Laski felt that Green has an unacceptable approach to language; she is openly critical in her review of Nothing: "If only people would refrain from reforming the English language when they are writing fiction!"⁷ Green would not, I am sure, see his use of language as either clever or prescriptive. He is in search of particular effects and his deviations are not to be taken as either an attempt to establish a new English grammar or as "trivia"; surely nothing so "unusual" can be considered insignificant.

In the first, single-sentence paragraph of Party Going there are three grammatical points which immediately attract attention. There are no articles before "Fog" and "bird" though there is an indefinite article before "balustrade" and a possessive pronoun with "feet". Three forms of the past tense are used in quick succession - imperfect, pluperfect and perfect. There is a suppressed consecutive clause; one would expect to read 'The fog was so dense that a bird had been disturbed' instead of the ungrammatical "Fog was so dense, bird that had been disturbed". In subsequent paragraphs similar deviations occur. In the second there is a demonstrative where one would expect an article, "that pall of fog", and a redundant conjunction, "then entered a tunnel in front of her, and this had . . .". In the third there is another puzzling conjunction, "and again looked up to where it must have died for it was still warm". In the fourth is a sentence syntactically ambiguous: "She thought it must be dirty with all that fog and wondered if it might not be, now it was dead, that it had fleas . . ." ⁸

There is little point in merely stating these irregularities of sentence construction; this activity would indicate that Green is indeed

being considered as one setting about language reform. But it would be naive to suppose that Green seriously advocates the removal of the article or the comma from the English language or the adoption of illogical sentence construction; in fact the norms of language are essential for a writer such as Green. What must be considered is the effect on the reader of this passage, as a piece of literary composition and as the opening of a novel.

The overwhelming impression is one of dislocation of cause and effect. In the first sentence the anticipated causality is denied. "Fog" and "bird" remain unconnected entities and their separation one from the other is highlighted by the absence of articles. It is an unidentified fog, neither 'the fog' which the narrator is already aware of nor 'a fog', one of many such fogs and thus comprehensible, but a primeval Fog. So the first sentence gives us information which we cannot wholly assimilate since we cannot establish its importance or find satisfactory connections. Does it matter that the bird is dead? Is the fog the cause of death? Should the fog be seen as symbolic?

In the second paragraph the opposite is true. A misleading connection is established: "she entered a tunnel in front of her, and this had DEPARTURES lit up over it, carrying her dead pigeon." Yet this too serves to separate. One would expect the sentence to run 'she entered a tunnel in front of her which had . . .'; the second clause, introduced by a relative pronoun, would be subordinated to the first. As it is, the clauses are merely linked, with a conjunction that does not make immediate sense. The position of "carrying her dead pigeon", separated from the noun to which it refers, is also strange in that it emphasizes the intermediate clause, giving it a predominance it does not seem to deserve. What is the significance of "DEPARTURES"?

In the third paragraph the conjunction "for" is altogether confusing. Two clauses which seem unrelated in substance are forced into relationship.

The first section of the sentence, "She turned and went back to where it had fallen and again looked up to where it must have died", shows Miss Fellowes returning to the probable place of the bird's death but "for it was still warm" makes an abrupt transition of dimension from space to time; it suggests the time of death (recently) but tells nothing about the circumstances of death, which have been the subject of the sentence.

The effect of such prose is that the reader has constantly to change his perspective as he reads a sentence. The sentence from the fourth paragraph which I have just quoted offers another example. One reads as far as "fog" without trouble - the bird is dirty because of the fog - but the next part, as far as "might not be" makes the reader wonder what is being referred to. Does "might not be" hark back to "dirty"? The continuation of the sentence, "now it was dead", brings in the new idea that death has something to do with the bird's condition and then "it had fleas" again changes the sense of what has gone before by completing "it might not be".

There are similar instances later in the novel, for example: "For one moment she thought she felt so she might burst into tears again." (p.127). The absence of punctuation and the unusual use of 'so' mean that the sentence can be read in two slightly different ways: 'she thought she felt so (much) that she might' or 'she thought (she felt) she might'. In this case the 'correct' shade of meaning could only be conveyed by voice inflexion. One important feature of Green's writing, both narrative and dialogue, is that so much depends on phrasing. Although the dialogue is not necessarily an absolutely accurate representation of how people speak but is written conversation (this will be fully discussed in the next chapter), many passages of speech, direct and indirect, and narrative rely for their meaning on how they are 'heard'. This is one way - what I have said about the sentence in the fourth paragraph is another - in which Green compels his reader to make conscious and continuous acts of

interpretation at a local level.

The opening of Party Going also exhibits certain technical features which one would more often associate with poetry than with prose. Bassoff discusses rhythm, even metre, in Green's prose, as do both Russell and Stokes, but what is striking about these paragraphs is the mixture of mellifluous prose and extreme clumsiness. Green does not always write prose that is pleasant to the ear though there are here several examples of satisfying patterning of sounds and words. For instance in the second paragraph the progression no one/all/everyone/nobody has a pleasing sequence and finality shared by the next sentence with its rhyme (dead/head) and assonance (down/ground). However the following two sentences are uneconomical, stumbling, with attempts at logical connection thwarted. Now the reader makes halting progress. We seem about to be given explanations but they fail to appear. As the narrator says, we are left with "everything unexplained".

This introduction alerts the reader to the method and themes of the novel in several ways. The prose tells to some extent what is going on. As I have said in Chapter 10, there is a great deal of speculation and reflection in Party Going, mainly rambling contemplation of motive, 'wondering' about what is happening. The difficulties and misleading confusions of the prose seem to encapsulate characters' behaviour: first an unsuccessful attempt to make rational sense out of the irrational; second self-deceptive and tangential explanation of motives and events. Plans are worked out, situations nicely set up, but anticipated goals are rarely reached. I should also mention the ominous note struck at the beginning of Party Going by the emphasis on fog, death and vermin. To return to A Handful of Dust, the opening words "'Was anyone hurt?'" become highly significant in another context later on; likewise in Party Going fog, both physical and mental, and death hang about throughout the novel. So although Green's narrator, unlike Isherwood's, gives no information

directly which seems of great importance, obliquely he tells a good deal.

I have mentioned several of the oddities of Green's style: inconsistent use of the article, unusual use of demonstratives and possessive pronouns, redundant conjunctions, especially to introduce a relative clause, condensed consecutive clauses. Some others should be noted: modification of verbs with adjectives instead of adverbs, use of "like" where 'as' or 'as if' would be thought of as correct, omission of anticipated conjunctions. Sentence length has also aroused interest, in Stokes particularly. Many observations have been made on the effects of Green's style. Russell, concentrating on Back and Concluding, suggests that the absence of a connective often denotes an impulsive action, for example "Then the girl leaned over, stroked that white cat". He also describes kinds of compression; for instance, verbs modified with adjectives can be indicative of alarm or jumpiness in the characters. Possessives he equates with individuality and he contrasts love scenes in Back, where possessives are used, with similar scenes in Concluding where love has been neutralised and individuality denied, this marked by fewer possessives.

What is so interesting about these comments is that they show the extent to which, as Russell himself says, "Green's characters dictate his modus operandi".⁹ Green's prose has always been a form of 'dialogue' with the reader in which narrator is partially submerged and character revealed by the choice and order of the words. His stylistic deviations become a kind of sub-verbal communication accompanying the 'conversation'. So, he does not write (though we may hear) 'then the girl leaned over and impulsively stroked the white cat' but the omission of a connecting word directs the reader to give his interpretation of the action, maybe the one Russell suggests, maybe not.

It is appropriate that Green should have finished his writing career with two novels of pure dialogue for previous work led the way. Even in Blindness it is often difficult to separate conversation from narrative

since much of the narrative 'speaks' to us in a series of distinctive voices. This is Green's method of obtaining what I have referred to as an 'intimate distance' from what he writes and of creating mystery, where what is unsaid is as important as what is stated.

The style of Blindness has been little considered, perhaps because it is overshadowed by the more daring techniques of Living, perhaps because it is more or less conventional. However it is worth looking at the patches of Joycean interior monologue where action is related in the language of the character involved.

Mrs. Haye knitted. The bells carried one back to Barwood. He would have been better there, you could not breathe in London, and fresh air was good for one if one was feelin' seedy. But it was no use thinkin' about Barwood, one must be practical, and everything would change once they had a house of their own. (p.251)

And Master John had growed up and gone to college but that never had agreed with him, he was weakly ever since she could remember. . . . Then they had had the governess who was not up to much with all her airs and graces. The way she used to carry on with that teacher in Norbury, undignifying. But he had been too weakly for college, he had never been happy there even if he had growed to the figure of a man he was. The other boys what were less well-behaved and brought up would have been always at him, she knew their ways. (p.169)

In the first passage the omission of 'g' from "feelin'" and "thinkin'" and the continual use of "one" are the idiosyncracies of Mrs Haye's speech: in the second words such as "growed", "undignifying", phrases like "all her airs and graces" and clauses such as "what were less well-behaved" bear the distinctive voice of Nanny. A number of similar passages exist in the novel and many more are written in the educated-young-man style of John.

This technique is very similar to, and perhaps influenced by, Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway which was published in 1925, the time when Green was writing his first novel. In Mrs Dalloway narrative is often written in the voice of Clarissa:

She could remember scene after scene at Bourton - Peter furious; Hugh not, of course, his match in any way, but still not a positive imbecile as Peter made out; not a mere barber's block. When his old mother wanted him to give up shooting or to take her to Bath he did

it, without a word; he was really unselfish, and as for saying, as Peter did, that he had no heart, no brain, nothing but the manners and breeding of an English gentleman, that was only her dear Peter at his worst; and he could be intolerable; he could be impossible; but adorable to walk with on a morning like this.

(June had drawn out every leaf on the trees. The mothers of Pimlico gave suck to their young. Messages were passing from the Fleet to the Admiralty. Arlington street and Piccadilly seemed to chafe the very air of the Park and lift its leaves hotly, brilliantly, on waves of that divine vitality which Clarissa loved. To dance, to ride, she had adored all that.)¹⁰

In the first paragraph I have quoted, several things identify the narrative as Clarissa's. First the word "positive" has even at this early point in the novel come to be associated with her and "dear" is the adjective often ascribed to Peter by her. Second the passage consists of only two sentences, broken up into speech fragments by semi-colons. The paragraph which follows is reminiscent of some of the bracketed passages in Caught where the brackets indicate an alternative viewpoint or voice. Here the narrator steps in to give us further information about the scene.

Apart from conversation and character-narration in Blindness there is some straight narrative and, something rarely to occur in later novels, description of the scene-setting variety, as in this opening to the chapter entitled "Picture Postcardism":

In the green lane between Barwood and Huntly there was a stile in the tall hedge. Behind were laurels, and brambles, and box trees, and yews, all growing wild. At the end of a mossy path from the stile lay the house, built in yellow brick with mauve patterns, across a lawn of rank grass. It had been raised in 1840 by a Welshman, the date was over the door. But this was hardly visible, it was early morning and a heavy white mist smudged the outline. (p.97)

Most of the narrative is written in a pointedly neutral manner, a simple and plain description of events in sequence with almost no comment on what is happening.

She blew her nose and put the handkerchief away in the pocket of her skirt. She rubbed her face slowly in her hands, when she stopped it was redder still. Then she sat for some time looking at nothing at all, thinking of nothing at all. The specks kept on rising in the sunlight.

She got up. She rang the bell. She went to the writing-table and sat down. She opened the inkstand hoof, Choirboy's hoof, and she looked at her pens. She dipped one into the ink, and she drew a bit of paper towards her. Then she looked out of the window on to the rose garden for some time. (p.79)

Of the ten sentences nine begin "she" or "then she"; each is of simple construction. Quite frequently narrative of this kind goes suddenly into the present tense:

She gets up and moves slowly into the house without bothering to put on her straw hat again. From the cupboard underneath the stairs she takes out the lamp with a saucepan fixed above it and carries it into the kitchen. She fills the saucepan by dipping it into the washing-up water, and puts the two eggs in, then lights the lamp with a match from the box on the shelf over the range. (p.121)

This happens especially in scenes which, as this one, concern Joan, and the aim is clearly to give a sense of immediacy, an objective he had also in writing Living.

Walter Allen describes the style of Living as reminiscent of Anglo-Saxon prose and suggests that Green was not as resistant to his Oxford studies of Anglo-Saxon as he maintained in Pack My Bag.¹¹ John Ashbery, in his M.A. dissertation on Green, points out some striking similarities between Living and Auden's early poetry. Living predated Auden's first collection by a year so it is possible that Green directly influenced Auden. However, Ashbery may be right to suggest that any resemblances could be explained by both writers having read and been affected by Old English texts and also Norse sagas.¹²

While Allen and Ashbery receive favourably the style of Living, others have been less impressed, particularly by the absence of articles in many passages. Green said that he wanted to make the novel "as taut and spare as possible" to suit the proletarian subject-matter and also that leaving out things serves to highlight what is left in,¹³ points taken up by Bruce Bassoff. Bassoff maintains that Green's mimetic explanation is undermined by the fact that articles are omitted throughout the novel, whether it be the rich or the working-class characters who are being dealt with. His

justification for the style is twofold:

In Living one can discern two kinds of motivation for Green's elision of the definite article and of the nonadverbial "there": to convey a certain kind of awareness - of the immediacy of impressions and of the particularity of nouns rather than of their class; and to exercise control over prose cadence. 14

Bassoff analyses the rhythmic effects of some of the examples of elision, his aim being to show how Green's style appeals to the ear as well as the eye. What he says about Green's control of tempo is certainly true in some instances (also in Party Going, as I have shown) but it hardly accounts for every such sentence in Living.

Bassoff says that the same style is used for both sets of people represented in the novel; there are 'shorthand' passages concerning the Duprets as well as the factory workers. However there are some significant differences in the ways the thoughts and conversation of characters are shown, the extremes revealed most clearly in Dupret junior and Lily Gates. Lily acts, speaks and sees:

She saw in images in her mind how Mr. Dale was to her like being on the verge of sleep, in safe bed. (p.76)

When they were out together once, after that, she saw clearly how unjust her life at home was to her, staying in all day, . . . (p.77)

Her interior monologues are direct and certain:

I am I, why do I do work of this house, unloved work, why but they cannot find other woman to do this work.

Why may I not have children, feed them with my milk. Why may I not kiss their eyes, lick their skin, softness to softness, why not I? I have no man, my work is for others, not for mine. (p.109)

Dupret's thoughts are much more self-conscious, uncertain, and the way in which they are phrased emphasizes this.

Standing in foundry shop son of Mr. Dupret thought in mind and it seemed to him that these iron castings were beautiful and he reached out fingers to them, he touched them; he thought and only in machinery it seemed to him was savagery left now. . . . He felt more certain and he said to himself it was wild incidental beauty in these things where engineers had thought only of the use put to them. He thought, he declaimed to himself this was the life to lead, making useful things which were beautiful, and the gladness to make them, which you could touch; but when he was most sure he remembered, he

remembered it had been said before and he said to himself, 'Ruskin built a road which went nowhere with the help of undergraduates and in so doing said the last word on that.' And then what had been so plain, stiff and bursting inside him like soda fountains, this died as a small wind goes out, and he felt embarrassed standing as he did in fine clothes. (pp.6-7)

The word 'thought' is rarely used in connection with Lily; usually such phrases as "she saw in images in her mind" or "she saw in feeling" (see p.108) describe her perceptions. The aim seems to be to indicate a direct emotional and visual response. By contrast, Dupret's perceptions are intellectual, his attempts at the uncomplicated feelings ascribed to Lily a failure. In the above passage the tautologous "thought in mind", the repeated "it seemed to him", suggest a tentative, laboured apprehension of the "wild incidental beauty" of the iron castings. When "he thought" is reinforced by the enthusiasm of "he declaimed this was the life to lead making useful things which were beautiful", Dupret seems to have made a confident assertion, to have articulated an observation in which he believes, but this observation, he realises, is only a secondhand thought. He tries to experience a joyous, unthinking response to beauty but fails through self-consciousness, the result embarrassment. The final sentence of the passage is suggestive of sexual vitality, "stiff and bursting inside him like soda fountains", but this impotently dies away.

There are other differences between the factory workers and the owners which are indicated by characteristic modes of behaviour. On the whole Craigan, Gates, Lily are either silent - "They did not say much" (p.13) "They said nothing to each other" (p.14), "They said nothing" (p.33) - or they talk freely. Lily's excited, candid talk is beautifully represented in an account of a conversation with Mrs Eames.

Once she had said to Mrs Eames she had said it made you ridiculous she had said walking with Jim, yes she had said that to Mrs Eames, when he looked odd like that, daft you might say, she had gone far as that even, daft with his eyes yes, she had said, yes and with the girls tittering behind him it made you feel awkward to be with him . . . (p.41)

The middle-class characters tend to think rather than speak and, as in Nothing and Doting, what they say may not be what they mean:

'But it may be boring, and boring waiting on so long.'

He thought why couldn't she say 'you' may be bored: flattery, he thought, flattery, you could count on fingers of 2 hands only the girls who flattered you at dinner . . .

'Brilliant' he said letting no break in conversation, 'brilliant' thinking more of himself, 'of course it will be ghastly waiting, . . .

She thought what a priggish boy and hadn't heard more of what he said than his little place he knew of. Why speak like a serial she asked in her mind.

'It's done a great deal' he said after waiting for her 'I've done it but perhaps it's rude.'

She thinks it rude he thought, she's half witted . . . (pp.50-1)

Green's conversational narrative style is dominant in Pack My Bag to an extent that Richard Church, in his Spectator review, found irritating enough to detract seriously from the effect of the book. The consistent idiosyncrasy of style in the self portrait is that Green uses punctuation as all school children are taught not to use it, to indicate speech pauses rather than to ensure syntactical accuracy and clarity. The following examples are representative:

So, much later, when in love and I heard the person's name unexpectedly, - is there anyone who has not felt their heart lurch then and, if it happens to be secret, combined with that same sense of guilt I had over Philip's death. (p.82)

But nobody came lower down, for years I had it to myself, only it was farther so that there was always this choice to make, which way to go, up or down and in the end I always chose the same. (p.51)

I have commented on certain idiosyncracies of Green's style and pointed out some of the ways in which even narrative passages 'speak' to the reader in a number of voices. In the next chapter I shall consider those novels which were concurrent with Green's writing and talks on the dialogue novel, Nothing (1950) and Doting (1952).

C H A P T E R 1 2

Confronting Language: Dialogue

". . . They just keep talking in little short scenes, silly, inconsequential, foolish talk. None of them ever says right out loud what he's thinking about. . . ." 1

Thus speaks Mrs Mandible in the little Green parody which prefaces Orville Prescott's critical comments on "comrades of the coterie": Green, Ivy Compton-Burnett, Elizabeth Bowen and, surprisingly perhaps, Graham Greene. Prescott's imaginary literary lady is talking at a dinner party about Nothing, largely because Green is "'supposed to be ever so subtle and original and a marvelous stylist'". Although expressing a hostile reaction to Nothing which Prescott describes later, along with the rest of Green's work, as vacuous, arid, dull and pretentiously oblique, Mrs Mandible's words are in fact accurate. Nothing consists of a number of scenes, generally brief, during which the six speaking characters have mildly charming, not always very clever, conversations in which they carefully avoid direct statement. However, there is, as Diana Trilling observed, "more than meets the eye".²

In his article on Green's theory, D.S. Taylor makes an interesting point about Doting. Usually, he says, the effect of an ambiguous novel is that at first one is confused but this confusion gives way to an underlying clarity "with which the author has all along intended to reward his best readers".³ In Doting the reverse is true; the movement is from clarity, the smooth surface of social chit-chat, to mystery as the characters begin to come alive, to have the contradictions and secrets of real people. If this is so, then Green has achieved his aim of writing a novel that can be all things to all men. Certainly the experience of reading the two dialogue novels suggests that they, more than Green's earlier work, require the reader's concentrated imaginative effort.

Green's experiments with dialogue began with 'The Lull', one of his war stories. Although previous novels contained a fair proportion of dialogue, it was in this story that he first adopted the 'scenic' approach. 'The Lull' opens with a scene-setting paragraph:

There was a bar in this fire-station. On the bar was a case of beer. A fireman was taking bottles from this case, placing the full bottles on to shelves. He was alone.

A second fireman comes in and a conversation ensues. A third then a fourth joins the conversation, then all but the barman leave and the scene ends. Further similar scenes follow until we have been introduced to eleven firemen, depressed by the tedium of inactivity, enlivened only by the stories they tell one another of their exploits during the blitz. The story is similar in method to the last novels with one important exception: the narrator's explanatory comment is more prominent and gives definitive interpretation. Particularly in the first scene, he often points out the context or implications of the remarks made and clarifies the meaning of tones of voice.

What lay behind this last remark was that Gerald, the man in the check shirt, was echoing an opinion widely held in the station . . .

He was referring to the fact that Gerald, because he did odd jobs carpentering for the officer in charge, was excused the tactical exercises . . .

His tone of voice was to show, elaborately, that he did not care.

At this a third fireman came in.

"Well brother?"

That is to say the barman and third fireman were both members of the Fire Brigades Union.

(my emphases)

All these examples of narrative explanation, which help the reader in his attempts to fill in the unstated, come from the first scene. Although as the story progresses such comment decreases, it may be that the short-story form is not suitable for Green's method of building meaning through the slow accumulation of "the contexts of words".

One instance of unnecessary and obtrusive explanation serves to show how much better dialogue suits Green's purposes than narrative. The third and shortest scene is a description by the narrator of the effect on the firemen of a stranger's entrance.

But it was noticeable that, whenever a stranger came into the bar, these firemen, who had not been on a blitz for eighteen months, would start talking back to what they had seen of the attack on London in 1940. They were seeking to justify the waiting life they lived at present, without fires.

A stranger did not have to join in, his presence alone was enough to stimulate them who felt they no longer had their lives now that they were living again, if life in a fire-station can be called living.

This passage is immediately followed by an incident which reveals through dialogue exactly the point which has been generalized. The firemen's conversation in front of the "bored, expressionless" stranger shows the characteristic behaviour much more subtly and memorably, rendering the lead-in redundant.

"We begin taking a few tiles off," he went on, "and we find a place where it's a bit 'ot, but we still 'aven't come on the seat of the fire, we're rummagin' about, like, on top of that bloody roof when all of a sudden there's a bloody blubbering noise up in the sky over'ead, yes, like a dog bloody 'owling in a bass voice, and coming down out of the moon though we couldn't see nothink. Was I scared. I thinks to meself it's another bloody secret weapon. I called out to you, didn't I mate?"

"You may 'ave done Alf. I was too busy tryin' to get down out of it."

"Yes, we had a bit of a scramble. Joe 'ere was nearest, so he goes down first. Well, there was no point in that 'after you' stunt, was there? Yes, and as I was coming last down through the trap-door, I looks up, and I sees what had put the wind up me to such an extent. Know what it was?"

Everyone in the room, bar the stranger, could have told him. They had heard this story often. And the stranger was not interested. Alfred answered himself. (pp. 17-8)

Perhaps at this stage Green was uncertain of the ability of his readers to read closely; when he wrote Nothing and Doting he was prepared to make greater demands on them.

There are several basic problems confronting the reader of Nothing and Doting. A kind of equivocation exists in all dramatic dialogue, more acute perhaps in novels such as these than in most drama. For dramatic dialogue is at once a sequence of utterances made by a number of speakers - thus individual characters can be expected to be differentiated as one reads - and the utterance of one person, the writer. In a play, maybe the former is usually dominant, at least when the lines are spoken on a stage by

living people: in a novel the balance between the two is harder to establish. In Green's last novels there is a certain amount of narrative, which one would not of course find in a play, and also descriptive tags which apparently direct the reader on how to interpret: "he gravely agreed", "he protested", "he said in low tones", "Mr. Addinsell protested, in a shocked voice". Although the actual words of the characters make up by far the largest part of the novel, so the novel on the page looks like a play, these pointers can seem crucial in the reader's decision on the meaning of the dialogue.

In Doting the problem arises early with those passages in the opening scene which appear to give the author's prejudgment on what is to follow. Is Green manipulating the reader into one interpretation, which he will find if he looks hard enough, or is the novel open to any number of readings? A.K. Weatherhead tends towards the first of these views. He sees the juggling act as ritual and as sexual symbolism, an indication of how Arthur Middleton should deal with his affairs.⁴ Taylor, on the other hand, says that anything we might infer from the scene offers merely an optional reading that we may take or leave, that finally the novel is, in Green's words, "infinitely interpretable".⁵

The problem exists also in Nothing where the complex patterning of scenes, the juxtaposition of conversations, seems to create a structure which suggests interpretation of events and characters. So Weatherhead sees social behaviour as the subject of Nothing; the unacceptable members of the society who do not conform to its rules - that is, Dick and Liz and, for different reasons, Philip and Mary - are shown to be deviant in that they do not fit comfortably into the formal structure of the novel.

Weatherhead's view carries with it the assumption that there exists a hidden subtext, a veiled coherence beneath the apparent human inconsistencies of the characters' conversation. Are the novels then narratives

or dramas; or is that in fact a false distinction? In his book Drama as Literature Jirí Veltruský suggests that in a play the two coexist. Dialogue may be seen as achieving a "unity of sense" on two planes, the "subject-matter" and the "extra-linguistic situation"; but one of these is usually in the foreground. "If it is the subject-matter, the dialogue looks more or less like a gradual clarification and elaboration of it. If it is the situation, the dialogue comes closer to interaction between the participants, to a chain of actions and reactions."⁶ Veltruský says further:

The impression that dramatic dialogue is a homogeneous utterance by the dramatist is stronger where those linguistic resources predominate which by their nature promote the continuous flow of the language rather than its division into distinct segments. When emphasis is put on the continuity of the discourse, the borderlines between the alternating speeches tend to be blurred; when emphasis is put on its segmentation, they are sharply marked, precisely because they are the most effective means of cutting up the dialogue. (p. 13)

This distinction between homogeneous dialogue, where subject-matter is dominant and a narrative evident, and segmented dialogue, where the characters' interaction is more important, may be illustrated by a comparison between Ivy Compton-Burnett, all of whose novels are written in a scenic, dialogue form, and Green.

In the novels of Ivy Compton-Burnett there is a clear unity of sense in subject-matter. Her characters might be expected to be closer to autonomy than Green's for the simple reason that their creator puts no independent construction on their words. There is the minimum of narrative; apart from brief physical descriptions of characters as they first appear, tags such as "he said", or very occasionally, "he said in a low tone" suffice as an indication of speaker and manner of speaking. Ivy Compton-Burnett herself said: "'I do not see why exposition and description are a necessary part of a novel. . . . In reading novels I am disappointed if a scene is carried through in the voice of the author rather than the voices of the characters.'"⁷ However, the characters are in fact doing the author's task for her since in offering us candid disclosures of their

thoughts they are giving the explanations a novelist such as George Eliot would provide as comments on conversations. Ivy Compton-Burnett's characters are self-aware, devastatingly articulate, voices, but voices which are difficult to distinguish from one another; the reader acquires only a limited sense of individuals. Her novels have been compared with Greek tragedy in that there is in them all movement towards revelation, followed by recognition and then decline. Certainly the novels have continuity as events relentlessly move towards their inevitable conclusion. To an extent the characters are embodiments of their creator's thoughts while Green's give at least the illusion of independent existence; we become more interested in the intricacies of their interaction than in an overall coherence of meaning. Veltruský suggests that this difference is shown up in the kind of language used in the dialogue; it may be either a "continuous flow" which is not broken by changes of speaker or divided into "segments", in which case there is a sharp distinction between speeches. The following extracts, from Doting and A Father and his Fate, are indicative of the two methods.

"Well, here is the future mistress of the house," said Miles, as they came to the dinner table. "She can sit by me for the present. But I shall soon see her opposite to me. She will be apart from the rest of you. She will be one by herself. And I shall be glad not to see that place empty. We feel we have to keep our eyes from it. It seems to stare one in the face."

"It should be Ursula's place for the time," said Malcolm.

"Well, but she has not taken it."

"We left it empty, Father," said Constance. "To us that is what it was. We have kept our own places."

"Well, there will be none affected by marriage. That is something gained."

"Perhaps Aunt Ellen's ghost is in the place," said Malcolm. "Or will be, when Verena comes to it. It is a Shakespearean state of affairs."

"What did you say?" said Miles. "Say it again."

Malcolm repeated his words.

"Do not say such things. Do not hurt and upset someone who is innocent and helpless. It is an unmanly thing, mean and revengeful. It makes me ashamed."

(A Father and His Fate)⁸

"Finished darling" she murmured, when he had settled down.

"All done" he mumbled.

There was a long pause.

"Gone off yet?" she asked in a low voice.

"No, my dear" he replied.

"Wasn't it sweet of darling Annabel" she said.

"What's the girl done now?"

"Taken Peter out to lunch."

"Did she" he murmured in an uninterested voice.

"So good for him at his age" Diana added.

Mr. Middleton gave a grunt.

"I daren't think what they can have found to talk about, though" Mrs. Middleton wondered. "Of course I chatter away to him and he's so jolly with me always - that's only natural, but wasn't it generous of anyone in her generation to take the trouble?"

"Yes indeed" he faintly assented.

They were lying back to back. Diana turned over, settled the sheets about his chin. He brought a hand up and put these back the way they were.

(Doting, pp. 38-9)

The differences are immediately apparent. First, the extract from A Father and his Fate is composed of statements, the only question being a request for a statement to be repeated, while the conversation between Arthur and Diana Middleton is in question and answer, although significantly some of the questions are not indicated by the appropriate punctuation mark. Further, the level of intensity is consistent throughout the first passage while in the second voice inflexion is vital to meaning and varies considerably. Lastly, the characters from A Father and his Fate make clear their feelings on the situation under discussion and articulate some of its implications but the implications of the conversation from Doting are by no means clear and the reader needs to draw on previous knowledge to make sense of it.

Our concern in reading the first of these passages is to find out what it says about the situation being referred to. Miles, father of Constance and Ursula, believing his wife to be dead (though we later find out he knew all along she was still alive), is intending to marry Verena, a young girl who was to marry Malcolm, Miles's nephew and heir. In this scene the family express their disapproval of his decision and the idea of usurpation expressed by Malcolm and Ursula is reinforced by the

allusion to Macbeth. The effect of the Doting extract is quite different. The subject-matter, that is, Annabel's lunch with Peter, is not in itself interesting; but attention is drawn to what the conversation tells us about the relationship between Diana and Arthur. I shall not discuss it in detail since a few points will suffice. Diana's first words, "'Finished darling'", are, it seems, a question; Arthur has, as usual, been doing office work at home during the evening and, now they are in bed, Diana is asking if he has completed this work. However the absence of a question mark means that it could be taken as a statement, perhaps an announcement of fatigue, though the use of "darling", a marker of relationship, suggests that Diana is expecting a response, some reassurance. Arthur's "'All done'" is not encouraging so, after a pause, Diana tentatively tries to start a conversation: "'Gone off yet?'" Arthur's "'No, my dear'" could be said in many different tones: impatient, weary, loving, stern. However, his next comment and first question must express interest for he has recently had a flirtatious lunch with Annabel and cannot yet tell what his wife is referring to with: "'Wasn't it sweet of darling Annabel'". Diana reveals that Annabel has taken Peter out to lunch and Arthur is said to make his remark, "'Did she'", in an "uninterested voice". This we are likely to be suspicious of considering Arthur's attraction to Annabel; it may be that he is now feigning lack of interest. There is much more which could be said about this and almost any piece of dialogue from Doting but what I want to show at this point is the extent to which the "extra-linguistic situation" is predominant in this novel.

In discussing in greater detail the workings of Green's dialogue, I shall confine myself to Doting because it contains the juggling scene, which reveals a good deal about Green's aims. Four of the six speaking characters are present in this opening scene which is a celebratory dinner party for Peter's homecoming at the beginning of the school holidays.

While conversation continues, first a near-naked dancer, then a juggler appear on the night-club stage, and their activities are described in some detail. As D.S. Taylor points out, the description of the juggler's act is clearly a metaphor relating to the artist and the process of creation. The juggler is a consummate master of his craft, controlling no less than twelve billiard balls precisely yet without apparent effort, with "lazy-seeming hands". Significantly he receives no applause from his audience for this feat and later, we are told, the characters "altogether ignored" his clever trick with a beer mug and two billiard balls. This "lazy" artist completes this task by allowing the balls and the mug to fall, "balls of ivory each to a hand, and the jug to a toe of his patent leather shoe where he let it hang and shine to a faint look of surprise, the artist" (p. 8). Thus Green, the billiard player, the drinker, the artist, the contriver of the novel, takes his characters through their paces and to his own surprise brings events neatly to a conclusion; but the characters do not see him as having anything to do with them. This would suggest that Green sees himself as carrying out his polished, structured performance alongside those of his characters; they cannot be defined by his interpretation and are almost independent of it. Green's reading of the action as offered in the opening scene - in Taylor's words he portrays Annabel as "frigidly exhibitionistic", Arthur as "neurotically obsessed", Diana as "delightfully therapeutic" - is not simply an optional one: it is an imposed one which is not always to be trusted.

Taylor asks himself why Green did not attempt the "uninterrupted, chaotic flux of sensation with which life confronts us. The very dividing into scenes . . . puts a construction on life".⁹ To explain this, one might consider Green's own life. His was a passive existence in that things happened to him (I do not refer of course to his writing) and he expected a certain external ordering to be placed on his life. I

said in Chapter 2 that he anticipated his father's directorships would be handed down to him, as a matter of course; he accepted the conventional clothes that were wrapped around him. Yet within those social structures he was entirely unconventional. This passivity is, as I have earlier remarked, shared by his characters. Usually circumstances dictate what will happen and it is Green who provides those circumstances. He gives the characters' lives a structure which they implicitly, unconsciously, accept (the juggler is present but ignored) so do not break out of, but they go their own way within it. What is so interesting in Doting is the tension, between statements made by the same character, between the perceptions of different characters of the same people or events, between what the characters say and what they do, between what they say and what the narrator says they meant by it. It is a novel which, if it succeeds in capturing a reader's attention, it is difficult to exhaust.

"Pretty squalid play all round, I thought!"

His son only grunted back at him, face vacant, mouth half open, in London, in 1949.

Smiling with grace the mother, the spouse, leant across to the fourth of their after-the-theatre party, who was a girl older than this boy, aged almost seventeen, by perhaps two years.

"But could you conceive of the wife?" Mrs. Middleton cried.

The girl, the Annabel Paynton, smiled.

"Oh wasn't she!" this child agreed who, as a favoured daughter of a now disliked old friend, was invariably asked to make even numbers at what had come to be the immemorial evening out, on the boy's first night of his holidays. . . .

"Pretty fair rot to my ideas" Arthur Middleton insisted, 'rot' being a word he did not use except in his son's school holidays. But he had no answer save a long roll of drums, because, at this moment, lights throughout the restaurant were dimmed.

"Not quite ideal for eating" Diana Middleton complained.

(Doting, p. 1)

On the first page of Doting Green's task is to assign roles in his drama: the son, the boy, the mother, the spouse, the girl, the child; the daughter, the father. The contrivance, the artificiality of the situation¹⁰ is reinforced by reference to the play they have all just seen which we learn nothing of apart from the comments included in the quotation but which may be similar to the drama we are about to witness. However,

although Green has manoeuvred his characters into this situation, their conversation is far removed from the smooth performance of the accomplished artist/juggler. It is obscure, tangential, fragmented.

The opening words, "'Pretty squalid play all round'" have been taken as a comment on the action to come but it is important to look at them in their context. Arthur's words appear to be a voicing of opinion to anyone who is listening but we discover that they are in fact directed at Peter, from whom little reaction is elicited. Arthur fails to start up a conversation with his son. An exchange does take place between Diana and Annabel but for the reader there is a puzzling gap between Diana's question and Annabel's answer. We are told Annabel "agreed" but with what we do not really know. We have no means of knowing at this point in the novel whether this is simply a shorthand conversation between people who are attuned to each other or if Annabel is agreeing to be polite, to be acceptable. Arthur's second comment, again apparently undirected, is a near repeat of his first but the change of wording is made significant by the use of the schoolboy word 'rot', which reveals Arthur's intensified attempt to communicate with his son. Again he receives no answer.

As Norman Page points out in his brief but detailed discussion of Doting in Speech in the English Novel¹¹, it is difficult to illustrate Green's dialogue through short quotations. Green said in one of the B.B.C. talks that it "is only by an aggregate of words over a period followed by an action, that we obtain, in life, a glimmering of what is going on in someone".¹² It is the cumulative effect that counts. This has become clear even in the pieces of dialogue I have quoted so far; it is necessary to refer to other conversations, other contexts, to clarify meaning.

A number of aspects of Green's dialogue need considering: Green's descriptions of the actions which follow or accompany words, repetitions of particular words or scenes, in which change of context alters interpretation, and the subtleties of the unstated, or understated, in conversation.

This last point is evident from the following passage, the first of many conversations between Arthur Middleton, "the husband", and Annabel Paynton, the girl invited out for the son but attracting instead the father. The couple are dancing, on Annabel's initiative, the reason being that she has seen on the dance floor her much discussed but never heard 'boyfriend', Campbell Anthony who, it is later revealed, is compiling an anthology of love poetry entitled Doting. The start of their conversation relates primarily to this "poet" who at first ignores or fails to see Annabel's nod.

They danced in silence through another few moments. Then Mr Middleton saw the poet at last wave negligently in their direction. Upon which, with a happy smile, Annabel Paynton moved closer within her partner's arms. (p. 15)

This paragraph immediately precedes a long conversation:

"Now, how awful of me" she exclaimed. "I've just remembered! Peter says you simply slave at your business."

"Peter says?" he demanded, with some astonishment.

"Oh you've someone really special there, all right" she went on, enthusiastically bright. "He's going to be terrific."

"Well thanks" Arthur Middleton said drily.

"So here I go again" she lamented. "I suppose nothing can be a greater bore than having virtual strangers talk to one about one's own children."

"I wouldn't have thought we were quite that, Ann."

"No more did I, but you seemed...Oh I don't know, I expect I misunderstood. But I imagine people must be talking to you about Peter all the time."

"Not always" Mr. Middleton smiled.

"Then tell me" she demanded. "D'you, yourself, get these awful depressions, too, from one day to the other?"

"Peter's never given me a moment's anxiety" he replied stoutly.

"No, no" she said "I thought you wanted to get off the topic of your son. I meant in yourself. Do you still have them?"

"Of course."

"But why? What's the purpose in one's always being depressed?"

"I should say it may have a lot to do with sex" he replied, with a nervous laugh.

She looked down her nose. "Would you?" she asked. "I wouldn't know, especially about sex, of course. No, Campbell worries so terribly over his health."

"You don't though, Ann. You look blooming."

"Yet I'm always in the dumps and there's nothing wrong with me, is there?"

"Not that I can see."

"And you say you do, as well? What is it, then?"

"The times, perhaps."

(Doting, pp. 15-7)

Annabel has just previously shown little interest in Arthur but at this point she turns to him, both in action (she "moved closer within her partner's arms") and in words ("Now" indicates the end of one phase - concern with Campbell - and the beginning of the next - flirting with Arthur). Her motives are obscure. She is obviously pleased to have received a sign of recognition from Campbell and her "happy smile" suggests that the casual indifference of his wave is perceived by Arthur or the narrator but not by her. So why does this propel her into Arthur's arms? Does she hope to make Campbell jealous? Is she simply in a good mood and prepared to exert her charm on whomever she is with? Has she proved her relationship with Campbell sufficiently to allow her to forget about him for now and concentrate on Arthur who, she knows, is attracted to her? Is she temporarily transferring her affection from Campbell to Arthur, thus using Arthur as a substitute lover? Whatever her reasons, she intends to flirt with Arthur and her first remark, whether said in innocence or not, secures his attention, implying as it does some kind of relationship between herself and Peter, and potentially arousing jealousy in the older man. Annabel responds very quickly to Arthur's inference of comparison by praising exaggeratedly Peter, who so far has appeared unsociable, insensitive and sexually immature. Arthur's reply to this is unenthusiastic because he does not want to be told in these circumstances how "terrific" his son is but Annabel, perhaps wilfully, misinterprets his tone, assuming he is just bored.

This third remark from Annabel, "'I suppose nothing can be a greater bore than having virtual strangers talk to one about one's own children'" sends out two challenges of the kind at which she excels. First she invites flattery - she is not boring - and second she encourages an assertion of intimacy with her reference to "virtual strangers". As so often happens in Doting, and has happened already in this conversation,

Arthur does not take up the main thread of the sentence but focusses on this phrase, "virtual strangers", and suggests what Annabel probably wants him to state, that they have a relationship which is more than mere acquaintance. It is noticeable that it is here that Arthur uses Annabel's name for the first time, and not her full name but a short form, Ann, a marker of intimacy; Diana calls her Annabel throughout the novel. Annabel does not use Arthur's name at all during this conversation while Arthur uses hers twice. Annabel's aim seems to be to manoeuvre Arthur into taking the initiative, to make it appear as though he is the dominant one when it is in fact she who is making the running. So, with an abrupt change of subject to "awful depressions" she seeks to encourage Arthur to bare his soul to her and deepen their acquaintance. Arthur, however, is not quick enough and misunderstands her question, revealing that his relationship with his son has caused him anxiety; we have already seen his failed attempts to communicate with Peter by using uncharacteristic vocabulary.

Annabel corrects Arthur's misapprehension, perhaps impatiently ("No, no"), and again bows to him, "'I thought you wanted to get off the subject of your son'", when it may be more to the point that she wants to change the subject. Her comment "'Do you still have them?'" is bewildering since she can hardly be expected to have a full history of Arthur's mental state but her question leads neatly to the subject of sex, perhaps because she has reminded Arthur of his youth, and puts the conversation on a more personal footing, though Arthur at least is still nervous.

Sex in their minds, Annabel chooses this moment to mention Campbell, the rival, again, and this draws out Arthur's first complimentary comment on Annabel, "'You look blooming'". Annabel's conversation is always self-orientated, revealed among other ways by the predominance of the word 'I' in her talk, and so she tries to reinforce Arthur's approval of her with her question "'there's nothing wrong with me, is there?'". Whether or not his reply, "'Not that I can see'", counts as a satisfactory one would

depend altogether on the tone of voice employed.

Although Green provides far more elucidation of manner of speaking than Ivy Compton-Burnett does ("he demanded, with some astonishment", "she went on, enthusiastically bright"), these descriptions do not pin down what is going through the characters' heads but tell the reader instead what he might have gathered as an observer of the scene. They are rather different from those found in 'The Lull' which are often definitive: "His tone of voice of voice was to show . . . that he did not care." In Doting we may know that Arthur Middleton speaks "with some astonishment" but we have nevertheless to decide for ourselves why he should be astonished.

Many of the conversations we witness in Doting are fraught with tension and ambiguity. They are also on a limited number of themes: love, sex, marriage, and, of course, 'doting'. Often at the end of conversations characters seem dissatisfied, discontent, their talk inconclusive, their relationships in jeopardy. However Green's brief summaries at the end of scenes of words and actions which we do not observe are strangely at odds with the preceding dialogue. Sometimes tension is evaporated with a flat description of a mundane action: "Soon after this he paid the bill and they left without arranging to meet again." (p. 34). "On which they kissed and left." (p. 66). Sometimes Green indicates that the characters did or said nothing worth recording: "Nothing else of consequence passed that night between them." (p. 102). "Shortly afterwards they left, went their separate ways, without anything else of significance having passed." (p. 226). We also discover from the narrator that we see only a selection of their talk; they do discuss other subjects: "And they went on to discuss underclothes, with spirit." (p. 132). "At which the two girls fell into a fit of giggling. When they'd got over it, they talked of other things, then left." (p. 183). "She then changed the conversation adroitly and they talked of musical comedy until the time came for her to go back,

late, to work." (p. 144). "Following which, they spoke of the weather for a few sentences, and she rang off." (p. 172).

Scenes involving Arthur and Diana reveal a particularly marked disparity between the conversation we read and what the narrator says happened afterwards. For example a heated exchange between them on the subject of Diana's discovery of Annabel in the bedroom without her skirt on is apparently brought to a harmonious conclusion by talking about Peter: ". . . they animatedly discussed Peter's splendid progress out of his concussion." (p. 85). Later Diana is, for a variety of reasons, implicit and explicit, trying to persuade Arthur to warn Annabel off Charles. Arthur finally agrees very reluctantly to tell Annabel Diana's fabrication that Charles has received psychiatric treatment for his "peculiar habit" of pursuing only women older than himself, in an attempt to frighten her off. Although agreement of sorts is reached there is still considerable tension between them but the narrator describes the end of the scene like this:

After which his wife changed the subject. She spoke at length, and with fervour, of Peter, and, afterwards, of their friends, in both of which topics Arthur Middleton joined wholeheartedly.

When they came home, it was plain the two of them had had, on the whole, a very pleasant evening. (p. 153)

These conclusions can be taken at face value, indicating that what holds Diana and Arthur together - their friends, their son, their marriage - is stronger than what pulls them apart - Annabel, Charles. However they could also be read as evasions of difficulty and unpleasantness, in which Peter, their son, what they have in common, is used as a topic of conversation which will restore harmony temporarily. Are they thus simply covering over the cracks in their relationship? Finally, the narrator could be misleading us, giving us his own interpretation of activity we do not see. These comments from the narrator are very similar to the 'happy ever after' ending of Loving which elicits the same ambivalent feelings from the reader.

There are many instances of repetition in Doting, of words, sentences and sometimes scenes. A notable example occurs in Arthur's attempted

seduction of Annabel where an echo of detail appears in the scene where Charles succeeds in seducing Claire.

Here they found a deep sofa drawn up to face the fire.

"Arthur" she almost accused him "you've been pulling the furniture about. I don't remember this, here, before."

"I felt it was rather cold tonight. So I moved everything out from that bookcase because I thought we'd be more cosy."

"I see" she said and sat down on it. (p.74)

Upstairs there was a sofa drawn up before the fire. He mixed the girl a drink, out of which she took one sip.

"Oh no, Charles, mine is too strong!"

"Give it to me" he demanded, and watered the thing down.

Then he came to sit beside her, setting his own glass, the contents untasted, on a stool to the right.

"I must kiss you once more" he said.

"Charles" she gently replied, and held her mouth tilted.

Shortly afterwards, when she was half naked, with her eyes closed, Mr Addinsell carried her to bed in the next room.

Two hours later, he ran the girl back in his car to her digs. She still seemed just as wordlessly contented. (pp.213-4)

The scene from which the first passage is taken is very long, covering more than eleven pages, and contains a good deal of talk. Very soon after this point, where Annabel and Arthur sit down together by the fire, Arthur kisses Annabel and knocks the coffee over her, leading to the unfortunate incident which Diana witnesses. The atmosphere is not conducive to romance; Annabel's stern accusation and her (probably icy) "'I see'" lead one to believe that she is contributory to its being "rather cold tonight". In contrast the second scene, with which we are encouraged to compare it by the repetition of the detail about the sofa drawn up to the fire, is short (three pages) and actions replace words; when Claire is taken home, she is described as "wordlessly contented". Charles and Claire actually carry through their lovemaking while Arthur and Annabel talk about it, or round it, then mishandle things when the opportunity arises.

A second instance of repetition offers a comparison between Diana's behaviour with Charles, her friend/would-be lover, and her husband.

"You do more than something to me, Charles" she said, in what seemed to be wonder.

He put his mouth close to her ear.

"Let's go upstairs" he suggested, in a flat voice.

"But, my dear" she objected "you're all on the one floor in this place!"

"Next door" he levelly corrected.

She pecked a kiss at him.

"No, Charles. Two wrongs don't make a right, do they?"

Mr Addinsell relaxed his hold.

"Bother Arthur!" he complained. (p.101)

"Darling" she said next to her husband. "You don't have to work tonight, do you? Let's go up now."

"Go up?" Mr Middleton laughed. "We're all on one floor here, you know."

She turned. She kissed him on the lips and took her time.

"Silly" she said smiling. "Well, all right then! Next door." (pp.117-8)

The second scene comes soon after the first and the parallels, "'Let's go upstairs'"/"'Let's go up now'", "'... you're all on the one floor in this place'"/"'We're all on one floor here, you know'" are too close to miss. However, whereas it is Charles who makes the suggestion that he and Diana go to bed in the first passage, it is Diana herself who takes the initiative in the second. She kisses Arthur on the lips but only 'pecks' a kiss at Charles. While there is laughter and smiling and affectionate banter ("Silly") in the scene between Arthur and Diana, Charles seems dispassionate ("he suggested, in a flat voice", "he levelly corrected") and Diana restrained. The conversation between Charles and Diana seems to confirm the Middletons' relationship, suggesting the strengths of established intimacy.

As might be expected, one of the repeated words in the novel is the title word, 'doting'. It is used primarily by Annabel who introduces it first in a conversation with Arthur: "'Let's talk of doting. Tell me how you first met Diana.'" (p.30). Later, when having lunch with Arthur, she says "'I dote on when you ask me'" (to come out) (p.49) and she mentions the anthology of love poetry, Doting. Here Arthur draws a distinction between doting and loving: "'To my mind love must include adoration of course, but if you just dote on a girl you don't necessarily

go so far as to love her. Loving goes deeper.'" (p.50). Annabel also uses the word to describe her feelings for Campbell, which she equates with love (p.72), Arthur's feelings about Peter and about Diana (p.104) and her feelings towards Arthur (p.167). The other characters do not refer to doting, with the exception of Arthur who uses it once to Diana:

"If you truly loved the boy!"

"Now, Diana, I promise you I simply won't have this! We are not to enter into a competition as to who dotes on him most!"

"Oh, doting!" the mother cried, in tones of disgust.

"Whatever you care to call it, I don't mind" Mr Middleton exclaimed.

"Can't I love my own son, even?" (pp.221-2)

Both Arthur and Diana reject the concept of doting in favour of loving and, as Annabel uses it, the word expresses shallow, all-purpose emotion. Yet Green used Doting as the title of his novel so should all the 'love' expressed by his characters be defined by this term? The Middletons themselves, though champions of love, both 'dote', Arthur on Annabel and Diana on Peter. At the end of the novel they are reunited; as Claire goes off with Charles, and Annabel stays in the nightclub with Campbell, they go "grumbling" home. In this last scene, which is in many ways an echo of the first, Diana is again described as "wife and mother", Arthur as "father", then "husband". Maybe the 'doting' was just an interlude in their life together, of which we have seen such a small part. However, the last sentence of the novel tells us that "next day they all went on very much the same" so Diana's restoration to her roles as 'wife and mother' and Arthur's acceptance of the responsibility of being 'father and husband' may themselves be only temporary states of affairs before new outbreaks of 'doting'. The only certainty that does come out of the novel is that the Middleton's marriage will stand up to it.

CHAPTER 13

Reading Loving

In one of the articles he wrote for the Daily Telegraph Frank Kermode had this to say to potential readers of Green's novels; he was referring in particular to Loving.

Those who are unwilling to take part in the making of meanings, whose sole wish is to play the part of the passive consumer, had better watch the television serials instead.

It may be, and usually is, the case that Green tells a story anybody can take in without strenuous effort; the imagination is called upon to exercise itself by the presence of those gorgeous and - from the point of view of those who like their stories very simple - irrelevant figurations, great washes of verbal colour, with which the stories coexist.¹

In this final chapter I should like to bring together many of the points I have made up to now in a reading of Loving, with the aim of showing how the reader, or at least a reader, participates in the "making of meanings".

Loving is an ambivalent but coherent and surprisingly consistent novel, perhaps the supreme manifestation of Green's vision of the world and his methods of inviting the reader to share it. It is a difficult novel to grasp because although conclusive interpretation is impossible, internal verbal relationships are such that everything interconnects in echoes, contradictions, oblique references, and the reader is stunned, bewildered, almost blinded, by the dazzle of significance which he confronts. In Green's terms it is a triumph, drawing out the kind of emotional, associative, imaginative response he thought prose should inspire. Yet the reader has to look carefully if he is to experience Loving to the full; lapses of concentration and skimming of pages would leave him with the impression that all he has read is a trivial account of nothing in particular.

Loving consists of minor incidents - the loss of a ring, a game of blind man's buff, the discovery of a woman in bed with her lover, a Nanny telling a fairy story to some children, a butler falling in love with an underhousemaid - interspersed with inconsequential chat, grumbles, jokes, disputes, all performed by a group of unexceptional people with varying amounts of feeling and intuition but scarcely a thought to share between them. Apart

from Edith, the dazzling underhousemaid, they are not particularly young or beautiful; neither are they clever or charming. They are the epitome of ordinariness. Considered so starkly, the novel may seem to have little to offer.

On a first reading the novel can be, and has been, seen as a comedy of manners, a humorous view of class conflict between the owner of the castle, Mrs Tennant, and the servants, headed by Raunce, the footman turned butler. Rayner Heppenstall suggested that the novel could almost be called Fiddling² and indeed many of the characters, but particularly Raunce and the cook, Mrs Welch, are devoted to the appropriation of their employers' goods and money. Clashes between servants and masters are frequent, culminating in the disappearance of Mrs Tennant's sapphire ring and the confusion which ensues. Distrust prevails as the characters all try to maintain their spheres of influence and locate blame elsewhere.

Several critics and reviewers see the passing of the great house tradition and the disintegration of the old order as themes of Loving. The old order is represented by Eldon, the butler who is dying at the beginning of the novel, and the new by the unreliable and shifty Raunce who takes over Eldon's position. This changeover leads to the breakdown of protocol, loss of rapport between the classes, loss of control, which becomes more and more apparent when the mistresses leave, one could say irresponsibly, for England. Miss Burch, the chief housemaid, and Miss Swift, nurse to the Tennant children and formerly to Violet, take to their beds, Miss Burch bemoaning the changing times and the demise of the "respectable" house, while Edith and Raunce establish themselves in the Red Library and the Cockney evacuee, Albert, enslaves Miss Moira and Miss Evelyn, the little Tennant girls.

Chaos threatens from outside too. At first implicit, it soon becomes explicit as fears of invasion by either the Nazis or the I.R.A. cause

acute anxiety in the castle, humorously displayed in the servants' conviction that the man from the Irish Regina Assurance company is in fact an I.R.A. man in subtle disguise. At the end of the novel Edith and Raunce flout the most sacred duty of servant to employer in running off together to England without giving notice, leaving Mrs Tennant, aided by two sick servants, a drunken cook and just one housemaid, totally confused as to what had happened in her absence and with the castle crumbling around her.

Loving also has elements of fairy tale (noticed by American critics especially), with Edith as sleeping princess aroused from her slumber to capture her prince, and of Shakespearean comedy. The novel is enclosed in a fairy-tale frame, beginning "Once upon a day" and ending "they lived happily ever after". It portrays a group of people isolated and distanced from everyday reality - it is wartime and they are a British family with British servants in an Irish castle which they desperately defend from intrusion by the Irish whom they do not understand or wish to know. The novel is also filled with intrigue and misunderstanding and it concludes in apparent resolution with marriage and lost things found.

All that I have said so far about Loving is justifiable and can be useful but the real fascination of the novel, and I think Green's concern, lies elsewhere. What makes the book absorbing, and brings it to life, is the way in which characters, events, conversations are presented. A constantly shifting eye glances on the perceptions and talk taking place in the castle; strange, sometimes misleading images and symbols permeate the reader's mind; echoes in words, phrases, actions almost click into place but for the most part tantalize until a second reading begins to fit them together.

The people who inhabit Loving are inconsistent. We are offered a series of reactions and perceptions which do not add up to a 'personality'. As Giorgio Melchiori says in relation to Loving, "what matters is the

individual reaction to the atmosphere which keeps changing through the subtle variations of psychological moments".³ Paradoxically, although Green never tells us, only gives the occasional hint or suggestion, what is going on inside characters' heads, what he portrays in Loving is an individual's view of the world, or rather the views, sometimes conflicting, sometimes in harmony, of a number of individuals. Barbara Davidson describes this as "the projection of an inner world into the fact world of everyday".⁴ Reality is only what eyes see and that is the key to the novel, if there is one. Seeing is everything in this novel preoccupied with eyes, with watching, looking, blindness and sight. What characters, and the narrator, see may not be the 'truth' but it is more reliable as a means of understanding than talking which rarely reaches the level of real communication, maybe because it is a more intellectual, thinking activity than seeing which is instinctive, intuitive and thus dear to Green's nature.

As there is so much which we do not know in Loving, I want to start by detailing what we do know. First, what do we find out about the characters? Physical description is limited mainly to eyes, sometimes hair. We know that Edith has huge, dark, beautiful eyes, Paddy's are light blue, Raunce's odd, one light, one dark. It is a remark about eyes which first identifies the interest of Edith and Raunce in each other. Raunce: "He seemed to appraise the dark eyes she sported which were warm and yet caught the light like plums dipped in cold water." (p.13). Edith: "'And the strange thing is I didn't ever properly take it in that they was a different colour till the other day. Not after two years and five months here, not till just the other day.'" (p.39). Mrs Tennant's blue-washed white hair is commented on as is Kate's blonde thatch, Edith's "mass of dark hair" and Paddy's uncontrollable birds' nest which Kate attempts to comb. We learn that Violet has golden hair and "blue, blue eyes that matched the curtains", that Agatha Burch wears a wig over her "shiny skull".

In addition remarks are made on the general appearance of some of the characters. Edith's beauty is lovingly evoked: Miss Burch is described as being on her bad days "blotchy as a shrimp before boiling".

The reader also becomes aware of certain mannerisms or compulsive actions which belong to individuals. Edith and Kate giggle, screech and shriek, Edith blushes, Raunce polishes silver, carefully closes doors, picks off dead flower heads, Mrs Tennant searches for dust: "She walked away and tried the mantelpiece with her finger which she then examined as though it was going to smell." (p.20, repeated p.204); Mrs Welch clings to her pots and pans and peeps through holes in walls; Paddy guards his peacocks. Similarly each has a distinctive speech style so that we recognize them as separate voices. They have speech tags: Edith's "Land's sake", Nanny's "Oh dear", Raunce's "Lucky Charley", "Busy Charley". From Paddy we gather nothing at all since his speech is so inarticulate that Kate alone can understand and translate for the others.

In general the reader must find out about the characters from what they say and do, and from what others say of them. Green has created fictional characters whom we perceive almost as we would real people. In life impressions of others are gathered from speech and action but also from appearance, gestures, mannerisms. The same goes for Loving. Information we are given is similar to what we might learn from seeing real people but this information serves another purpose too. What characters habitually do and how they look, or at least those features Green chooses to describe, are very closely linked to themes and motifs in the novel; it is not for nothing that the narrator tells us the colour of Edith's eyes.

Event in Loving is, as I have said, apparently insignificant, but in fact all the memorable incidents - Edith and Kate watching Paddy in his lamproom, the blind man's buff, Nanny's storytelling by the dovecote, Edith's discovery of the affair between Violet and Captain Davenport, the

loss of the ring, the picnic - have to do with two things: loving and perception. As the title indicates, the novel is about loving, not just sexual love but maternal, filial, sisterly love, marriage, adultery and even a hint of lesbianism between Edith and Kate. Every character, with the exception perhaps of Mrs Tennant whose concern is more for things than people and Mrs Welch's Albert who arouses affection in the little Tennant girls but does not reciprocate, experiences love relationships. It is Edith who has the greatest capacity for giving love - to Raunce, to Kate, to the little girls, to Miss Burch even - but Kate loves Paddy and Edith, Miss Burch 'her girls' and the old butler, Miss Swift Violet and Violet's children, Violet Captain Davenport, Miss Welch her Albert, Raunce's Albert Edith, Raunce Edith and his mother, Paddy his peacocks, if his passionate devotion to the birds may be counted. Only Edith embraces all kinds of loving and it is that, among other things, which makes her the true heroine of the novel.

Just as important as loving is perception. It would be hard to ignore the presence of watchers, spies, in Loving. From Mrs Welch peering grimly through a hole in the wall of her larder, to see what Kate and Edith, Albert or her kitchen girls are up to, to Kate and Edith watching Paddy asleep, to Raunce 'eying' Edith, everyone is watching and sometimes watching people themselves watching. Seeing is often equated in Loving with knowledge while conversation is usually confused, oblique, tangential. Between certain characters there appears to be no verbal communication at all because each is so absorbed in his or her own thoughts as to be unable to receive anyone else's. They fail to respond to cues and go on blindly, regardless of what is being said to them. Often words are given a meaning quite different from that intended by the speaker. So Violet, obsessed with guilt and worry over her affair with the Captain, interprets almost everything as a reference to that. Even her conversation with her lover is unsatisfactory.

". . . what's the matter with that footman you've got here? He asked me how the salmon trout were runnin'. I thought everyone in Old Ireland knew it was close season."

"Dermot you don't mean he suspects anything?"

"Suspect anything? My dear girl I only mentioned it to change the conversation. Good Lord I only meant he seemed a funny sort."

"And why d'you say you wanted to change the conversation?" she asked.

"Now you're all upset."

"You don't understand," she wailed.

"All I meant was I'd rather have him than Eldon," the Captain said with bitterness. But it seemed that she was not thinking of the servants. (p.41)

Here it is only the readers who understand what is going on and even we are not given confidence in our interpretation by the narrator's "it seemed". However, we know the necessary background to the conversation. Raunce has asked the Captain about salmon trout fishing because he is using information about guests to the castle from Eldon's notebook; he hopes in this way to get a good tip. Violet sees Raunce's inappropriate comment as a sexual innuendo, being acutely sensitive to such remarks. The reader is inclined to think the same, for hunting and fishing are certainly given a sexual significance on many occasions. Raunce, seeing Albert is attracted to Edith, warns him off: "'You lay off Edith, understand. You can muck about with Kate all you please but Edith's close season, get me?'" (p.70). In addition several references to 'game' appear in close proximity. During a discussion about what might happen to the women if Ireland were invaded, Raunce announces soberly that rather than allow them to be raped by the Naxis, he has a cartridge for each of them. Miss Burch's rather incongruous reply again establishes a link between sex and hunting: "'You want to go delicate you know, . . . you've no game licence.'" (p.97) Later in the same conversation Kate states her intention to give in her notice (at this time Mrs Tennant and Violet are in England):

"How would you do that?" Edith enquired, "when they aren't here?"

"Why I'd send it by post or I'd put it on a post card if I was in the mood," the girl answered and there was a pause. "I'm game if you are Edie," Kate added, giving Edith a look that seemed highly inquisitive. (p.99)

Edith has not even mentioned giving in her notice and the pause in Kate's speech seems to indicate that there is a change of subject, that it is romantic adventure to which she is referring.

To return to the conversation between Violet and the Captain, nothing seems to go right. Violet is upset that Dermot wanted to change the subject of their conversation, during which she had been insistently declaring that she could not continue the affair. She is distressed that he is talking about servants and not about him and her. Dermot's last comment shows that Violet is not foremost in his thoughts. The bitterness is due not to anything she has said but to the fact that Eldon was blackmailing him in a minor way; but Charley has not yet found out the grounds for blackmail and is thus more acceptable to Dermot.

Conversation between Miss Burch and Miss Swift always results in confusion. On one occasion Miss Burch 'accidentally' lets out the news that Edith has found Violet in bed with Dermot. She maintains that this came out by chance but it is obvious from previous comments that she has been maliciously hoping to find an opportunity to tell, believing no doubt that the knowledge of her "little girl's" adultery will be disturbing for Miss Swift. However Miss Swift refuses to acknowledge her statement, except in a "wild look of alarm" which proves she has heard, and keeps up a forceful monologue about what a sweet child Violet was, paying no further attention to what Miss Burch is saying.

Some complicated cross-talk occurs in a scene near the beginning of the novel.

"Oh forget it," Charley said to Edith, probably meaning this remark for Albert. He lowered his eyes and an odd sort of bewilderment showed in his face. But Miss Burch must have understood that he was answering her for she objected, . . . (p.65)

A character looks at a second person while addressing a remark to a third and is answered by a fourth. Three 'conversations' have been going on in this scene, verbal and non-verbal. Miss Burch has been talking about the

lost ring and saying (yet again - it is her obsession) that someone will "have to make them open up the drains for us". Raunce and Albert have been discussing the gardening glove which Edith 'borrowed' to hide her peacocks' eggs in and which Albert is supposed to return to Mrs Tennant. However it is the non-verbal communication which takes on the greatest significance. At the mention of the glove Edith blushes, revealing her feelings of guilt on account of the eggs she stole and the waterglass she took to preserve them in, and Raunce, making the necessary connections, realises that it is Edith who had the waterglass Mrs Welch is making such a fuss about, not Albert whom he had suspected. Before the remarks just quoted he says, "to Albert perhaps", "'I do believe I done you a real injustice'" but he is looking at Edith and it is with her he is concerned. Raunce's seeing Edith blush brings about discovery; the talk achieves little.

Characters in Loving often feel the need to 'see' to assist conversation. When Raunce goes to see Mrs Tennant to give in his notice (his ploy to be taken on as butler), Green describes the scene with a heavy concentration on positions and range of vision.

In the morning room two days later Raunce stood before Mrs Tennant and showed part of his back to Violet her daughter-in-law.

"Might I speak to you for a moment Madam?"

"Yes Arthur what is it?"

"I'm sure I would not want to cause any inconvenience but I desire to give in my notice."

She could not see Violet because he was in the way. So she glared at the last button but one of his waistcoat, on a level with her daughter-in-law's head behind him. (p.10)

Mrs Tennant wants to be able to see Violet's expression for support and advice on how to deal with Raunce but Raunce, probably on purpose, has interposed himself between the two women causing Mrs Tennant furiously to try to look through him.

When Raunce declares his love for Edith, it is her physical response, which he notices, that encourages him to continue.

"Look dear I could fall for you in a big way," he said and he saw her back stiffen as though she had begun to hear with intense attention. She said no word.

"I could," he went on. "For the matter of that I have." (p.110)

Green emphasizes that one can often tell more from expression than tone of voice. The conversation is between Mrs Welch and her Albert.

"What's a I.R.A. man auntie?" he enquired.

"Thieves and murderers," she said half under her breath as though her thoughts were elsewhere.

"Blimey," he said. If she had looked she would have seen he mocked. (pp.167-8)
(my emphasis)

Edith 'sees' a great deal and of course her triumphal vision is that of Violet and the Captain in bed, an experience which brings her sexual knowledge. She is tremendously excited by her discovery which she immediately communicates to Kate and then Raunce; in telling Raunce she shows for the first time awareness of her sexuality.

With for her an altogether extraordinary animation she fairly danced up. He stood as though embarrassed, fumbling his nose, squinting. . . . She began once more to force her body on his notice, getting right up to him then away again, as though pretending to dance. Then she turned herself completely round in front of his very eyes. He seemed ill at ease. (p.79)

Raunce's unease at Edith's sexual initiative persists. Edith delights him but she also disturbs him.

Raunce's Albert, on the other hand, sees little. Raunce cannot believe that Albert never noticed where Eldon kept the precious notebooks which would be so useful to the new butler.

"You mean to stand and tell me you've never so much as set eyes on 'em, not even to tell where they was kept."

"What for Mr Raunce?"

"Well you can't help seeing when a thing's before your nose, though I'm getting so's I could believe any mortal idiotic stroke of yours, so help me." (p.9)

Later at the picnic with Kate and Edith, Kate teases Albert about Edith:

"We wasn't," Albert said sharp, twisting his head towards her.
His eyes did not seem to see. (p.136)
(my emphasis)

Blindness is often associated with love in the novel and this is appropriate

for the lovelorn Albert. Blindness and love are brought together most markedly in the blind man's buff scene where the red silk scarf covering participants' eyes is decorated with 'I love yous' all over in black letters. Here Albert can hold Edith in his arms and kiss her for the first and only time.

Blindness, looking and not looking feature strongly when Raunce proposes to Edith. When he asks her to marry him, Edith looks away into the fire.

Her eyes left his face and with what seemed a quadrupling in depth came following his to rest on those rectangles of warmth alive like blood. From this peat light her great eyes became invested with rose incandescence that was soft and soft and soft. (p.142)

At this emotionally charged moment he cannot look at Edith, "appearing to strain so as not to look at her". He is not confident that Edith will accept him so tries to be offhand by maintaining that he is not interested in "this love nonsense". Edith gives a non-committal verbal reply, "I haven't said yes have I?" but the question in her voice must be answered by the affirmative in the action which accompanies the words, a response without ambiguity.

. . . she . . . looked straight at him, her heart opening about her lips. Seated as she was back to the light he could see only a blinding space for her head framed in dark hair and inhabited by those great eyes on her, fathoms deep.

'Blinded' by the sight of the woman he loves, Raunce is almost overcome, dazed and confused. His response to Edith's question is automatic and not given the usual Raunce jaunty expression: "'No that's right,' he murmured obviously lost." Transported by this vision of dazzling, mysterious beauty, Raunce returns to normal only when Edith breaks the spell by taking her eyes from him. Their conversation continues:

"I'll need to think over it," she gently said. Folding hands she returned her gaze into the peat fire.

"She's a good woman," Raunce began again. "She worked hard to raise us when dad died. There were six in our family. She had a struggle."

Blindness and also deafness are shown very humourously in the scene at

the dovecote where Nanny, partly deaf and with eyes closed, tells her innocent fairy tale about the two little doves to Moira, Evelyn and Mrs Welch's Albert, and later Kate and Edith too, overlooked, inevitably, by Raunce "back from the round he had made of the peacocks' corn bins". The children hear little of the story, which does not interest them, and Nanny does not hear the children intent on watching and commenting on the mass of doves "quarrelling, murdering and making love again". Little Albert typically sees all the more gruesome activities of the doves. "'It was a baby one,' Albert said, 'and nude. That big bastard pushed it.'" Evelyn and Moira keep missing the more spectacular sights but are very eager to see: "'I didn't see,' Evelyn cried. 'I didn't really. What came about?'" (pp.54-5). Perhaps the fairy tale within a fairy tale is a sardonic comment by Green on Loving to tell us that alongside the enchantment of love and beauty exists death and sickness, malice and threat.

More important than doves in Loving are the peacocks which are never far away. They are either seen or heard in almost every scene and when they are not there we are reminded of them by Edith and Kate who echo the sounds of the birds; they do not cry or exclaim, they always "shriek" or "screech" like peacocks. Peacocks are perhaps the dominant symbol of Loving and neatly bring together the ideas of loving and watching. The peacock is an emblem of Juno, both supporter of marriage and adulteress, who gave it a hundred spying eyes in its tail so that it could keep watch for her jealous husband who might come along to interrupt one of her extra-marital affairs. Doves too are connected with love in that they are Venus's birds. Green uses the associations peacocks and doves have with love to reinforce his portrayal of the ambivalence of loving.

I have said that the characters spend much of their time watching, and watching them watching is the narrator, who, uncertain and unpredictable, alights on what takes his interest, catches his eye, drifts past

his ear. He makes the odd comment, offers his own perceptions and restricted interpretations. He only ever suggests what is behind remarks or expressions: "she added as though confidentially"; "Miss Burch seemed pleased"; "She was probably unsure of herself and everything"; "she must have understood". Sometimes he takes off on his own, commenting on things the characters are unaware of, describing things as he, not the characters, perceives them. Early in the novel, when Edith and Kate are still close and spend much time giggling about men, Kate teasingly asks Edith what she would have done if Bert had been in their room when they had come in. The narrator points to their sexual innocence by informing the reader what they do not see, the peacocks.

Though they could not see them the peacocks below were beginning to parade.

"And if it had've been Charley Edie?"

Edith gave a screech then slapped a hand over her mouth. A peacock screamed beneath but they were so used to this they paid no notice. (p.38)

They do not see or hear the peacocks, with their connotations of sexual experience, but they do unconsciously mimic the peacocks' actions. They too are "beginning to parade", they too screech and scream; they are ready for sexual experience and this is borne out by events in the remainder of the novel.

The elaborate similes used to describe Paddy lying asleep and observed by Kate and Edith are an example of the narrator getting carried away by his own perceptions. Paddy lies snoring and wreathed with cobwebs.

Caught in the reflection of spring sunlight this cobweb looked to be made of gold as did those others which by working long minutes spiders had drawn from spar to spar of the fern bedding on which his head rested. It might have been almost that O'Connor's dreams were held by hairs of gold binding his head beneath a vaulted roof on which the floor of cobbles reflected an old king's molten treasure from the bog.

"He won't wake now, only for tea," Kate said. "Because after he's had his he feeds the birds."

"Oh Kate isn't he a sight and all." (pp.51-2)

This is the narrator's view, what Kate and Edith might have seen, and as the perception of an author who has also a role as involved and partially ignorant participant, it embodies his dominating thoughts. The similes do not really say much about Paddy - it is hard to see Paddy as a king although it cannot be insignificant that the girls set about making him a crown - but they correspond with the patterns of imagery which go throughout the book. Here the emphasis on gold takes up many other references to gold, associated mainly with the Tennants. The wealthy but arid Tennants live in a sham Gothic extravaganza of gilt (and, for Violet, guilt). In the "dairy room" Mrs Tennant sits in a hammock of gold; golden-haired Violet sleeps in a bed which is an imitation boat in black and gold and her bedroom table is black marble supported by gold dolphins. Naked gold statues appear everywhere.

The reference to king's treasure is also a connection with the Tennants, specifically Violet. In Eldon's notebook, under 'Captain Davenport', Raunce reads "Digs after the old kings in his bog". This is made explicitly sexual later when Raunce asks at lunch: "'That Captain Davenport? Now where would I have heard he seeks after treasure in a bog?'" (p.32). When he receives no answer he continues innocently with a crudely sexual innuendo: "'Do they dig for it,' he went on, 'or pry long sticks into the ground or what?' he mused aloud." Raunce's remarks cause Edith to blush furiously, to look "as though she was going to choke" (choking is another characteristic of Kate and Edith), the reason being that when Violet last returned from 'excavating' at Clancarty with the Captain, she returned without her drawers. The link between king's treasure and the adultery is visually demonstrated by the pointer attached to Mrs Tennant's weather-vane which swings over a map of the area but has stuck in a position over Clancarty, represented by "two nude figures male and female recumbent in gold crowns". This pointer is hysterically wrenched off by Violet when she sees Raunce looking at it. A connection is also made between the old

king and the ring, a potent romantic and sexual symbol, which Kate thinks is "worth more than an old king's ransom" (p.137).

Of course gold and treasure do not relate directly to Kate and Edith, hardly at all to Paddy, but in Loving everything affects everybody. Symbols may not be translated into a clear message or assigned exclusively to one group of characters. There is a great deal of interconnection in the novel, or merging of identity, and this is another important aspect of Loving: the tension between union with others and the maintenance of separate identity.

The theme of establishing identity is introduced right at the start of the book. The butler is dying and Raunce determines to take on his role. He wins over Mrs Tennant easily through blackmail (already he is adopting the tactics of Eldon); she could not replace him if he were to give notice, for good servants, indeed any servants, are hard to come by. However his real test comes when he has to face his fellow servants. His takeover is symbolized at dinnertime when he sits in Eldon's chair at the head of the table: "'This time I'll take his old chair. I must.'" (p.14). He succeeds with the others and from that moment on dedicates himself to making the best possible use of his new power.

Kate and Edith, the two underhousemaids, are largely undifferentiated at first, although we do gather that Edith is exceptionally lovely while Kate is not, and they are often assigned 'incorrect' love roles. When Edith steals the peacocks' eggs to put on her face to enhance her 'charms' (the element of magic spells is certainly present), Kate says, "'. . . who's it for? . . . Patrick?'" Edith is associated with Paddy, who is to fall to Kate, the one who can comprehend him, and Kate is linked with Raunce. Raunce is aware of Edith but plays around with Kate too at first, sometimes in preference to Edith.

He looked in the next open door. Against deep blue tiles Kate with her doll's face and tow hair was rearranging a scarlet bathrobe on the chromium towel horse. Edith had followed. But where he went in she stayed by the door, through which she watched as though reluctant.

He slipped up behind Kate, put his palms over her eyes.

"Guess baby," he said, still whispering.

She gave a great screech beneath her breath, so discreetly she hardly made a sound. (p.45)

When Raunce tells Miss Burch he wants one of her girls to bring him in his morning tea now he is butler, Miss Burch is certain of his favourite: "'And I don't doubt she must be Kate.'" (p.19). However Kate and Edith gradually grow apart to become quite separate and the cause is the love that arises between Raunce and Edith. Kate is upset that Edith has left her - "'Why don't we have the talks we used to Edie?'" - but Edith is ready with an explanation: "'Well things is different now Kate.'" Kate admires and seeks to imitate the new Edith and when Edith becomes engaged to Raunce, Kate turns to Paddy. Raunce cannot understand how Kate can bear to be involved with "that ape out of a Zoo" but the shrewd Edith understands: "'She was lonely . . . an' she watched us.'" (p.226).

The love affair of Edith and Raunce alters both of them, though the most positive changes occur in Edith. Raunce becomes ill, as do several characters in the novel. The glands in his neck swell up and he has trouble with his stomach; the stronger his love for Edith is, the worse he feels: "'I love you so much my stomach's all upset an' there you are.'" (p.215). Love seems to be associated with illness from the start, for men at least. As Eldon lies dying, it is the name of a woman he loved which is on his lips. While men in love sicken, women thrive and grow, only weakening when without love as is shown by Miss Burch and Miss Swift.

Raunce also undergoes a change in manner. At first he is confident, cheeky, artful, sometimes pompous; however this leaves him to a greater and greater degree as he becomes entangled with Edith. His old mannerisms

return intermittently but are not what they used to be: "'Busy Charley that's me,' he wound up with what seemed an empty return to his old manner" (p.63); "'You leave all the brain work to your old man. Lucky Charley they call him,' he said in a threadbare return to his usual manner." (p.224). Edith takes the edge of his cheekiness and brightness and seems sometimes to drain him of energy; her kisses "suck" at him as if she were a vampire and he feels drained of blood. The most notable indication of Edith's influence on Charley, however, is near the end of the novel. As I have mentioned previously, Edith is prone to blushing, either in embarrassment or anger, and Raunce frequently makes a joke of it, but there comes a time when Raunce himself blushes, an unprecedented action. He and Edith have been discussing running away and Edith accuses him of carrying her off. "'It's you cartin' me off body and soul more likely,' he answered. He fastened on to her mouth. His face was very white and green and grey." (p.227) Edith agrees to go with him to England and kisses him "wildly", promising not to tell anyone they are going.

At this he began to flush. The colour spread until his face had become an alarming ugly purple.

"Why I do declare you're blushin'," she cried delightedly. "You who never have." (p.228)

He has taken on one of Edith's characteristics.

But it is Edith who changes most noticeably. Others see the difference in her: "'How she has come on. You'd never know it was the same girlie.'" (p.117); "'Eddie,' Kate said in an admiring voice, 'you've changed.'" (p.138). Edith's sexuality, expressed at first only in hysterical talks with Kate about 'what men do', becomes open with Charley. "When he kissed her she kissed him back with such passion, all of her hard as a board, that he flopped back flabbergasted, having caught a glimpse of what was in her waiting for him." (p.166) She becomes more self-assured, more maternal, more understanding. Yet, as she is developing through love into an

individual, she is also taking on aspects of Charley's personality, particularly his way of speaking. On a number of occasions she uses expressions copied from Charley: "'Too true I have,' Edith answered, 'but there you are you see. Circumstances alter cases.'" (p.138); "'It's a hard bloody world.'" (p.194). The glib confidence of the first comment and the 'masculine' nature of the second recall Raunce not Edith. The similarity of Edith's and Raunce's speech becomes more marked as the novel progresses and at one point the narrator actually tells us: "She was beginning to speak like him." (p.219).

Edith's new-found sexuality is seen as a threat by some. Mrs Welch warns her Albert, whom she dotes on, constantly against having anything to do with Edith. Once Edith gives Albert a toffee.

"You see what I'm goin' to do with this," she went on, and unwrapped the sweet. Then she spat on it and threw the toffee into a can of ashes by the range. "Now listen," she continued, "if ever I catch you taking what she offers I'll tan the 'ide right off you d'you h'understand?" (p.92)

Mrs Welch's reaction is irrational and excessive and as the novel is filled with sexual innuendo it is not too much to see as sexual what Edith has to 'offer'. Edith is the most open and giving character in the novel and what she has to give is love.

So Raunce and Edith come together in love and their identities to some extent merge. However this 'union' is far from complete. On almost every occasion when they are alone together their solitude is shattered. On page 110 Raunce has been telling Edith he has fallen for her. She challenges him with a statement which reveals his past character: "'You tell that to them all Charley.'" Raunce prepares to answer her, perhaps to give her the reassurance she is obviously requesting, but is prevented by the appearance of Badger, the greyhound, carrying in its mouth the stinking carcass of the peacock which Albert killed. The romantic conversation is brought to a halt. Later Edith says with great passion to Charley:

"After we're married I'll see to it that you don't have no imagination. I'll make everything you want of me now so much more than you ever dreamed that you'll be quit imaginin' for the rest of your life."

"Oh honey," he said in a sort of cry and kissed her passionately. But a rustling noise interrupted them.

"What's that?" he asked violent. (p.191)

Again it is the peacocks, ever present and ready to break up any intimacy. When near the end of the novel Edith is worried about what they are to do, she bursts into tears and turns to Raunce for support. The narrator says she "merged into him" but the 'merging' is tempered with reality as Raunce's legs begin to ache beneath Edith's weight and "to distract her attention" he points out to her the "peacocks that had been attracted". The greedy birds had gathered near them "on the scrounge for titbits". Edith certainly sees them as intruders: "'It's wicked the way they spy on you.'" Raunce's cryptic reply seems to suggest that they are only following their masters: "'They've been raised in a good school,' he remarked." (p.223). Edith and Raunce show the symbiotic nature of sexual love yet are not quite at one and are constantly pulled down from the heady heights of romantic love.

The need for an identifiable role and for possession extends to other characters too. While Paddy guards his peacocks and refuses even to let them out after Albert's exploit is discovered, Mrs Welch chains up her pots pans and jealously watches her waterglass, her Albert and her kitchen girls whom she does not allow to speak to any of the tradesmen. It is seen as a great advantage to have a piece of personal territory. Miss Burch voices and later repeats in almost the same words her envy of Mrs Welch and Miss Swift: "'You're one of the lucky ones Mrs Welch. You've a place to call your own.'" (p.103). Later she says to Miss Swift: "'Mrs Welch won't let him enter her kitchen. But then you've both of you a place you can call your own.'" (p.121). Mrs Tennant's concern is to keep her things which she suspects the servants of failing to care of properly. It is seen as vital to keep what is yours and allow no trespass.

Yet characters also attempt to come together in harmony. It is very noticeable that characters mimic one another's speech habits. Examples are numerous:

"Oh dear," cried Raunce in the high falsetto he put on whenever he referred to Nanny Swift.

"No'm I ain't," he replied in the manner of Raunce's lad.

"They're very rum them birds." (Kate as Paddy)

"Mercy," Miss Evelyn exclaimed with a trace of Cockney accent. (derived from Albert)

"I feel faint," Kate suggested in Agatha's voice.

The same idea of denying difference is present at the beginning of the novel when we discover that Mrs Tennant calls all footman Arthur after the first whose name really was Arthur. The vocal echoing seems to have several purposes. First it is a kind of identification; this is certainly the case when Kate mimics Paddy, Edith copies Raunce and possibly when the little girls imitate their hero, young Albert. Often however it is a source of humour and serves to ally the servants against others. The best example of this is when the servants all imitate the lisping of the insurance man who, as an object of anxiety, must be deflated. Most of the younger servants are present in this scene: Kate, Edith, Albert, Mary and Jane from the kitchen, plus Charley Raunce. At first Edith and Albert are not amused by the game but finally all but Albert join in the hysterical laughter of a group united against an alien. Albert will not participate in the fun and when at the end of the scene Raunce takes off Miss Burch he is alone in his disapproval.

Then he quoted Miss Burch with solemnity. "And the wicked shall flourish even as a green bay tree," he intoned. Everyone bar Albert seemed to approve. (p.214)

Albert is always the odd one out, the misfit. In love with Edith he receives no encouragement from her and, surprisingly, scarcely any kindness, and finally he returns to England to join up as a gunner, probably going to his death.

Humour nearly always succeeds in restoring harmony. When Edith announces to Kate that she is in love with Raunce, Kate is annoyed and the two friends are estranged. However when Edith rushes into the room they share with some news, everything changes. Edith's breathless account of her discovery of the affair between Violet and the Captain sends both girls into shrieks of laughter and their mutual affection is revived.

Harmony between characters is achieved most successfully in a number of beautiful, magical scenes which stand out in the novel: Paddy asleep in the lamproom, Kate stroking Edith's almost naked body and, perhaps the most memorable, Kate and Edith dancing in each other's arms in the white and gold ballroom. For Kate and Edith the dance is an ecstatic experience in which they are temporally and spatially taken away from everyday concerns. The description Green gives is exchanting; the two girls, tiny though they are in the vastness, fill the room with their sparkling reflections in the great chandeliers.

They were wheeling wheeling in each other's arms heedless at the far end where they had drawn up one of the white blinds. Above from a rather low ceiling five great chandeliers swept one after the other almost to the waxed parquet floor reflecting in their hundred thousand drops the single sparkle of distant day, again and again red velvet panelled walls, and two girls, minute in purple, dancing multiplied to eternity in these trembling pears of glass. (p.62)

However such moments as these are usually rudely shattered. John Russell finds examples of this in other novels - it is Back and Concluding which he discusses - and he sees it as a feature of Green's style. Long, fantastic, "increasingly lurid sentences are checked by six- and eight-word paragraphs that try to get the characters back to their senses."⁵ Russell's comment is relevant here. A fifty-five-word sentence is followed by an abrupt interjection which breaks the spell: "'You're daft,' he called out. They stopped with their arms about each other." Yet there is more to say about this example for the 'he' who insensitively brings the dance to a halt is Raunce; and it is Raunce also who stops the girls in

their giggly, voyeuristic but charming antics with the sleeping Paddy. Looking through the window of the lamproom into the chamber which Paddy has given over to his birds, Edith sees a group of peacocks "driven into view by some disturbance", further described as "danger". Suddenly the peacocks disappear "and in their room stood Charley Raunce". The girls stop dead, "transfixed as if by arrows" and then turn and flee. Raunce constantly has this paralysing, deadening and quite 'unloving' effect on people. The blind man's buff is interrupted in the same way, by Raunce's sudden and unexpected appearance: "Raunce entered upon a scene which this noise and perhaps also his presence had instantly turned to more stone." (p.115). He goes directly to Edith, at that moment blindfolded with the 'I love you' scarf, and she stands before him "blind as any statue".

The "noise" which disturbs the revellers from their game on Raunce's entrance is the sound of the door opening: ". . . a door in the wall opened with a grinding shriek of rusty hinge" (again that 'peacock' word, 'shriek'). In the ballroom scene too the narrator mentions a door. "He paused to look over his shoulder with his hand on a leaping salmon trout in gilt before pressing this lever to go in." Raunce has malicious intent in entering the ballroom ("'The little bitches I'll show 'em'") and there is some sexual implication in the "salmon trout" lever which recalls Violet and the Captain. The pun on "in gilt" is no doubt intended and the idea of guilt, of his doing something he should not be doing, is reinforced by his looking over his shoulder before he goes in. There is a cruel and destructive, almost violative, side to Raunce which comes out most clearly in a scene with Edith where their kissing is described in a way reminiscent of the rape of Leda by Zeus in the form of a swan.

The room had grown immeasurably dark from the storm massed outside. Their two bodies flowed into one as he put his arms about her. The shape they made was crowned with his head, on top of a white sharp curved neck, dominating and cruel over the blur that was her mass of hair through which her lips sucked at him warm and heady. (p.200)

Raunce's intrusion is marked by references to doors. I have already mentioned two examples but doors feature throughout and nearly always in connection with Raunce. The other 'door' characters, both of whom make sure that doors are shut, are Mrs Welch and Mrs Tennant, both very possessive and territorial. On the first two pages of Loving doors are mentioned five times and the opening and shutting of doors is associated with Raunce's thieving; he is going in and out of Eldon's room, a place he should not be, to steal some whisky for himself and Albert. In his capacity as butler, Raunce is always careful to shut doors quietly: "He went out, shutting the mahogany door without a sound." (p.8); "After twenty trained paces he closed a green baize door behind him." (p.8). But he is often found in parts of the castle where he need not or should not be and on these occasions doors are noisy, announcing his presence: "Raunce came out of an unused door in that Castle wall. The rusted hinges creaked." (p.53). The two parts of the castle, the lived-in part and the rooms filled with furniture covered in white sheets, are separated by a "great sombre pair of doors" and when he goes through them, to be drawn by music to where Edith and Kate are dancing, it is emphasized that the other part of the castle is a different world: ". . . he passed once he had opened these into yet another world." It is a world in which he does not belong and this is shown by the noise he cannot avoid making when he closes the doors: "In spite of his training they made a booming sound as he shut them behind him." (p.61).

There are a great many conflicts and oppositions in Loving: light and darkness, blindness and sight, intimacy and alienation, love and hate, mystery and revelation. Most of the love, beauty and magic resides in Edith, who is always the centre of enchanting, harmonious scenes, and also a strange mixture of fascinating mystery (she is often considered 'deep'

and mysterious) and openness, receptiveness. Albert, or the narrator for Albert, sees this, in sexual terms: "As she watched him thus, he might have felt this was how she could wear herself in bed for him, screened but open, open terribly." (p.131). As the vitality, growth and spontaneity, the positives of loving, Edith is the novel's heroine. Raunce embodies negatives - illness, malice, possessiveness, stasis - and is to an extent Loving's villain. However, definitive statements have to be offered tentatively and it is interesting to see the varied impressions readers have of the novel and its characters. Some feel that Edith does not change at all in the course of the novel, some that she changes dramatically. She is seen as both goddess and destroyer. While most find the novel filled with magic and love, Earle Labor finds in it loathsomeness and says "there is scarcely an ounce of genuine love in the whole book".⁶ Green would be pleased by these contradictory responses for it shows that he has achieved his aim that "a novel should be all things to all men" and narrative prose "as diffuse and variously interpretable as life itself".⁷

CONCLUSION

It is difficult and hazardous to try to establish firm links between a writer's life and his work; and I have not sought to provide in this thesis biographical interpretations of Henry Green's novels. Rather I have made a study of two personae - Henry Yorke and Henry Green - with the twin aims of identifying and illustrating Green's methods, and anchoring the novels in the life of a man about whom little is generally known. I have attempted to elucidate connections that exist between Yorke and Green without diminishing the importance of the novels in themselves.

The first part of the thesis is primarily a chronological account of Green's life but I have given emphasis to particular aspects. In the opening chapters especially I have concentrated on features of Green's personality, stressing the ambivalence in his attitudes and responses. Although he could be morbid, melancholy and towards the end of his life was probably clinically depressed, he was at the same time humorous and entertaining, and delighted in idiosyncratic minutiae. Self-conscious, self-effacing, introspective and conventional, he was occasionally given to self-dramatization, eccentric public 'performances' and the adoption, perhaps merely to shock, of bizarre points of view. The latter he could no doubt accomplish with ease since he was not really interested in ideas; his responses were emotional and sensual rather than intellectual. One conclusion that I reached is that Green's apprehension of the world seemed to be characterized by two opposing but co-existing feelings - detachment, finally turning to rejection, and involvement, which showed itself as excited fascination, in his life and his writing. It is this detachment/involvement which I maintain is essential to Green's writing method.

The biographical section deals also with the writing of the novels and their critical reception, and gives a description of Green's radio appearances and theoretical writings. I aimed to discover his standing with reviewers and the general public at different times in his career, paying special attention to the 1950s when he made his only statements of intent with regard to writing, and was temporarily drawn into the literary scene. An interesting point which emerged from my reading of reviews was the consistency with which fellow writers (among them Waugh, Orwell, Greene) expressed admiration for Green's work; this would seem to confirm the theory that Green is above all a writer's writer. However, if Green has not had more than a critical success in England, elsewhere he has achieved popularity; I referred in Chapter 6 to his modest spell of fame in the United States when Loving became a best seller in 1949. I looked at the reactions Green provoked when he went to the States to promote his novel and suggested some reasons for the interest shown by Americans and also, in the 1950s, by the French. Yet it remains hard to explain fully why such wholeheartedly English novels should be appreciated by Americans and Continentals but not by the English reader.

Finally, Part I is a record of the major events of an apparently uneventful life. Charting Henry Yorke's life, difficult in itself for reasons previously stated, is rendered perilous by Green's efforts to make it mysterious. When he wrote about his life, he kept it at a distance, as is seen in his fictionalized autobiography and in the article with which I began Chapter 1, 'For Jenny with Affection'. Green tried to separate his two occupations, businessman and writer, and encouraged the disjunction of Henry Yorke and Henry Green. My intention has been to show that although the relationship between the personae is complex, it is possible to see how each affected the other and to suggest why a man who stated that he found his happiness in writing should spend the greater part of

his life doing a job he neither liked nor was particularly good at.

There are obvious connections between Green's life and work; for example, the subject matter of Living, Blindness, Caught and perhaps Loving has origins in personal experience. I have mentioned Goronvy Rees's contention that many of the characters in Green's fiction are based on people Green knew, though this has not been documented and it is highly unlikely that Green was writing romans à clef. Yet strangely Green did not write about himself, apart from in Blindness (Roe in Caught and young Dupret in Living are perhaps most like Green), and, stranger still, wrote rarely about his own kind. Servants, schoolgirls, wounded soldiers, factory workers - these characters are drawn from observation, listening and imagination. Green transmitted his experiences only in an indirect way in his writing.

Less clear but more important is the relationship between writing and personality. In 'Unloving' Green asserted that novels tell the reader a great deal about their writers and are in fact much more revealing and truthful than conversation with the writer himself.

. . . experience is certainly what reading is. Not least in the personality of the man or woman who has written the book you are reading, as for the characters they present. To one reader at least - to speak for myself - unless one or other of the characters runs away with the book, then it is the mind and heart of the writer that matters, and instructs. . . .

The way the author expresses his cast, the way he or she puts it all together in say 70,000 words, the construction, the edifice give one an idea of him or her which could not be obtained in a fortnight's tête à tête. People are such liars.

So do Green's novels show the "mind and heart" of Henry Yorke? To some extent they do. They reinforce the view of his personality gained from a glimpse of his life. I have written about the way his mode of perception is in evidence in the novels and about his interest in the process of communication, verbal and non-verbal, particularly the potential multiplicity of individual interpretations. Green's reader also

sees the moral neutrality which allowed Henry Yorke to focus on what interested or pleased him in people and events without passing judgment. Although he certainly had a body of views, some of them quirky and at times possibly affected, these were not enforced in relation to people he liked, and that stance prevails in his writing too; he enjoys the characters he creates and indulges them by not moralizing about their not always moral behaviour. Ever present is Henry Yorke's sense of humour, a rather gentle humour whereby the reader is encouraged to laugh with compassion, and jokes are not at the characters' expense. While Evelyn Waugh, for instance, often displays contempt through humour, Green accepts human frailty, and even his more unattractive characters are accorded sympathy in his treatment of them. An enamoured detachment is the hallmark of Green's vision, in his life and his work.

Green has never been well known and one explanation for this must be found in his rejection of the trappings of the literary life. I have referred to the paucity of his critical contribution and implied that he would not have wished to make his living through writing of that kind. Instead he became a businessman, for thirty years working at Pontifex as his father's assistant and later as Managing Director. His career at Pontifex brought him valuable assets: money, status, a conventional role. I think paternal pressure also must have been a strong determinant in Green's choice of occupation; I wrote in Part I of the need Green had for his father's approval. A further reason, however, may be that writing was for Green a private activity which he was not over-anxious to discuss and was only for a limited period in the early 1950s eager to publicize. His view of the business of writing is analogous to his narrative method: the attitudes of Henry Yorke to his existence as part-time novelist and Henry Green, as narrator of fictions, share an intensity that is given veiled expression. Thus in Green's novels a narrator who has renounced omniscience.

and whose degree of involvement with the action fluctuates strangely, reveals his presence primarily through the workings of his highly individual prose. His underplaying of the narrator's role is fundamental to his general aims: "The writer will keep any direct statement from himself out of the narrative because anything of the kind has an inhibiting effect on the magic which has to be created between writer and reader." The author gives the reader the illusion of superiority; it is as if he is himself but a partial knower. This uncertainty in the narrator's position is one of the aspects of Green's method I have tried to illuminate throughout Part II.

Any study of Green must acknowledge that he is a highly idiosyncratic writer. While helpful comparisons with other writers can be made, it is extremely difficult to 'place' him satisfactorily. Some critics see him as part of the 'female' tradition of Jane Austen, allying him with Elizabeth Bowen, or Nancy Mitford: others have found links with Dickens, Lawrence, Joyce, Virginia Woolf. It might seem reasonable, given the social connection, to relate Green's work to that of Waugh and Powell. Indeed there are resemblances in the early novels. Waugh's Vile Bodies (1930) and Powell's Afternoon Men (1931) are similar to, say, Party Going in their everyday style of conversation, their limited plots, the social scenes they portray. However, both Waugh and Powell developed in a quite different direction from Green, and there is little useful comparison to be made between Powell's A Dance to the Music of Time or Waugh's Sword of Honour trilogy and Green's novels. Ivy Compton-Burnett too might seem to have a close affinity with Green in that both writers use dialogue to an unprecedented extent but, as I have shown, the style and function of their dialogue are not the same.

In my thesis I have used the work of other writers to highlight Green's methods but I have not looked for influences. Although Henry

Yorke had the novels of Henry James on his bookshelves and was undoubtedly impressed by his writing, it would be misleading to see James as directly influential on Green's mode of writing. So comparisons can be made, but often they are quite surprising ones, which may indicate Green's freedom from kinship with any traditional style. For a novelist immersed in fiction, Green evolved a remarkably individual style, which owed less to literary traditions than to his personality, circumstances, perception of the world, sensuous response to people and things.

If Green is not part of an established tradition, it could be that he will initiate one, that other novelists will take up his notions of, for instance, the dialogue novel. So far it seems that this is not the case. Kingsley Amis told me that he, and to a greater extent Philip Larkin, had a "terrific craze" on Green in the late 1940s; however, he is not aware of any influence on his own writing. Certainly Ending Up is like some of Green's novels, and not only in the gerundive title; but perhaps Waugh is a more likely source for the humour and anti-naturalistic conclusion of Amis's novel.

I have said that Green's most appreciative readers and critics are American (of the four critical works on Green, three were written by Americans, one by an Australian); his followers are American too. John Ashbery and John Updike have both expressed great admiration for Green's writing. Ashbery wrote his M.A. dissertation on Green, and the novel he wrote with James Schuyler, A Nest of Ninnies (1969), published incidentally by Green's American publisher, Dutton, has the mark of Green in its preponderance of dialogue and its insubstantial subject-matter; but Ashbery is much better known for his poetry than for his fiction. Updike actually cited Green as his mentor in the introduction he wrote for the first Picador paperback and stated that The Poorhouse Fair was embarrassingly indebted to Concluding, but it is yet to be seen whether his enthusiasm will provoke others to look seriously at Green.

In England critical comment at least has suggested renewed interest though the revival prophesied by some critics when the reprints started appearing has not occurred. Green has of course been brought to public notice in the last five years. In 1975 the novels were hard to find, Blindness almost impossible: now all are back in print. Then Henry Yorke was virtually unknown: Paul Bailey's biography should change that. Green is included on modern fiction courses in some universities, among them Liverpool and Cambridge, and several theses are being written, both in England and in the United States. Kermode's articles in the Daily Telegraph in 1977 revealed that interest can be aroused; I said earlier that his third article was written in response to readers' appreciative letters.

However, there is not much evidence to show that Green is being widely read in 1981. Sebastian Faulks saw in 1977 a "great upsurge of interest in his work" but it is interesting to note that a study A.S. Byatt made of the literary preferences of sixth-formers applying for admission to University College, London (results published in the Times Educational Supplement, 2 January 1981) found only one student, out of about five hundred, who is reading Green. Green's name is still unfamiliar to most readers, his achievement unmatched by critical and popular attention; but listeners to Radio 4's Monday Play on 23 March 1981 heard at least a version of Henry Green, Neville Teller's dramatization of Party Going, which will, so Robert Ottaway (Radio Times) hoped, underline the Green revival.

NOTESChapter 1

- 1 The Jenny referred to is Jenny Rees, daughter of Goronwy Rees.
- 2 Spectator, 4 October 1963, p.422.
- 3 All comments credited to Sebastian Yorke are taken from a conversation with the present writer unless otherwise stated.
- 4 'There It Is', Kenyon Review, 26 (1964), p.436.
- 5 'Henry Green', New York Herald Tribune Book Review, 8 October 1950, p.14.
- 6 'There It Is', p.437.
- 7 'There It Is', p.436.
- 8 Tape recording, 'Drawing Tears out of the Stone', BBC Radio 3, 28 December 1975.
- 9 'Talk with Henry Green - and a P.S.', New York Times Book Review, 19 February 1950, p.29.
- 10 'Novelist X', Newsweek, 27 March 1950, p.40.
- 11 'Novelist X'.
- 12 Simon Blow, 'Silent Green', Guardian, 8 August 1973, p.8.
- 13 'There It Is', p.462.
- 14 'Drawing Tears Out of the Stone'.
- 15 To Keep the Ball Rolling, vol.1, Infants of the Spring (London 1976), p.106.
- 16 Infants of the Spring, p.107.
- 17 'Silent Green'.
- 18 'Talk with Henry Green - and a P.S.'.
- 19 Henry Green, 'Unloving', The Times, 3 August 1961, p.11.
- 20 Alan Ross, 'Green, with Envy', London Magazine, 6, no. 4(1959), p.23.
- 21 Information from the following sources is taken from letters to the present writer unless otherwise stated: Goronwy Rees, Peter Quennell, Harold Acton, Diana Mosley, Auberon Waugh, John Lehmann, Kingsley Amis.
- 22 'There It Is', p.434.
- 23 Family and friends have assured me this is the case.
- 24 London Magazine, 6, no.4 (1959), pp.11-17.

- 25 'Talk with Henry Green - and a P.S.'
- 26 In order of publication: Edward Stokes, The Novels of Henry Green (London 1959); John Russell, Henry Green: Nine Novels and an Unpacked Bag (New Brunswick 1960); A. Kingsley Weatherhead, A Reading of Henry Green (Seattle 1961); Bruce Bassoff, Toward Loving: The Poetics of the Novel and the Practice of Henry Green (Columbia, South Carolina 1975).
- 27 Henry Green, Columbia Essays on Modern Writers, 29 (New York 1967)
- 28 'Comrades of the Coterie', In My Opinion (Indianapolis 1952).

Chapter 2

- 1 'Henry Green', New York Herald Tribune Book Review.
- 2 Journal of Hellenic Studies and the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society.
- 3 Memories 1898-1939 (London 1967), p.165.
- 4 Infants of the Spring, p.66.
- 5 Memories, p.165.
- 6 Infants of the Spring, p.66.
- 7 Memories, pp.164-5.
- 8 Memories, p.164.
- 9 As an undergraduate Green was very interested in Proust (Anthony Powell, To Keep the Ball Rolling, vol.2, Messengers of Day /London 1978/ p.115).
- 10 Green's mother insists that Henry was in fact seven and three-quarters, if not older, when he started school. (Annotation to British Library, Green MS, Pack My Bag, Loan 67/3).
- 11 Infants of the Spring, p.62.
- 12 Brian Howard: Portrait of a Failure (London 1968), p.120.
- 13 Brian Howard, p.172.
- 14 B.G., 'Henry Yorke and the Eton Society of Arts', Cherwell, 23 October 1926, p.11.
- 15 Infants of the Spring, p.116.
- 16 Brian Howard, p.121.

Chapter 3

- 1 Messengers of Day, p.6.
- 2 George Jefferson describes Green's dealings with Garnett in some detail in 'Green and Garnett', London Magazine, new series, 18, no. 2 (1978), pp.53-62.
- 3 Henry Green, 'Edward Garnett', New Statesman and Nation, 30 December 1950, p.675.
- 4 Richard Church, The House of Dent 1888-1938 (London 1938), p.296.
- 5 D.B.W., 'Blindness', New Republic, 29 December 1926, p.174.
- 6 'Blindness', Saturday Review of Literature, 25 December 1926, p.472.
- 7 'Henry Yorke and the Eton Society of Arts'.
- 8 'New Novels' Times Literary Supplement, 2 December 1926, p.884.
- 9 'Europe in the Looking-Glass', Cherwell, 13 November 1926, p.155.
- 10 Memories, p.163.
- 11 Cherwell, 19 February 1927, p.99.
- 12 Cherwell, 14 February 1925, p.128.
- 13 Information obtained from the Balliol College Register 1900-1950, ed. Sir Ivo Elliot (Oxford /printed for private circulation/ 1953).
- 14 "He more than anyone helped to launch into civilised life the brilliant generation that came up after the immediate postwar years, and aesthetes like Brian Howard and Harold Acton, scholars like Kenneth Clark, Isaiah Berlin, Roger Mynors and John Sparrow, and men of letters like John Betjeman, Cyril Connolly, 'Henry Green' and Evelyn Waugh all owed much to his friendship and his influence." (Maurice Bowra: a Celebration, ed. Hugh Lloyd-Jones /London 1974/, p.26).
- 15 The Marble Foot: an Autobiography 1905-1938 (London 1976), p.113.
- 16 Memories, pp.162-4.
- 17 Memoirs of an Aesthete (London 1948), pp.92-3.
- 18 Memories, p.162.
- 19 Children of the Sun: a Narrative of Decadence in England after 1910 (London 1977), p.192.
- 20 Evelyn Waugh and his World, ed. David Pryce-Jones (London 1973), p.118.
- 21 Infants of the Spring, p.154.
- 22 Infants of the Spring, p.185.

- 23 Infants of the Spring, pp.185-6.
- 24 Infants of the Spring, p.180.

Chapter 4

- 1 Messengers of Day, p.25.
- 2 'Green and Garnett', p.58.
- 3 R.N. Linscott, 'Cinematograph', New York Herald Tribune, 11 August 1929, p.2.
- 4 'Green and Garnett', p.59.
- 5 3 October 1929, p.768.
- 6 'A Neglected Masterpiece', Graphic, 14 June 1930, p.588.
- 7 Christopher Sykes, Evelyn Waugh, rev.ed. (Harmondsworth 1977), p.19.
- 8 Stephen Spender, The Destructive Element (London 1935), p.237.
- 9 World Within World (London 1951), p.95.
- 10 Cyril Connolly, Enemies of Promise (London 1938), pp.80, 105.
- 11 Nigel Dennis maintains that Auden called Green "the best English novelist alive". ('The Double Life of Henry Green', Life, 4 August 1952, p.85).
- 12 'Henry Green', The Penguin New Writing, 25 (1945), p.144.
- 13 'An Unfinished Novel', p.17.
- 14 Information obtained from The Times, 26 July 1929.
- 15 Harold Acton, Nancy Mitford: a Memoir (London 1975), p.26.
- 16 Diana's first marriage was to Bryan Guinness, her second to Oswald Mosley.
- 17 A Life of Contrasts (London 1977), p.76.
- 18 A Life of Contrasts, p.120.
- 19 The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh, ed. Michael Davie (London 1976), p.317.
- 20 References to birth and christening in The Times, 25 January and 22 March 1934.
- 21 John Lehmann, The Whispering Gallery: Autobiography 1 (London 1955), p.329.

- 22 Leonard Woolf appears not even to remember the title of the book: "We began the publication of Henry Green's novels with Party Games." (The Journey Not the Arrival Matters: an Autobiography of the Years 1939-1969 /London 1969/, p.107). Perhaps the slip is significant and reveals Woolf's perception of Green's novels as catalogues of trivia.
- 23 'Party Going', Times Literary Supplement, 30 September 1939, p.561.
- 24 'New Novels', The Times, 6 October 1939, p.4.
- 25 'Fiction', Spectator, 29 September 1939, p.450.
- 26 'Books in General', New Statesman and Nation, 7 October 1939, p.489.
- 27 John Lehmann, I Am My Brother: Autobiography 2 (London 1960), p.40.

Chapter 5

- 1 'Before the Great Fire', London Magazine, 7, no.12 (1960), p.19.
- 2 Fire and Water: an NFS Anthology, ed. H.S. Ingham (London 1942).
- 3 Fire and Water, p.10.
- 4 A Life of Contrasts, p.180.
- 5 Letter included with the papers kept by the British Library, Loan 67/3.
- 6 'A Fight for Identity', Spectator, 22 November 1940, p.548.
- 7 'An Artist of the Thirties', Folios of New Writing, 3 (Spring 1941), pp.156-8.
- 8 Under Siege: Literary Life in London 1939-45 (London 1977), p.91.
- 9 B L, Green M S, Caught, 67/4.
- 10 I Am My Brother, p.153.
- 11 Daniel George, 'Those Were the Days', Tribune, 25 June 1943, p.16.
John Hampson, 'Fiction', Spectator, 30 July 1943, p.112.
Margery Allingham, 'New Novels', Time and Tide, 26 June 1943, p.528.
Edwin Muir, 'New Novels', Listener, 15 July 1943, p.78.
Philip Toynbee, 'New Novels', New Statesman and Nation, 26 June 1943, p.422.
'A.F.S. Interlude', Times Literary Supplement, 19 June 1943, p.293.
- 12 'Henry Green', The Penguin New Writing, p.152.
- 13 Under Siege, p.46.
- 14 I Am My Brother, p.109.

- 15 Diversion, ed. Hester W. Chapman and Princess Romanovsky-Pavolovsky (London 1946).
- 16 I Am My Brother, p.110.
- 17 'Young Writers', Spectator, 30 July 1943, p.110.
- 18 'Novel Notes', Tribune, 30 March 1945, p.14.
- 19 'New Novels', New Statesman and Nation, 5 May 1945, p.292.
- 20 The Novel Since 1939 (London 1946), pp.26-30.
- 21 'Fiction', Spectator, 20 April 1945, p.368.
- 22 'New Novels', Listener, 5 April 1945, p.386.
- 23 'Twofold Vision', Time and Tide, 21 April 1945, pp.338, 340.
- 24 'New Novels', New Statesman and Nation, 23 November 1946, p.385.
- 25 'Selected Notices', Horizon, 15 (1947), p.75.
- 26 'Fiction', Spectator, 29 November 1946, p.590.
- 27 'New Novels', Listener, 28 November 1946, p.766.
- 28 'A Dozen', Tribune, 22 November 1946, p.17.
- 29 Information obtained from the Hogarth Press.
- 30 I Am My Brother, p.85.
- 31 John Lehmann, The Ample Proposition: Autobiography 3 (London 1966), p.19.

Chapter 6

- 1 Alan Ross, 'Green, with Envy', p.24.
- 2 'A Poet of Fear', Times Literary Supplement, 25 December 1948, p.726.
- 3 'Henry Green', New Statesman and Nation, 27 November 1948, p.466.
- 4 'Selected Notice', Horizon, 18 (1948), pp.365-8.
- 5 'New Novels', Listener, 2 December 1948, p.856.
- 6 'Fiction', Spectator, 10 December 1948, p.786.
- 7 Partisan Review, 16 (1949), pp.487-97.
- 8 Nigel Dennis, 'The Double Life of Henry Green', p.93.

- 9 'Molten Treasure', Time, 10 October 1949, pp.46-8.
- 10 New York Times Book Review, 9 October 1949, pp.1, 22.
- 11 'Mr Green Does It Again', Daily Mail, 6 May 1950, p.4.
- 12 John Pandy Kirby, 'Tradition and Experiment', Virginia Quarterly Review, 26 (Winter 1950), pp.144-8.
- 13 Ernest Jones, 'The Double View', Nation, 22 October 1949, pp.401-2.
- 14 'Fiction Chronicle', Partisan Review, 16 (1949), pp.1052-5.
- 15 'Green: Ironist of the Human Heart', Christian Science Monitor, 27 October 1949, p.15.
- 16 'The Success of Form', New Republic, 26 December 1949, pp.19-20.
- 17 'Something', New Yorker, 25 March 1950, pp.111-2.
- 18 'The Comic View', New York Times Book Review, 28 March 1950, pp.1, 20.
- 19 Walter Havighurst, 'Intrigues', Saturday Review of Literature, 25 March 1950, pp.13-4.
- 20 Ernest Jones, 'Henry Green, Virtuoso', Nation, 8 April 1950, pp.328-9.
- 21 'The Symbolical Apple', Nation, 24 May 1952, p.506.
- 22 'The Case Against Pure Sensibility', Kenyon Review, 12 (1950), pp.543-7.
- 23 'Reader's Choice', Atlantic Monthly, 186 (October 1950), p.84.
- 24 Jean Garrigue, 'Back', New Republic, 6 November 1950, p.20.
- 25 'The Real and Unreal Worlds of Henry Green', New York Times Book Review, 31 December 1950, pp.5, 13.
- 26 'Two Novels by Henry Green', New Leader, 14 May 1951, pp.25-6.
- 27 'The Juggling Act', New Republic, 12 May 1952, p.21.
- 28 'Back from the War', New York Times Book Review, 1 October 1950, pp.4, 28.
- 29 'Novelist X', Newsweek, 27 March 1950, p.40.
- 30 Information supplied by Longanesi, Milan. The novels are out of print at the time of writing.
- 31 Information supplied by Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt.
- 32 Information supplied by Seix Barral, Barcelona.
- 33 Vida Markovic, 'Henri Grin', Forum 11-12 (1963).
- 34 I Am My Brother, p.148.

- 35 John Russell, 'There It Is', p.448.
- 36 Information supplied by Nagel, Paris.
- 37 'Essai Sur Un Roman', Lettres Nouvelles, June/July 1953, pp.417-33, 550-65.
- 38 'A French View of "Loving"', London Magazine, 6, no. 4 (1959), pp.25-35.
- 39 Iphigénie Hôtel (Paris 1963).
- 40 'Catalytic Rhetoric: Henry Green's Theory of the Modern Novel', Criticism (Detroit), 7 (Winter 1965), p.85.
- 41 Lettres Nouvelles, 13 (1965), pp.116-33.

Chapter 7

- 1 'Apologia', Folios of New Writing, 4 (Autumn 1941), pp.44-51.
- 2 John Russell, 'There It Is', p.449.
- 3 The Ample Proposition, pp.107-8.
- 4 'Henry Green: a Novelist of the Imagination', Texas Quarterly, 4 (Autumn 1961), pp.246-56.
- 5 The Ample Proposition, pp.108-9.
- 6 The Ample Proposition, p.111.
- 7 Nigel Dennis, 'The Double Life of Henry Green', p.93.
- 8 Messengers of Day, p.30.
- 9 'The Double Life of Henry Green', p.93.
- 10 'The Double Life of Henry Green', p.86.
- 11 'There It Is', p.454.
- 12 'There It Is', p.440.
- 13 Goronwy Rees, A Chapter of Accidents (London 1972), pp.229-30.
- 14 The Ample Proposition, p.187.
- 15 Cecil Beaton, Photobiography (London 1951), p.183.
- 16 'The Double Life of Henry Green', p.88.

- 17 Bruce Johnson, 'A Note on Henry Green in Retirement', Michigan Alumnus Quarterly Review, 66 (Autumn 1960), pp.68-9.
- 18 The Ample Proposition, p.109.
- 19 'New Novels', Listener, 4 May 1950, p.801.
- 20 'New Novels', Spectator, 5 May 1950, pp.624,6.
- 21 'New Novels', New Statesman and Nation, 20 May 1950, p.586.
- 22 The Ample Proposition, p.109.
- 23 Transcript, 'The Contemporary English Novel', supplied by the BBC.
- 24 The Ample Proposition, p.109.
- 25 'The English Novel of the Future', Contact, 1 (1950), p.20.
- 26 'Books and Writers', Spectator, 22 September 1950, p.320.
- 27 The Ample Proposition, p.193.
- 28 Transcript supplied by the BBC.
- 29 'The Double Life of Henry Green', p.87.
- 30 'New Novels', Listener, 15 May 1952, p.805.
- 31 Tangye Lean, 'Fiction', Spectator, 2 May 1952, p.590.
- 32 J.D. Scott, 'New Novels', New Statesman and Nation, 10 May 1952, p.566.
- 33 Spectator, 4 September 1953, p.248.
- 34 London Magazine, 1, no.1 (1954), pp.80-3.
- 35 London Magazine, 2, no. 2 (1955), pp.88-91.
- 36 Transcript supplied by the BBC.
- 37 'The Art of Fiction XXII', Paris Review, 19 (1958), pp.60-77.
- 38 'Greening', New Statesman, 2 May 1959, pp.615-6.
- 39 'Green, with Envy'.
- 40 The Times, 6 April 1961, p.15.
- 41 The Times, 3 August 1961, p.11.
- 42 Reference in The Times, 9 February 1967.

Chapter 8

- 1 The Times, 15 December 1973, p.14.
- 2 The Times, 20 December 1973, p.14.
- 3 'Henry Yorke, Henry Green', London Magazine, new series, 14, no. 2 (1974), pp.28-32.
- 4 'Green Fields, All Too Far Away', 29 January 1977, p.9.
'The Chief Defect of Henry Green', 12 February 1977, p.11.
'Still Green in the Memory', 26 February 1977, p.11.
- 5 'A Novel with a Message for Teaching', Times Higher Educational Supplement, 26 August 1977, p.7.
- 6 'Whispers Alone at Night', Spectator, 27 August 1977, pp. 15-6.
- 7 'Living and Loving', Observer, 28 August 1977, p.24..
- 8 'Seeing the World through a Child's Eyes ... and None', Guardian, 25 August 1977, p.7.
- 9 Observer colour magazine, 21 August 1977, p.11..
- 10 New York Times Book Review, 10 December 1978, p.11.
- 11 Norman Shrapnel, 'Surprisingly Different', Guardian, 8 June 1978, p.14.
- 12 'Writing', New Statesman, 9 June 1978, pp.790-1.
- 13 Times Literary Supplement, 23 June 1978, p.695.
- 14 'Back', New Statesman, 4 May 1979, pp.648-9.
- 15 'Henry Green's Comeback', Books and Bookmen, 24, no. 7 (1979), pp.50-2.
- 16 Sunday Times, 23 December 1979, p.45.

Chapter 9

- 1 'A Novelist to his Readers: Communication without Speech', Listener, 9 November 1950, p.506.
- 2 'A Fire, a Flood and the Price of Meat', Listener, 23 August 1951, p.293.
- 3 'A Novelist to his Readers', p.506.

- 4 The Art of the Novel (New York 1934), p.xv.
- 5 'The English Novel of the Future', p.22.
- 6 The Novels of Henry Green, pp.108-9.
- 7 The Air of Reality, ed. John Goode (London 1972), p.60.
- 8 The Bostonians (Harmondsworth 1966), p.11.
- 9 The Portrait of a Lady (Harmondsworth 1963), p.93.
- 10 Mansfield Park (Harmondsworth 1966), p.31.

Chapter 10

- 1 Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton 1957), p.71.
- 2 'Henry Green's Comic Symbolism', Ball State University Forum, 6 (Autumn 1965), p.29.
- 3 A Reading of Henry Green, p.99.
- 4 'The Imagery of Wallace Stevens and Henry Green', Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, 8, no. 1 (1967), p.62.
- 5 La Jalousie (Paris 1957).
- 6 'The Structure and Technique of "Party Going"', Yearbook of English Studies, 1 (1971), pp.189-90.
- 7 'The Imagery of Wallace Stevens and Henry Green', p.62.
- 8 The Novels of Henry Green, p.154.
- 9 The Novels of Henry Green, p.177.
- 10 A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (London 1963), pp.175-6.

- 11 The Novels of Henry Green, p.169.
- 12 Washington Square (New York 1950), p.291.
- 13 White Mule (New York 1937), p.1.
- 14 The Technique of Modern Fiction (London 1968), p.35.
- 15 The Golden Bowl, 2 vols (New York 1909), I, p.154.

Chapter 11

- 1 'A Fight for Identity'.
- 2 'Those Were the Days'.
- 3 Style in Modern British Fiction: Studies in Joyce, Lawrence, Forster, Lewis and Green (Baltimore 1978).
- 4 Mr Norris Changes Trains (Harmondsworth 1942), p.113.
- 5 The Novels of Henry Green, pp.190-1.
- 6 In Doting Green actually uses a juggler as a metaphor for the artist.
- 7 'New Novels', Spectator, 5 May 1950, p.624.
- 8 Bruce Bassoff has also examined these opening paragraphs but with a different aim from mine.
- 9 Style in Modern British Fiction, p.162.
- 10 Mrs Dalloway (London 1925), pp.12-13.
- 11 'An Artist of the Thirties', p.154.
- 12 'Three Novels of Henry Green' (unpubl. diss., University of Columbia, 1950), p.35.
- 13 Terry Southern, 'The Art of Fiction XXII', p.73.
- 14 Toward Loving, p.55.

Chapter 12

- 1 In My Opinion, p.94.
- 2 'The Comic View'.
- 3 'Catalytic Rhetoric', p.86.
- 4 A Reading of Henry Green, p.138.
- 5 'Catalytic Rhetoric', p.98.
- 6 Drama as Literature (Lisse 1977), pp.11-12.
- 7 'A Conversation between I. Compton-Burnett and M. Jourdain',
quoted by Miriam Allott, Novelists on the Novel (London 1959), pp.
297-8.
- 8 A Father and his Fate (London 1972), p.125.
- 9 'Catalytic Rhetoric', pp.89-90.
- 10 Green is perhaps alluding to the artificiality of his artistic
performance when in the description of the juggler's act he shows
how nature is foiled: ". . . then a pint beer mug on top of that
ball at the exact angle needed to cheat gravity." Although he
wanted his novels to be true to life in a sense, he nevertheless
described them as 'non-representational'.
- 11 Speech in the English Novel (London 1973), pp.129-32.
- 12 'A Novelist to his Readers', p.506.

Chapter 13

- 1 'Still Green in the Memory'.
- 2 'Twofold Vision', p.340.
- 3 The Tightrope Walkers: Studies of Mannerism in Modern English
Literature (Westport, Connecticut 1974), p.203.
- 4 'The World of Loving', Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature,
2, part 1 (1960), p.65.
- 5 Style in Modern British Fiction, p.174.
- 6 'Henry Green's Web of Loving', Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction,
4, no. 1 (1961), p.34.
- 7 'The English Novel of the Future', p.22.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

HENRY GREEN

Books:

Blindness (London 1926, rpt. 1977)Living (London 1929)Party Going (London 1939)Pack My Bag (London 1940)Caught (London 1943)Loving (London 1945)Back (London 1946)Concluding (London 1948)Nothing (London 1950)Doting (London 1952)

Articles, reviews:

'Europe in the Looking-Glass', Cherwell, 13 November 1926, p. 155'A Private School in 1914', Folios of New Writing, 1 (Spring 1940), pp. 11-25'Mr Jonas', Folios of New Writing, 3 (Spring 1941), pp. 11-17'A Rescue', The Penguin New Writing, 4 (1941), pp. 88-93'Apologia', Folios of New Writing, 4 (Autumn 1941), pp. 44-51'Mr Jonas', The Penguin New Writing, 14 (1942), pp. 15-20'The Lull', New Writing and Daylight (Summer 1943), pp. 11-21'The English Novel of the Future', Contact, 1 (1950), pp. 20-4'Henry Green', New York Herald Tribune Book Review, 8 October 1950, p. 14'A Novelist to his Readers: Communication without Speech', Listener, 9 November 1950, pp. 505-6'Edward Garnett', New Statesman and Nation, 30 December 1950, p. 675

- 'A Novelist to his Readers - II', Listener, 15 March 1951, pp. 425, 7
- 'A Fire, a Flood and the Price of Meat', Listener, 23 August 1951, pp. 293-4
- 'The Spoken Word as Written', Spectator, 4 September 1953, p. 248
- 'A Writer's Diary', London Magazine, 1, no. 1 (1954), pp. 80-3
- 'The Complete Plain Words', London Magazine, 2, no. 2 (1955), pp. 88-91
- 'An Unfinished Novel', London Magazine, 6, no. 4 (1959), pp. 11-17
- 'Before the Great Fire', London Magazine, 7, no. 12 (1960), pp. 12-27
- 'Unloving', The Times, 3 August 1961, p. 11
- 'For Jenny with Affection from Henry Green', Spectator, 4 October 1963, p. 422

OTHERS

Books:

- Acton, Harold, Memoirs of an Aesthete (London 1948)
Nancy Mitford: a Memoir (London 1975)
- Allott, Miriam, Novelists on the Novel (London 1959)
- Amis, Kingsley, Ending Up (London 1974)
- Ashber, John and James Schuyler, A Nest of Ninnies (New York 1969)
- Austen, Jane, Mansfield Park (Harmondsworth 1966)
- Bassoff, Bruce, Toward Loving: The Poetics of the Novel and the Practice of Henry Green (Columbia, South Carolina 1975)
- Beaton, Cecil, Photobiography (London 1951)
- Bowra, Maurice, Memories 1898-1939 (London 1967)
- Chapman, Hester W. and Princess Romanovsky - Pavolovsky, eds., Diversion (London 1946)
- Church, Richard, The House of Dent 1888-1938 (London 1938)
- Compton-Burnett, Ivy, A Father and his Fate (London 1957, rpt. 1972)
- Connolly, Cyril, Enemies of Promise (London 1938)
- Elliot, Sir Ivo, ed., Balliol College Register 1900-1950 (Oxford printed for private circulation/ 1953)

- Friedman, Alan Warren, Forms of Modern British Fiction (Texas 1975)
- Frye, Northrop, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton 1957)
- Goode, John, ed., The Air of Reality: New Essays on Henry James (London 1972)
- Green, Martin, Children of the Sun: a Narrative of Decadence in England after 1918 (London 1977)
- Hewison, Robert, Under Siege: Literary Life in London 1939-45 (London 1977)
- Hollis, Christopher, Oxford in the Twenties: Recollections of Five Friends (London 1976)
- Ingham, H.S., ed., Fire and Water: an NFS Anthology (London 1942)
- Isherwood, Christopher, Mr. Norris Changes Trains (Harmondsworth 1942)
- James, Henry, The Art of the Novel (New York 1934)
The Bostonians (Harmondsworth 1966)
The Golden Bowl (New York 1909)
The Portrait of a Lady (Harmondsworth 1966)
Washington Square (New York 1950)
- Joyce, James, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (London 1968)
- Karl, Frederick R., A Reader's Guide to the Contemporary English Novel, rev. ed. (London 1972)
- Kettle, Arnold, An Introduction to the English Novel, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London 1967)
- Lancaster, Marie-Jacqueline, ed., Brian Howard: Portrait of a Failure (London 1968)
- Lehmann, John, The Whispering Gallery: Autobiography 1 (London 1955)
I Am My Brother: Autobiography 2 (London 1960)
The Ample Proposition: Autobiography 3 (London 1966)
- Lloyd-Jones, Hugh, ed., Maurice Bowra: a Celebration (London 1974)
- Melchiori, Giorgio, The Tightrope Walkers: Studies of Mannerism in Modern English Literature (1956, rpt. Westport, Connecticut 1974)
- Mosley, Diana, A Life of Contrasts (London 1977)
- Page, Norman, Speech in the English Novel (London 1973)

- Powell, Anthony, To Keep the Ball Rolling,
 vol. 1, Infants of the Spring (London 1976)
 vol. 2, Messengers of Day (London 1978)
- Prescott, Orville, In My Opinion (Indianapolis 1952)
- Pryce-Jones, David, ed., Evelyn Waugh and his World (London 1973)
- Quennell, Peter, The Marble Foot: an Autobiography 1905-1938 (London 1976)
- Raban, Jonathan, The Technique of Modern Fiction (London 1968)
- Reed, Henry, The Novel Since 1939 (London 1946)
- Rees, Coronwy, A Chapter of Accidents (London 1972)
- Robbe-Grillet, Alain, La Jalousie (Paris 1957)
- Russell, John, Henry Green: Nine Novels and an Unpacked Bag (New Brunswick
 1960)
Style in Modern British Fiction: Studies in Joyce, Lawrence,
 Forster, Lewis and Green (Baltimore 1976)
- Ryf, Robert, Henry Green, Columbia Essays on Modern Writers, 29 (New York
 1967)
- Sarraute, Nathalie, L'Ere du Soupçon (Paris 1956)
- Spender, Stephen, The Destructive Element (London 1935)
World Within World (London 1951)
- Stokes, Edward, The Novels of Henry Green (London 1959)
- Sykes, Christopher, Evelyn Waugh, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth 1977)
- Veltruský, Jirí, Drama as Literature (Lisse 1977)
- Vinaver, Michel, Iphigénie Hotel (Paris 1963)
- Waugh, Evelyn, Diaries, ed. Michael Davie (London 1976)
- Weatherhead, A. Kingsley, A Reading of Henry Green (Seattle 1961)
- Williams, William Carlos, White Mule (New York 1937)
- Woolf, Leonard, The Journal Not the Arrival Matters: an Autobiography
 of the Years 1939-1969 (London 1969)
- Woolf, Virginia, Mrs Dalloway (London 1925)

Articles, reviews:

- Allen, Walter, 'An Artist of the Thirties', Folios of New Writing, 3
 (Spring 1941), pp. 149-58
 'Henry Green', The Penguin New Writing, 25 (1945), pp. 144-55
 'Greening', New Statesman, 2 May 1959, pp. 615-6

- Allingham, Margery, 'New Novels', Time and Tide, 26 June 1943, p. 528
- Amis, Kingsley, 'Back', New Statesman, 4 May 1979, pp. 648-9
- Anon, 'New Novels', Times Literary Supplement, 2 December 1926, p. 884
- Anon, 'Blindness', Saturday Review of Literature, 25 December 1926, p. 472
- Anon, 'La Gazette', Cherwell, 19 February 1927, p. 99
- Anon, 'New Books and Reprints', Times Literary Supplement, 3 October 1929, p. 768
- Anon, 'Party Going', Times Literary Supplement, 30 September 1939, p. 561
- Anon, 'New Novels', The Times, 6 October 1939, p. 4
- Anon, 'Self Portrait', Times Literary Supplement, 9 November 1940, p. 568
- Anon, 'A.F.S. Interlude', Times Literary Supplement, 19 June 1943, p. 293
- Anon, 'Other New Novels', Times Literary Supplement, 24 March 1945, p. 142
- Anon, 'Torment After War', Times Literary Supplement, 9 November 1946, p. 545
- Anon, 'A Poet of Fear', Times Literary Supplement, 25 December 1948, p. 725
- Anon, 'Molten Treasure', Time, 10 October 1949, pp. 46-8
- Anon, 'Novelist X', Newsweek, 27 March 1950, p. 40
- Anon, 'Serious and Trivial', Times Literary Supplement, 5 May 1950, p. 273
- Anon, 'Party Going', Atlantic Monthly, 188 (October 1951), p. 86
- Anon, 'New Novels: Conversation Pieces', The Times, 3 May 1952, p. 3
- Anon, 'Conversation Piece', Times Literary Supplement, 9 May 1952, p. 309
- Anon, 'Obituary: Henry Green', The Times, 15 December 1973, p. 14
- Anon, 'Back in Print', Observer colour magazine, 21 August 1977, p. 11
- Applegate, James, 'Something about Henry Green', New Mexico Quarterly, 25 (1955), pp. 270-5
- B.G., 'Henry Yorke and the Eton Society of Arts', Cherwell, 23 October 1926, p. 11
- Bailey, Hilary, 'Joseph and his Brethren', Guardian, 6 December 1979, p. 9
- Bain, Bruce, 'Henry Green: the Man and his Work', World Review, new series, 3 (1949), pp. 55-8, 80
- Barker, Frank Granville, 'Henry Green's Comeback', Books and Bookmen, 24, no. 7 (1979), pp. 50-2

- Blow, Simon 'Silent Green', Guardian, 8 August 1973, p. 8
- Bowen, Elizabeth, 'With Silent Friends', Tatler and Bystander, 30 June 1943, p. 406
- Breit, Harvey, 'Talk with Henry Green - and a P.S.', New York Times Book Review, 19 February 1950, p. 29
- Brooks, Jeremy, 'December Paperbacks', Sunday Times, 23 December 1979, p. 45
- Broyard, Anatole, 'Amor Omnia Vincit', Hudson Review, 2 (1949-50), pp. 621-4
- Calder-Marshall, Arthur, 'New Novels', Listener, 15 May 1952, p. 805
- Chapin, Ruth, 'Green Posturing', Christian Science Monitor, 13 September 1951, p. 13
- Church, Richard, 'A Fight for Identity', Spectator, 22 November 1940, pp. 548, 5
- Churchill, Thomas, 'Loving: a Comic Novel', Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction, 4, no. 2 (1961), pp. 29-38
- Cloyne, George, 'Resting?', The Times, 6 April 1961, p. 15
- Cosman, Max, 'The Elusive Henry Green', Commonweal, 72 (1960), pp. 472-5
- Cunningham, Valentine, 'Our Daily Bread', Times Literary Supplement, 10 February 1978, p. 157
'Writing', New Statesman, 9 June 1978, pp. 790-1
- D.B.W., 'Blindness', New Republic, 29 December 1926, p. 174
- Davidson, Barbara, 'The World of Loving', Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, 2, part 1 (1960), pp. 65-78
- Dennis, Nigel, 'The Double Life of Henry Green', Life, 4 August 1952, pp. 83-99
- Driver, Christopher, 'Seeing the World through a Child's Eyes ... and None', Guardian, 25 August 1977, p. 7
- Farrelly, John, 'The Success of Form', New Republic, 26 December 1949, pp. 19-20
- Faulks, Sebastian, 'Whispers Alone at Night', Spectator, 27 August 1977, pp. 15-16
- Garnett, David, 'Books in General', New Statesman and Nation, 7 October 1939, p. 489
- Garrigue, Jean, 'Back', New Republic, 6 November 1950, p. 20
- George, Daniel, 'Those Were the Days', Tribune, 25 June 1943, p. 16
'A Dozen', Tribune, 22 November 1946, p. 17
'Novel Notes', Tribune, 30 March 1945, p. 14
- Gill, Brendan, 'Something', New Yorker, 25 March 1950, pp. 111-2
- Greenberg, Martin, 'Two Novels by Henry Green', New Leader, 14 May 1951, pp. 25-6

Greene, Graham, 'Fiction', Spectator, 29 September 1939, p. 450

Hall, James, 'The Fiction of Henry Green: Paradoxes of Pleasure - and - Pain', Kenyon Review, 19 (1957), pp. 76-88

Hampson, John, 'Fiction', Spectator, 30 July 1943, p. 112
'Fiction', Spectator, 20 April 1945, p. 368

Harcourt-Smith, Simon, 'Henry Green', New Statesman and Nation, 27 November 1948, pp. 466-7

Hart, Clive, 'The Structure and Technique of "Party Going"', Yearbook of English Studies, 1 (1971), pp. 185-99

Havighurst, Walter, 'Intrigues', Saturday Review of Literature, 25 March 1950, pp. 13-14

'Search for a Dead Rose', Saturday Review of Literature, 30 September 1950, pp. 30-1

Heppenstall, Rayner, 'New Novels', New Statesman and Nation, 23 November 1946, pp. 385-6

'Twofold Vision', Time and Tide, 21 April 1945, pp. 338, 40

Holloway, John, 'A Novel with a Message for Teaching', Times Higher Educational Supplement, 26 August 1977, p. 7

Howard, Jean, 'Selected Notice', Horizon, 18 (1948), pp. 365-8

Howe, Irving, 'Fiction Chronicle', Partisan Review, 16 (1949), pp. 1052-5
'Blindness', New York Times Book Review, 10 December 1978, pp. 11, 57

Jefferson, George, 'Green and Garnett', London Magazine, new series, 18, no. 2, (1978), pp. 53-62

Johnson, Bruce, 'A Note on Henry Green in Retirement', Michigan Alumnus Quarterly Review, 66 (Autumn 1960), pp. 68-9

'Henry Green's Comic Symbolism', Ball State University Forum, 6 (Autumn 1965), pp. 29-35

Jones, Ernest, 'The Double View', Nation, 22 October 1949, pp. 401-2

'Henry Green, Virtuoso', Nation, 8 April 1950, pp. 328-9

Kalem, Theodore, 'Green: Ironist of the Human Heart', Christian Science Monitor, 27 October 1949, p. 15

Kee, Robert, 'Fiction', Spectator, 10 December 1948, p. 786

Kermode, Frank, 'Green Fields, All Too Far Away', Daily Telegraph, 29 January 1977, p. 9

'The Chief Defect of Henry Green', Daily Telegraph, 12 February 1977, p. 11

'Still Green in the Memory', Daily Telegraph, 26 February 1977, p. 11

Kirby, John Pandy, 'Tradition and Experiment', Virginia Quarterly Review, 26 (Winter 1950), pp. 144-8

Labor, Earle, 'Henry Green's Web of Loving', Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction, 4, no. 1 (1961), pp. 29-40

- Laski, Marghanita, 'New Novels', Spectator, 5 May 1950, pp. 624, 6
- Lazarus, H.P., 'Henry Green's Technique', Nation, 4 November 1950, pp. 416-7
'The Symbolical Apple', Nation, 24 May 1952, p. 506
- Lean, Tangye, 'Fiction', Spectator, 2 May 1952, p. 590
- Linscott, R.N., 'Cinematograph', New York Herald Tribune, 11 August 1929, p.2
- MacGibbon, James, Letter to The Times, 20 December 1973, p. 14
- Massingham, Hugh, 'Comedy of Manners', Observer, 30 April 1950, p. 7
- Mayberry, George, 'The Juggling Act', New Republic, 12 May 1952, p. 21
- Muir, Edwin, 'New Novels', Listener, 15 July 1943, p. 78
'New Novels', Listener, 5 April 1945, p. 386
- O'Brien, Kate, 'Fiction', Spectator, 29 November 1946, p. 590
- Odom, Keith C., 'Symbolism and Diversion: Birds in the Novels of Henry Green', Descant, 6 (1962), pp. 30-41
- Orwell, George, 'Young Writers', Spectator, 30 July 1943, p. 110
- Painter, George D., 'New Novels', Listener, 2 December 1948, p. 856
- Parrish, Phillip, 'New Novels', Tribune, 2 June 1950, p. 17
- Phelps, Robert, 'The Vision of Henry Green', Hudson Review, 5 (1953), pp. 614-20
- Pickrel, Paul, 'Outstanding Novels', Yale Review, 39 (1950), pp. 765-8
- Pons, Maurice, 'Pour Saluer Henry Green', La Revue de Paris, July 1956, pp. 86-91
- Pritchett, V.S., 'The Future of Fiction', New Writing and Daylight, 7 (1946), pp. 75-81
'Back from the War', New York Times Book Review, 1 October 1950, pp. 4, 28
'A Literary Letter from the British Capital', New York Times Book Review, 7 January 1951, p. 14
'Green on Doting', New Yorker, 17 May 1952, pp. 121-2, 125-6
'Henry Yorke, Henry Green', London Magazine, new series, 14, no. 2 (1974), pp. 28-32
'In the Echo Chamber', New Statesman, 23 September 1977, pp. 403-4
- Pryce-Jones, Alan, 'In the Glow of the Fires', Observer, 4 July 1943, p. 3
- Quennell, Peter, 'Mr Green Does It Again', Daily Mail, 6 May 1950, p. 4
- Quinton, Anthony, 'A French View of "Loving"', London Magazine, 6, no. 4, (1959), pp. 25-35
- Reed, Henry, 'New Novels', New Statesman and Nation, 5 May 1945, p. 292
'New Novels', Listener, 28 November 1946, p. 766
- Rees, Goronwy 'Column', Encounter, 49, no. 4 (1977), p. 51

- Richardson, John, 'New Novels', New Statesman and Nation, 20 May 1950, pp. 584-6
- Richardson, Maurice, 'Portrait of Brian Howard', Listener, 18 January 1958, pp. 69-73
- Rolo, C.J., 'Reader's Choice', Atlantic Monthly, 186 (October 1950), p. 86
- Rosenfield, Isaac, 'The Case Against Pure Sensibility', Kenyon Review, 12 (1950), pp. 543-7
- Russell, John, 'There It Is', Kenyon Review, 26 (1964), pp. 433-61
- Schorer, Mark, 'Introduction to Henry Green's World', New York Times Book Review, 9 October 1949, pp. 1, 22
'The Real and Unreal Worlds of Henry Green', New York Times Book Review, 31 December 1950, pp. 5, 13
- Scott, J.D., 'New Novels', New Statesman and Nation, 10 May 1952, pp. 564-6
- Shapiro, Stephen A., 'Henry Green's Back: the Presence of the Past', Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction, 7, no. 1 (1964), pp. 87-95
- Shrapnel, Norman, 'Surprisingly Different', Guardian, 8 June 1978, p. 14
- Simon, Kate, 'Fiction Parade', New Republic, 1 October 1951, p. 20
- Snow, C.P., 'Books and Writers', Spectator, 22 September 1950, p. 320
- Southern, Terry, 'The Art of Fiction XXII', Paris Review, 19 (1958), pp. 60-77
- Spurling, Hilary, 'Protective Camouflage', Observer, 13 May 1979, p. 36
- Stokes, Edward, 'Henry Green, Dispossessed Poet', Australian Quarterly, 28 (December 1956), pp. 84-91
- Sturrock, John, 'Writing', Times Literary Supplement, 26 August 1977, p. 1023
- Symons, Julian, 'Doubting', Times Literary Supplement, 23 June 1978, p. 695
- Taylor, D.S., 'Catalytic Rhetoric: Henry Green's Theory of the Modern Novel', Criticism, (Detroit), 7 (Winter 1965), pp. 81-99
- Toynbee, Philip, 'New Novels', New Statesman and Nation, 26 June 1943, p. 422
'Selected Notices', Horizon, 15 (1947), pp. 74-5
'The Novels of Henry Green', Partisan Review, 16 (1949), pp. 487-97
'The Gift of Empathy', Observer, 19 February 1978, p. 32
- Trilling, Diana, 'The Comic View', New York Times Book Review, 28 March 1950, pp. 1, 20
- Turner, Myron, 'The Imagery of Wallace Stevens and Henry Green', Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, 8, no. 1 (1967), pp. 60-77

Vinaver, Michel, 'Essai Sur Un Roman', Lettres Nouvelles, June/July 1953, pp. 417-33, 550-65

Waugh, Evelyn, 'A Neglected Masterpiece', Graphic, 14 June 1930, p. 588

Weatherhead, A. Kingsley, 'Structure and Texture in Henry Green's Latest Novels', Accent, 19 (1959), pp. 111-22

Weaver, Robert L., 'The Novels of Henry Green', Canadian Forum, January 1951, pp. 227-31

Welty, Eudora, 'Henry Green: a Novelist of the Imagination', Texas Quarterly, 4 (Autumn 1961), pp. 246-56

Wilson, Angus, 'New Novels', Listener, 4 May 1950, p. 801
'Living and Loving', Observer, 28 August 1977, p. 24

UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

Ashbery, John, 'Three Novels of Henry Green', unpubl. diss., University of Columbia, 1950

Transcript, 'The Contemporary English Novel', B.B.C., 4 July 1950

Transcript, 'New Soundings', B.B.C., 9 January 1952

Transcript, 'Recent Novels', B.B.C., 20 June 1958

Script, Doting, adapted Denis Constanduros, B.B.C. Radio 4, 3 February 1975

Tape recording, 'Drawing Tears out of the Stone', B.B.C. Radio 3, 28 December 1975

Green MS, Blindness, British Library, Loan 67/1

Green MS, Party Going, British Library, Loan 67/2

Green MS, Pack My Bag, British Library, Loan 67/3

Green MS, Caught, British Library, Loan 67/4