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Can a Sinner Be a Saint? Graham Greene's Unorthodox Saints in *The Power and the Glory* and *Brighton Rock*

Graham Greene never regarded himself as “a Catholic writer, but a writer who took characters with Catholic ideas as his material”¹. However, beginning with *Brighton Rock*, most of Greene's major works revolve around the Catholic faith.

Francis L. Kunkel suggests that “Greene would not be able to present the drama of humans' inner conflict between the fatal attraction of evil and the redemptive power of grace” (101) without applying the Roman Catholic point of view. Only a person who is himself concerned with such notions can really understand the moral dilemmas concerning faith and introduce them without being superficial.

Greene's Catholic novels present the world in a way strikingly different from what one might have expected. It is not a place where morality and virtue are considered superior in any way. Reality is shown as a battlefield on which different worlds collide.

Greene's characters are trapped between opposing realms of values. On the one hand, as Kunkel also notices, they are preoccupied with notions connected with God, virtue and salvation. On the other hand, however, they seem to be strongly drawn not only to evil but also to damnation itself (101).

Bosco states that “Greene's novels portray characters that come to stand on the border of acceptance or rejection of personal salvation” (17). The decision that they are forced to make is by no means an easy one. For instance in *Brighton Rock* and in *The Power and the Glory*, both Rose and the whisky priest can be characterized by their deep love towards God. This love makes them “heroes of Greene's book [as] it is the love for God that mainly survives because in his eyes they can imagine themselves always drab, seedy, unsuccessful, and therefore worthy of notice” (Francis Wyndham 7). They are fully aware of their own sins and weaknesses and this is probably the source of their drama. Many a time Rose and the

¹ Graham Greene, 86, Dies; Novelist of the Soul.” [NewYorkTimes.Com](http://www.nytimes.com/1991/04/04/obituaries/graham-greene-86-dies-novelist-of-the-soul.html), 4 April 1991. 28 May 2010<
<http://www.nytimes.com/1991/04/04/obituaries/graham-greene-86-dies-novelist-of-the-soul.html>> Jones, Sarah. “Graham Greene Brighton Rock: The Characterisation of Good and Evil.” [Literature Study Online](http://www.literature-study-online.com/essays/graham-greene.html). August 2004 <[http:// www.literature-study-online.com/essays/graham-greene.html](http://www.literature-study-online.com/essays/graham-greene.html)>.

whisky priest even despise themselves for actions which are against the Church and Christian faith. However, they are ready to give up their religion for the sake of others. The choice between salvation and damnation thus presented as a choice between the love for God and love for other people. This poses something of a paradox. As far as the Christian religion is concerned love is considered to be one of its bases, as the following quotation from the New Testament confirms:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. [...] You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (Matt 22:37-39).

However, it is love that makes both Rose and the whisky priest miserable as it leads to their presumed damnation. In a way they are forced to reject their religion. They consciously commit sins and cease to perform their religious obligations. Although they are fully aware of the consequences of their actions they do not stop as they are more concerned with those they love, Pinkie, Brigitta and all the other deserted people of Tabasco, than they are with themselves. Both Rose and the whisky priest perceive themselves as damnable creatures since every one of their sins is “an outrage perpetrated against the person of Christ” (Kunkel 138). Damnation of their beloved is something that they are not able to bear.

This brings to mind the philosophy of a French poet and essayist, Charles Péguy. Greene was fascinated with the ideas that the Frenchman presented in his works. Péguy was a strong believer, however he ceased to attend masses and take sacraments, bringing himself a theoretical downfall as he could not stand the thought of other people, especially his beloved ones, suffering damnation. That “voluntary damnation” along with “the sinner is at the very heart of Christianity” are Péguy’s most well known ideas, which reappear in Greene’s novels. Both Rose and the whisky priest seem to follow the idea presented in *Jeanne d’Arc* where the protagonist states that: “if the greatest suffering of the damned is that God is absent from their eternity [...] [and] if it is necessary to save the damned from the absence of God by abandoning my own soul to the absence of God, let it go into this absence” (qtd. Marjorie Villiers 85). The second belief highlights that “no one is more competent than a sinner in matters of Christianity. No one, unless it be a saint” (Péguy 179). Greene’s Rose and the whisky priest seem to be good examples of that notion.

Greene’s novels, as Bosco also notices, can be perceived as a certain dialogue with God, in which he objects to some views originating from the Catholic religion such as the idea of damnation. He manipulates those notions in an attempt to show the most humane approach to faith and belief, with all the uncertainties and doubts that it may arouse (18). Greene seems not be concerned with goodness and the virtue of people. He places emphasis on “the conflict between good and evil that takes place daily within a man’s soul” (Wyndham 8). His characters are Catholics torn between the opposing realms. Both Rose and the whisky priest believe in God

and are concerned with the afterlife. What is more, they both are willing to apply the notion of “voluntary damnation” in their own lives as “it is suggested in Rose’s wish to join Pinkie in suicide in *Brighton Rock* and embodied in *The Power and the Glory* when the whisky priest prays mournfully for his illegitimate daughter” (Bosco 42). Since they are ready to sacrifice themselves irrespective of their own fate, they may be perceived as saint figures. What is quite striking is that Rose and the whisky priest are forced to commit sins in order to achieve their aims. However, one needs to remember that by doing so they perform an act of altruism and selflessness. The fact that they are sinners actually makes them understand Christianity better. Rose’s and the whisky priest’s preoccupation with notions of damnation and salvation puts them “in the heart of Christianity” (Bosco 41) as it is only because of their faith that they are aware of their sins and only because of their sins that they are able really to appreciate God’s mercy.

There is one more of Péguy’s ideas that seems to have influenced Greene’s work. The Frenchman believed that “Christians of all kinds are needed to make up Christendom” and that “there have been saints of all sorts, but today perhaps there is a need for a new kind of saint” (qtd. Villiers 244-245). In other words, religion, to be strong and genuine, cannot claim that it consists only of epitomes of virtue. The Church is made of people and to err is human. In that way, saints should be more humane in order to show the accessibility of God’s mercy. Greene seems to apply this idea to his works as his characters are “men with more than a normal capacity for evil”, however, according to him, those men are also “the greatest saints” (Kunkel 110).

The present article is devoted to the notion of unorthodox saints which Greene developed in his fiction. Throughout the presentation of two characters from his major novels, namely Rose from *Brighton Rock* and the whisky priest from *The Power and the Glory*, an attempt will be made to decide not only whether in Greene’s view corruption and lack of virtue go along with the lack of divine love, but also whether it is possible to become a saint through the martyrdom of committing sins.

The notion of a saint is deeply rooted in European culture which is strongly influenced by the Christian faith. The term was already used in the New Testament to describe a member of the Christian community. However, it is more frequently used with reference to people noted for their holiness, and usually venerated during their lifetime or after death. Even though Greene’s whisky priest is not a character to whom such a definition could be thoroughly applied, it does not mean that he is not to be considered a saint in a broader sense of this term.

Initially, we perceive the whisky priest as a contradiction of our entrenched conception of a priest. He is an alcoholic, struggling with his own moral weaknesses. While under the influence of his disastrous addiction, he performs culpable actions such as having sexual intercourse with one of his parishioners or baptizing a boy

“Brigitta”. However, Boardman states that “the ‘goodness’ and the ‘badness’ of the priest are, as in all Greene’s character studies, a matter of perspective” (66). Therefore, one should not form any abrupt judgment about him before getting acquainted with all the facts.

The first thing to be considered when discussing the whisky priest’s saint-hood is the fact that he himself is completely aware of his own flaws and imperfections. He is highly self-critical and far from justifying himself to anyone. Many a time he describes himself as “a bad priest”. What is more, he even states that “evil ran like malaria in his veins” (Greene 139). Furthermore, when Maria states her opinion of the priest, he does not object to it or try to defend himself:

I know you’re a bad priest. That time we were together—I bet that wasn’t all you’ve done. I’ve heard things, I can tell you. Do you think God wants you to stay and die—a whisky priest like you? (Greene 79)

Instead of objecting, the whisky priest stands still and listens humbly. The priest feels ashamed of his own deeds. Both Francis L. Kunkel (112) and Gwenn Boardman (65) suggest that the whisky priest is torn between the secular and the spiritual world. In terms of the human world he seems to “yield readily to the word’s demands”, the situation is, however, quite different when it comes to the spiritual world.

Although the priest in his own view is corrupt and simply bad, in the course of the novel he proves to be quite the opposite. This point can be confirmed by making a comparison between the whisky priest and Padre Jose. The unnamed priest reproaches himself for not being like the latter. Many times he speaks favourably about Jose, considering him to be not only a better man, but also a better priest:

Perhaps Padre José was the better man—he was so humble that he was ready to accept any amount of mockery: at the best of times he had never considered himself worthy of the priesthood [...] It was not, like some more intellectual priests, that he was over — scrupulous: he had been simply filled with an overwhelming sense of God (Greene 92).

By recalling this, the priest shows genuine admiration for Jose’s priesthood and deep connection with God. Even when Jose categorically refuses to help the unnamed priest, when he is pursued by the Red Shirts, he does not blame him. What is more, the priest feels pity for Jose when he refuses to hear his confession because of his wife’s prohibition. From the priest’s point of view, Jose is presented almost as an epitome of virtue.

However, there is also another side to Jose, based on both other people’s and his own opinion about himself. Regardless of the fact that he might have been a good and devoted priest, due to revolution he becomes a mockery. He thoroughly despises himself for the denial of his church obligations and for getting married:

"[...] he knew that he was a buffoon. An old man who married was grotesque enough, but an old priest ... He stood outside himself and wondered whether he was even fit for hell. He was just a fat old impotent man mocked and taunted between the sheets. [...] Wherever he went, whatever he did, he defiled God. [...] he was like an obscene picture hung here every day to corrupt children with"

(Greene 29).

Even though Jose is aware of his sins, weaknesses and the probable consequences of his action for his soul, he does not do anything to change the situation. He may be a priest by definition, but he ceases to be one in reality. This view is confirmed by another striking difference between the whisky priest and Padre Jose. As Allot points out, "Padre José appears in *The Power and the Glory* as a foil to the whisky priest to make clear that the latter could have preferred abject safety to uneasy flight in a circle closed only by the priest's own conscience" (164).

In other words, the unnamed priest fulfils his obligation regardless of his own safety and, sometimes, even against his own will. His escape is purely motivated by his sense of duty and responsibility for other people in terms of religion: "He had tried to escape, but he was like the King of a West African tribe, the slave of his people, who may not even lie down in case the winds should fail" (Greene 19). The unnamed priest perceives himself as the people's servant. In spite of the fact that he lives in a state of mortal sin, he continues to serve God, because he believes that his person and his deeds are irrelevant when it comes to the salvation of other people. Kunkel accurately summarizes the priest's attitude stating that "Lest God should cease to exist "in all this space between the sea and the mountains" this brandy-bibber dare not stop baptizing, hearing confessions, and saying Mass- even at risk of his death in mortal sin" (116). For the whisky priest, people and God are the highest value. Padre Jose, contrary to what the whisky priest thinks, is the direct opposite of the priest. He is a coward who puts his own safety before his moral obligations. He ignores people's pleas for help. Padre Jose refuses to say prayers, celebrate Mass or hear confessions. Sometimes he feels a temptation to fulfil his priestly obligations, for example when a man asks him to say a prayer over his daughter's grave:

An enormous temptation came to Padre José to take the risk and say a prayer over the grave: he felt the wild attraction of doing one's duty and stretched a sign of the cross in the air; then fear came back, like a drug. Contempt and safety waited for him down by the quay: he wanted to get away. He sank hopelessly down on his knees and entreated them: "Leave me alone." [...] He knew he was in the grip of the unforgivable sin, despair (Greene 49).

Faith and God is presented here as "the good temptation who [which] may be resisted throughout a lifetime" (Kenneth Allot and Miriam Farris 179). In the case of Padre Jose this "sacred temptation" is far weaker than his secular fear of death and pain. Consequently, "the temptation passes, fear comes back 'like a drug',

and Jose returns to the contempt and safety of the house” (Allot 179). He is aware of his sins and he knows what he ought to do. However, his weakness is far stronger than his sense of duty.

To sum up, the whisky priest and Padre Jose are significantly different from each other in terms of behaviour and morality. Paradoxically, the unnamed priest, who considers himself inferior to Padre Jose, is clearly superior to him when it comes to love and attitude towards God and people. This juxtaposition highlights the whisky priest’s extreme humility, which may be regarded as another suggestion of his sainthood.

While discussing whether the unnamed priest may be considered a saint or not, it is important to emphasise that everything is a matter of perspective. This notion can be confirmed by contrast between the whisky priest and the pious woman. The latter appears to be an epitome of virtue while the unnamed priest is presented as a rather abominable character in terms of morality. The pious woman seems to be a deeply religious person. She despises all people in the cell, apart from the priest, whom she tries to justify when he admits that he is a “a bad priest”. By doing so, she attempts to contrast her high moral standard with the other prisoners’ absolute lack of virtue. However, it turns out that “the pious woman in the cell is its least charitable inmate. Her only official crime has been the possession of holy books, but her greater crime is the failure to love her fellow men” (Boardman 71). Even though she is unable to feel pity for any other person, she is convinced of her goodness. Instead of agreeing with her that the people in cell are murderers and thieves who are corrupted and simply bad, the priest describes the prisoners as God’s images:

When you visualized a man or woman carefully, you could always begin to feel pity ... that was a quality God's image carried with it ... when you saw the lines at the corners of the eyes, the shape of the mouth, how the hair grew, it was impossible to hate. Hate was just a failure of imagination (Greene 131).

The difference between the two of them is quite striking. The priest is filled with love for the people that surround him. He is also aware of the beauty of some sins, namely those that result from love. The priest even sympathises with the pious woman:

Poor woman, she's had nothing, nothing at all [...]. He was more out of touch with her kind than he had ever been: he would have known what to say to her in the old days, feeling no pity at all, speaking with half a mind a platitude or two (Greene 132).

The priest understands the difference between his faith and the faith of the pious woman. She is concentrated on holy books and teachings that seem convenient to her. The pious woman may seem to have moral virtues but the impression is

only superficial, just as her beliefs are. Even though love is the basis of Christianity, she is unable to feel it towards others. The priest, on the other hand, is deeply united with those human beings. He sympathizes with them. He is capable of something that is out of reach for the pious woman, i.e. seeing God in every person:

But at the centre of his own faith there always stood the convincing mystery — that we were made in God's image — God was the parent, but He was also the policeman, the criminal, the priest, the maniac, and the judge (Greene 101).

To sum up, even though the pious woman may seem to be a good person, who unlike the priest does not live in the state of the mortal sin, she is by no means a better human being. This confirms that the secular world and all the deeds connected with it do not always go together with the higher values of the spiritual world. This is why the whisky priest may be considered, in contrast to the pious woman, a saint.

Another indication of the priest's sainthood is the comparison, noticed also by Kunkel (117-118), between the priest and Christ, drawn on the basis of the events preceding the execution. To begin with, the mestizo can be perceived as a counterpart of Judas. This notion appears many a time in the novel: "He [the whisky priest] knew. He was in the presence of Judas" (Greene 91). The unnamed priest does not trust the mestizo and tries to maintain the distance between them. From the very beginning the whisky priest reasonably assumes that his companion is a traitor. Consequently, he feels deep distrust of the man and increases his vigilance. "Christ would not have found Judas sleeping in the garden: Judas could watch more than one hour" (Greene 92). Mestizo, similarly to Judas, highlights his deep devotion to religion and, to a certain extent, to the Priest, even though he betrays him at the end just as Judas betrays Christ. What is quite striking is the fact that the whisky priest does not blame or hate the mestizo. Instead he tries to justify his actions. What is more, the priest considers himself to be a worse person than the half-cast: "He prayed silently: "God forgive me": Christ had died for this man too: how could he pretend with his pride and lust and cowardice to be any more worthy of that death than this half-caste? This man intended to betray him for money which he needed, and he had betrayed God not even for real lust" (Greene 99). The unnamed priest is able to understand the mestizo's reasons and to look at his situation from different angles: "the priest thought, he deserved his reward—seven hundred pesos wasn't so much, but he could probably live on it in that dusty hopeless village — for a whole year. [...] and it was quite possible, he thought, that a year without anxiety might save this man's soul" (Greene 100). The fact that he sees goodness in every person is very Christ-like. He seems to genuinely believe that every person is good and all wrong deeds results from bad life conditions. The only person the priest seems to condemn is himself.

Another important issue is the priest's wish to flee to La Casas, which can be compared to the temptation of Christ in the desert. Allot writes that "Las Casas might be in the fourth dimension— it is further away than Heaven or Hell and the priest knows it" (186). The whisky priest is aware that he can survive only by escaping to Las Casas, that it is his only hope of staying alive. However, he, like Christ, does not yield to temptation due to his sense of responsibility and deep love towards people and God.

The consolation which the priest offers the Yankee bears more than a passing resemblance to the consolation which the good thief gains from Jesus. Again, the whisky priest puts other people above his own safety. The Yankee, even though he is a murderer, wants to help the priest. However, the unnamed priest's sense of priestly duty is far stronger and instead of himself he is preoccupied thinking about the soul of the man.

"This is your chance. At the last moment. Like the thief. You have murdered men— children perhaps", he added, remembering the little black heap under the cross. "But that need not be so important. It only belongs to this life, a few years — it's over already. You can drop it all here, in this hut, and go on for ever..." (Greene 189).

What is more the Yankee can be compared not only to the good thief but also to Barabbas. This suggests another point of resemblance between the whisky priest and Christ, namely the fact that before the execution, they both are surrounded by murderers, the Yankee in the whiskey priest's case and Barabbas in Christ's. In both cases religion is presented as a crime worse than homicide. People decide to condemn to death both Jesus and the priest, instead of serious criminals.

Finally, the glory accompanying the death of the priest is similar to that surrounding Christ's death. They both sacrifice themselves and die for people; however, not only for those good and beautiful, but also for the corrupted and depraved ones. Furthermore, the unnamed priest's death influences other people – Luis being a good example. At the beginning, as Allot states "Luis objects to the sentimentality in the martyr's biographies" (178). He finds them boring and seems not to understand the real meaning of faith and the church. Luis admires the lieutenant and other revolutionists. However, the unnamed priest's death influences him greatly. He "rejects the lieutenant –aiming a blob of spittle at his revolver butt and assumes Coral's 'duty' by ministering to the new priest" (Allot 190). The priest seems to be the last priest in the state, therefore his death is almost equal with the death of the Church. Consequently many characters, after the priest's death, are left with a sense of "desertion and loss" (Allot 190). The influence of the execution can be compared with the great impact which Christ's death had on the lives of all people.

Love as a notion appears many a time in *The Power and the Glory*. Throughout the novel the reader gets to observe not only different kinds of love but also different

approaches to understanding it. Love, as it is illustrated by a verse from the New Testament: “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13), is the basis of Christianity. Therefore, this notion may be crucial in discussing the sainthood of the unnamed priest. Keeping that in mind, the priest’s behaviour, which does not always seem to be appropriate in terms of morality, can be sanctified as it is clearly motivated by love. The whisky priest thinks that the human heart is unreliable. He also believes that God’s love is beyond people’s understanding. What is even more, it may be terrifying:

God *is* love. I don't say the heart doesn't feel a taste of it, but what a taste. The smallest glass of love mixed with a pint pot of ditch-water. We wouldn't recognize *that* love. It might even look like hate. It would be enough to scare us—God's love. [...] I don't know a thing about the mercy of God: I don't know how awful the human heart looks to Him (Greene 199).

However, according to the priest, this is the only genuine love that exists in the world. Although the priest states that he does not understand God’s love or mercy, his deeds suggests the opposite. He is very critical and self despising. On the other hand, he seems unable to feel hate towards other people.

What is also important is that the priest, by stating: “I do know this — that if there's ever been a single man in this state damned, then I'll be damned too.” He said slowly: “I wouldn't want it to be any different. I just want justice, that's all” (Greene 200). Greene here alludes to the ‘philosophy’ of Charles Péguy. As Allot comments “Péguy’s all-inclusive charity springing from an overwhelming pity has stayed with Greene in *The Power and the Glory*” (166). The whisky priest, just the Frenchman,” is ready to be damned for the sake of others” (Allot 166). The whisky priest loves his illegitimate daughter and is ready to sacrifice himself for her. He knows that she is a fruit of sin and this is why he is afraid that he is not going to find salvation. The priest finds himself trapped in some kind of a vicious circle. On the one hand, he believes that God is love; on the other he feels guilty for expressing it.

“Love is not wrong, but love should be happy and open — it is only wrong when it is secret, unhappy... it can be more unhappy than anything but the loss of God. It *is* the loss of God. [...] "Lust is not the worst thing. [...], lust may turn into love that we have to avoid it. And when we love our sin then we are damned indeed” (Greene 172).

The priest’s biggest tragedy is the “wound of sin” (Boardman 66), which “includes the fathering of his daughter: the result of five minutes following fear, despair, half a bottle of brandy, and a sense of loneliness, [...] the act has resulted in alienation from his heavenly Father and earthly daughter. Yet the priest still carries his own wound [...] and the Crucifixion symbolizing His forgiveness” (Boardman 68). Among all the priest’s sufferings, probably the certainty that his daughter is corrupted is one of the most painful ones. He knows he is helpless when it comes to

Brigitta. “ He recognizes that he is powerless against the thronged word of terror and lust into which he has brought her. She stands, small and blackly defiant, malicious and already corrupted, between him and God” (Allot 180).

The whisky priest is consumed with guilt. He is torn between the love for his daughter and his idea of priestly duties. He is not able to forgive himself for loving his sin. Once again he refers to the idea of sacrificing himself for the sake of others.

“O God, help her. Damn me, I deserve it, but let her live for ever.” This was the love he should have felt for every soul in the world [...]. He prayed: “God help them” (Greene 208).

The whisky priest many a time in the novel seems to care about other people like his cell companions, Coral or Trench. However, at the same time he feels guilty as he believes that he should love all people in the same way he loves his daughter. The priest knows that this is the only kind of love that is “great enough to move him to beg for his own damnation in place of another’s” (Allot 189). In other words, the whisky priest is strongly convinced that his daughter is the only person for whom he is ready to be damned. However, one should keep in mind, that he is ready to die for all people in the state who are in need of priest. Many a time he has a chance to escape and lead a safe life away from the persecution. He, however, decides to stay and perform his priestly duties. The priest may not believe in his own goodness. However, his deeds suggest that he is simply wrong. He sacrifices his soul and life for the sake of other people. In doing so, he reminds us of Christ who died in order to save all humans. Having realized that, it is hard not to perceive the whisky priest as a saint figure.

The Power and the Glory can also be seen as a story of self discovery and personal growth. Throughout the novel one may observe the development of the whisky priest in terms of his soul. Boardman suggests that the priest moves from “childish irresponsibility through adolescent giggling and sins to the maturity of acceptance” (66). In the course of the novel, one may observe gradual changes in the behaviour and attitude of the priest. He used to be the round faced comfortable cleric more concerned with earthly pleasures than with his duties connected with the church. The priest, however, becomes aware of his faults and, in addition, is not able to forgive himself.

The most interesting thing about the priest’s change is the fact that “only through his sin does the priest reach anything like the selfless and devotion he feels to be required of the saint” (Allot 189). In the course of the action, the unnamed priest becomes a martyr-like figure. The longer the priest stays in the country, the bigger his sense of duty is. All the time he is haunted by guilt, which results from his flaws, weaknesses and sins. On the other hand, however, this along with love is his

only motivation. The priest does not see his own good deeds. He does not try to justify himself. He is as humble as only saints can be. The priest is not aware of the great influence he has on the people he meets. Coral, Trench, Luis—they all change after meeting him or after his death, but the whisky priest never becomes aware of that fact. Instead, he dies believing that everything he has done is useless. He also “knew now that at the end there was only one thing that counted — to be a saint” (Greene 210). However, he is convinced that this is beyond him.

Taking everything into consideration, the whisky priest, even though he is not a flawless character, is to be considered a saint. The beauty of his soul, his selflessness, deep devotion to religion and people turns out to be more important than his faults. What is more, it is because of his humanity that he gives hope to others. This novel implies that God chooses the whisky priest to be a sanctified figure, therefore there is a hope for every human being. The whisky priest does exactly what a saint does: he shows people that God’s grace and mercy is something that cannot be imagined and is beyond human understanding.

Similarly to the whisky priest, Rose from Greene’s *Brighton Rock* does not seem to bear any resemblance to the Catholic notion of a saint. However, the detailed discussion of her character, behaviour and motivation, based on the events from the novel, suggests that Rose is a far more complex character than she seems to be at the beginning. Moreover, as the novel evolves, many arguments in favour of the view that she is to be considered a saint can be found.

Rose, just like Pinkie, comes from a very miserable background. She lives in the slums with her parents who seem not to care about her at all. They show absolute coldness and lack of feeling towards their daughter, as is clear when they agree to her marriage after receiving the amount of money that they wanted. However, the hard conditions of Rose’s life do not influence her in the way they influence Pinkie, since she manages to grow up as a good person. Although she is very young, she is extremely hard-working and not really used to any kind of relaxation. Unlike Pinkie, she does not complain about her life, being grateful for what she has and accepting everything that life brings her with thankfulness. What is more, she has the ability to appreciate simple things like eating ice cream, a walk on the pier or a recording of Pinkie’s voice. Rose is also a good Catholic, saying her prayers and attending masses. In that respect she is the exact opposite of the Boy. Even though theoretically he is a Catholic, he does not act according to the Church’s teaching. Pinkie is a sadistic young man who has chosen Hell over Heaven. Rose, on the other hand, possesses certain moral standards by which she perceives the world. However, under the influence of Pinkie she knowingly and wilfully abandons everything she believes in. That may suggest that Rose is a weak and submissive person. Even so, she might also be considered stubborn, sometimes even to the verge of foolishness, especially when she risks her life by staying with Pinkie, regardless of the fact that he is a murderer. Keeping in mind Rose’s character and

deeds, to describe her as a holy person seems unjustified. Nevertheless, while analyzing different aspects of her character and behaviour, many arguments to support the view that Rose is a saintly figure can be found.

In *Brighton Rock*, Rose finds herself between Pinkie and Ida, in a place where good and evil exist simultaneously, as Sarah Jones also believes. Jones claims that “She [Rose] is, in many ways, the link between the two [Ida and Pinkie], a connection between Good and Evil”. Most of all, however, Rose completes Pinkie in a way he does not like but is aware of:

“He was aware that she belonged to his life, like a room or a chair : she was something which completed him[...] What was most evil in him needed her : it couldn't get along without goodness”
(Greene 126).

Rose represents the force which has to go along with evil, as it cannot exist alone. The same is true of the concept of heaven and hell as treated in the novel. They need to coexist, because this is the only way that both make sense. Rose is not consciously acquainted with the concept, but still she knows the distinction between good and evil. This knowledge is the reason why it is clear to her that there is a gap between them, i.e. her and Pinkie, and the rest of the world. In contrast to the concept of good and evil, those of right and wrong are of no meaning to them but, apparently, are important in the world represented by Ida. What is also important is that Rose is acutely aware that Pinkie is a bad man. This is illustrated by the conversation she has with Ida:

‘I know one thing you don't. I know the difference between Right and Wrong. They didn't teach you *that* at school.’

Rose didn't answer, [...] Their taste was extinguished by stronger foods – Good and Evil [...] – she knew [...] that Pinkie was evil – what did it matter in that case whether he was right or wrong?
(Greene 199)

Rose has her own viewpoint in which things are either good or evil. There are no things in between. The choice she makes is conscious.

Rose is Pinkie's most loyal supporter (Jones). She loves him and that ultimate love makes her different in a way. She may seem to be naive in her affection and in her belief that Pinkie returns her love. She is still very young and no one has really cared for her before. The love she has for Pinkie presents her as a tragic figure. Her love is so strong that, even though she has a great faith in God, she wilfully and knowingly abandons it and chooses her beloved. This is why she makes the decision to be damned rather than let Pinkie be damned alone.

"She [...] was about to mutter her quick "Our Fathers" and "Hail Mary's" while she dressed, when she remembered again... What was the good of praying now? She'd finished with all that: she had chosen her side; if they damned him they'd got to damn her too"

(Greene 189).

Rose makes it obvious which side she has chosen by saying so once again. She rejects her religion, but still is bound up with her faith. In *Graham Greene*, Francis Wyndham writes that "Rose is good, and she, too knows the nature of her sin when she marries Pinkie in the registry office"(16). She has made her choice even though she feels guilty as a result of committing sin. Yet despite that, she does not stop loving God and her conscience does not change. According to Francis L. Kunkel's *The Labyrinthine Ways of Graham Greene*, Rose becomes an instrument of God's grace by which Pinkie can be saved from damnation (105). This view may seem rather radical; however, unconditional love is according to Christianity the highest value. Rose does not, in fact, act against Christianity by choosing love over religion. She wants to sacrifice herself in an attempt to save the soul of the person she loves, being even ready to die for him. "Rose [...] could bear anything so long as she thought Pinkie loved her"(Wyndham 16). When Ida suggests that Pinkie may hurt her, she says: "greater love hath no man than this" (Greene 246). This fragment alludes to the saying in St John's Gospel: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12-13). Rose's sacrificial love for Pinkie is thus another indication of her goodness. The fact is that by loving Pinkie she shows her deep love for God. On the one hand, she abandons Catholicism, but on the other one, she acts according to its standards.

Rose talks about damnation, choosing the 'evil' side, and about the incongruity of saying her prayers when she has decided to live in sin. If there were no place for God in her life, she would not be bothered by Pinkie's soul being "engaged in its adventure with eternity" (Kunkel 102). If her faith were not deeply rooted in her, she would not think about their, i.e. her and Pinkie's, afterlife (Henry J. Donaghy 36). In fact, she rejects her religion only on the surface since, deep inside, she always remains connected with God. This is probably the only motivating force behind her actions. Wyndham claims that Rose "will risk damnation for him [Pinkie], out of love and a blind trust in the mercy of God"(16). She knows that she is not able to prevent Pinkie from destroying himself. She loves him and even though this love as human "may be impotent" (Kunkel 145) she, having faith in God, wants to sacrifice herself to save him in the afterlife.

The fact that Greene uses a number of biblical and religious references in his novel may support the view that other aspects of Catholicism may be relevant to the interpretation of *Brighton Rock's* characters. The notion of the medieval Christians who were sanctified after kissing lepers is worth looking at. It all started with

Saint Francis of Assisi, who had felt deep repugnance for lepers. Not only had he given them alms but also kissed their hands. The ascetics, inspired with the behaviour of the saint, began to follow in his footsteps ("Saint Francis of Assisi" Encyclopædia Britannica). To a certain extent, this idea demonstrates similarities to Rose's actions which, therefore, may be considered holy. Pinkie's soul is definitely deeply decayed. Most of the time he acts as if he had no conscience at all. He kills people with shocking composure. What is even more terrifying is the pleasure he gets from the suffering of others. Drawing on the analogy between Pinkie and medieval Christians, one may assume that Pinkie's soul is the equivalent of a leper's. Thus, by loving him and sacrificing her eternity to be with him, Rose behaves in a way as holy as that of the medieval Christians.

Another side to the issue of the holiness of Rose is presented in Francis L. Kunkel's thesis. Kunkel regards Sonia, from Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* as a prototype of Rose. In his opinion both women are the light bearers who offer regeneration to the sons of darkness, i.e. Raskolnikov and Pinkie. Sonia is a prostitute full of Christian virtue. She serves as a guide for Raskolnikov in spiritual matters. Kunkel believes that Rose and Sonia are self-sacrificing girls who are those men's only hope. Raskolnikov would probably never change if it were not for Sonia. The case is similar with the protagonists of *Brighton Rock*. If Rose did not try to save Pinkie's soul through her sacrifice and love, he would not have any chance of being saved from damnation. The comparison of Sonia and Rose also highlights that Christian virtues and good deeds do not always go together (Kunkel 100-112). That point is supported by the ending of *Brighton Rock*, when the priest says: "I mean a Catholic is more capable of evil than anyone." (Greene 246).

What is more, this idea was also confirmed by Greene himself in his essay *The Lost Childhood*, where he wrote that "The greatest saints have been men with more than a normal capacity for evil" (93). This is to say, that sinners are also capable of holy actions. Consequently, when considering Rose, one should only look at her reasons and her faith and not at her sins or the imperfections of her character.

In discussing whether Rose may be regarded as a saint, the final chapter of the novel is crucial. After the death of Pinkie, Rose goes to church and speaks to an old priest. He tells her about God's mercy and also about a certain Frenchman, whom critics identify as Charles Péguy (Bernard Bergonzi 101):

"This man decided that if any soul was going to be damned, he would be damned too. He never took the sacraments, he never married his wife in church. [...] some people think he was well, a saint. I think he died in what we are told is mortal sin I'm not sure; [...] You can't conceive, my child, nor can I or anyone the ...appalling... strangeness of the mercy of God"

(Greene 246).

There is a strong link between the Frenchman and Rose. Both of them preferred to be damned rather than let anyone they love be damned. In both cases the choice was made consciously. Additionally, the allusion to Charles Péguy suggests another reason for the closeness between Pinkie and Rose. Evelyn Waugh wrote about the Frenchman: "He feels a kinship with the saints that these conventional church-goers do not know and in his strange, narrow, brooding mind he makes the preposterous deduction that this very true and strong bond is made, not by his faith and love, but by his sins" (102). To put it another way, Rose and Pinkie felt intimacy towards each other not only because of the concept of good completing evil, but also due to their faith. They are both Catholics and by this they possess the awareness of sin. This notion separates them from people like Ida. What is more, if we perceive Rose as a holy figure, we need to keep in mind that she is not an orthodox example of such a person, as she consciously does bad deeds. Thus, according to what Péguy believed, even though Pinkie is damned and Rose is a saint, they are bound together by their committing of sins and their awareness of them. This is also another reason why the Boy needed Rose in his life.

What is more, when considering Rose's conversation with the old priest there is another notion which is worth looking at. While speaking about God's great mercy the priest says:

We must hope and pray [...] The Church does not
demand that we believe any soul is cut off from mercy
(Greene 246).

This quotation may allude to St Paul's epistle to the Romans: "I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren and kinsmen" (Romans 9:3). Peter F. Ellis writes that: "[...] this is the worst fate Paul could imagine, his willingness to accept it proves indisputably his love for his fellow Jews" (241). One can, therefore, state that the old priest suggests an analogy between St Paul and Rose. The former expresses the wish to sacrifice himself for the sake of his "brethren and kinsmen" (Roman 9:3) while Rose is ready to give up everything, including her life, faith and salvation, to save Pinkie. This may suggest that there is still hope for the Boy. Bergonzi, being in favour of this idea, writes that the old priest saying, which is aimed at Rose, "means that we do not have to believe that anyone, however great a sinner is necessarily damned" (101).

What is also important is that the old priest, later in the conversation, refers to the same passage from the Bible as Rose does earlier in the novel: "It was a case of greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his soul for his friend" (Greene 246). The repetition of the quotation about love and also the priest's assurance that any kind of love is good and can help to save a soul suggests that every-

thing Rose does is not pointless. The priest also asks Rose to make her baby a saint to pray for his father. This gives the hope that Pinkie still can be saved. Although this comforts Rose, at the end of the novel she is to discover how wrong she was in imagining that the Boy loved her: "She walked rapidly in the thin June sunlight towards the worst horror of all"(Greene 247). She is going to listen to the recording of Pinkie's voice. Instead of the expected words of affection, however, the Boy has put there what follows: "God damn you, you little bitch, why can't you go back home for ever and let me be?"(Greene 177) Rose, due to everything that has happened to her, is about to discern that "damnation is not something that is imposed- God wishes all humanity to be saved- but something that the impenitent sinner freely and deliberately wills" (Bergonzi 110). In other words, Rose is going to realize that, even though her love could have saved Pinkie, he resisted it and therefore it did not (Janet McCann).

All things considered, it does not matter how unclear Rose's sanctity may seem throughout the novel. What is important is the fact that her holiness becomes clearly apparent near the end. Although, at many points, Rose appears as a tragic and submissive figure who stays by a man who does not even love her, she is a real instrument of God's grace. She is, by no means, a typical saint according to the principles of the church. However, her deeply rooted faith and great love sanctify her. She denies not religion, but herself in an attempt to save Pinkie's soul, acting without regard to her own good. Rose is immature and inexperienced, but still she knows exactly what she wants. Unlike typical saints, she does not fight for her religion or to protect somebody precious or simply worth saving, but she "engages her own soul in its adventure with eternity"(Kunkel 102) just because she values the good of her beloved more than anything. One is tempted to conclude that Rose's behaviour can be seen as Christ-like according to the teachings of the New Testament. It points out that "[...] Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit" (1 Peter 3:18). Rose's similarity to Jesus is emphasised by the fact that Pinkie, for whom she sacrifices herself, is an abominable rather than an admirable person. As it is stated in St Paul's epistle: "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). In other words Rose, just like Christ, chooses to suffer for the unjust. Consequently, in clearly sacrificing herself for love, she is evidently led by God, for whom it is the highest value. Rose in a somewhat Christ-like way illustrates that God's mercy and grace is immeasurable and inconceivable. Only one conclusion can be drawn from the above, namely that Rose is to be considered a saint.

In *Brighton Rock* and *The Power and the Glory*, Greene is mostly concerned with people who are far from being perfect. The number of sinners, as Deryl Davis also suggests, in Greene's works is significantly bigger than the number of

characters who one would consider saints². However, this does not mean that Greene sympathizes with corruption and depravation. He was always interested in the so called “human factor” and this is why most of his novels are concerned with the inner world of the characters, their moral struggle and their weaknesses. Greene does not intend to present his characters as idealized figures. His heroes are truly human in both the best and the worst senses of the word. By presenting the world and his characters in such a manner, Greene “rather than edifying, (...) troubles us” (Kunkel 102). He does not condemn his characters but he also does not try to justify them. What Greene seems to do is to present the human being as he/she really is, instead of presenting the reader with any kind of role model. In other words, his novels are “Catholic without being aggressively sectarian, highly denominationalized, or piously evangelical” (Kunkel 101).

Although Greene “rebelled against the label of Catholic writer” (Jessica Sequeira), the Catholic faith plays an important role in his novels. The biggest tragedy of his characters arises from their beliefs. Their preoccupation with notions of salvation and damnation is the source of their essential dilemma. However, Greene became fascinated with the philosophy of Charles Péguy as they both objected to many teachings of the Church, especially its view on damnation. Greene applied the Frenchman’s idea of “the sinner,[...], who, together with the saint, is at the heart of Christendom (Kunkel 142) together with the notion of “voluntary damnation”(Bosco) in order to express doubts concerning theological questions of saints and damnation.

Both Rose from *Brighton Rock* and the whisky priest from *The Power and the Glory* are torn between their religion and their humanity. They become martyrs haunted by their consciences and trapped between heavenly and earthly values. Neither Rose nor the whisky priest ceases to believe in God. However, the situation forces them to choose between what they believe in and what they love. Paradoxically, in that sense, love is not only “the universal element in any relationship of man to God” (Kunkel 122) but also the cause of his downfall.

The choice which Rose and the whisky priest make is in fact not aimed against God but against Roman Catholic doctrine. Their actions, motivated by love towards other people, bring to mind Jesus’ great command: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:37-39). Both Rose and the whisky priest fulfil both of the commands. Firstly, their awareness of their sins and the torment it gives them, along with the ability to distinguish between good and evil originate from their love to God. Secondly, their sacrifice when Rose decides that “If they damn him [Pinkie] they’d got to damn her, too” (*Brighton Rock*189) and the whisky priest

² <http://www.sojo.net/>

says: “Damn me, I deserve it, but let her [Brigitta] live forever” (*The Power and the Glory* 208) shows how important their loved ones are for them. In that sense, their actions should actually sanctify them as they appear to be selfless, humble and highly self critical characters, ready to be damned in an attempt to save those whom they love.

Greene’s characters, on the one hand, are sinners full of imperfections. However, on the other hand, they appear to be saintly figures. All of their actions, doubts and feelings originate from their love towards God. Both Rose and the whisky priest can be characterized, just like saints, by humility and selflessness. They, however, are far from perfect, sinless, unwavering saints, without any traces of religious doubt. Rose and the whisky priest do struggle with their morality and the influence of their faith, but this is exactly what makes them human. They are not role models, but nevertheless they both present God’s mercy. In that sense, they are to be considered saints, unorthodox ones, but still saints. Greene managed to present fully human characters who are nevertheless holy in spite of their flaws. By doing so, he not only gives hope to people that no matter what they do there is still a chance of salvation, but also presents his protest against the Church’s view on damnation.

Abstract in English:

The article addresses the theme of unorthodox saints in Graham Greene’s novels – *Brighton Rock* and *The Power and the Glory* and also deals with the author’s attitude to religious problems, particularly his views on salvation and damnation. There is also a discussion of the question whether the title of “a Catholic writer” has been rightly used in Greene’s case.

The first part of the paper presents the character of the whisky-priest from *The Power and the Glory*. Particular attention has been paid to the author’s use of two perspectives upon the figure of the priest: one shows the character in his mundane existence, with all his human weaknesses and vices, whereas the other view stresses the character’s moral and religious superiority which testifies to his sainthood. This point is argued with numerous references to the Bible and to the philosophy of Charles Peguy which underline the martyrdom of the sinful priest and his similarity to Jesus Christ.

The second part of the article focuses on the figure of Rose from *Brighton Rock*, highlighting a contrast between the weakness of her character and the strength of her convictions. The fact that she is torn between good and evil has been pointed out as well as the power of her feelings which is the reason of both her fall and her salvation. Similarly to the analysis of *The Power and the Glory*, references to the Bible and to Peguy’s philosophy have been used in order to underline Rose’s motivation which was rooted in her love of God.

The final part of the article presents similarities between the two characters; what they have in common is both a human, sinful nature as well as the ability to offer superhuman love and self-sacrifice. The conclusion of the article underlines the fact that although both characters have sometimes acted in the ways questioning the principles of faith and the teaching of the Church, they can be perceived as saints because of the superiority of their morality with regard to their love of God and love of their neighbours whose good they put above their own.

[English translation by Teresa Bela]

Key words:

Graham Greene (1904-1991), novel, literature of the 20. century, Christianity, Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory,

Abstract in Polish:

Artykuł poświęcony zagadnieniu nieortodoksyjnych świętych w powieściach Grahama Greene „Brighton Rock” oraz „The Power and the Glory”, omawia również stosunek autora do zagadnień religijnych, zwłaszcza jego poglądów dotyczących kwestii zbawienia i potępienia. Został również poruszony problem związany z przypisanemu Greenowi określeniu pisarza katolickiego.

Pierwsza część pracy prezentuje postać księdza pijaczyny z „The Power and the Glory”. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono przedstawieniu postaci – z dwóch różnych perspektyw, podkreślając zarówno jego przyziemność, z wszelkimi ludzkimi ułomnościami, jak i moralno-religijną wyzność, świadcząca o jego świętości. Teza artykułu została poparta poprzez przywołanie licznych nawiązań do Biblii oraz do filozofii Charlesa Péguy, które podkreślają męczeństwo grzesznego księdza i jego podobieństwo do Chrystusa.

Druga część pracy została poświęcona postaci Rose z powieści „Brighton Rock”. Skupiono się na przedstawieniu kontrastu pomiędzy słabością jej charakteru, a siłą jej przekonań. Omówiono wewnętrzne rozdarcie Rose między dobrem a złem, a także potęgę jej uczucia, które jest przyczyną zarówno jej upadku, jak i zbawienia. Podobnie jak w przypadku „The Power and the Glory”, posłużono się nawiązaniami biblijnymi i filozofią Péguy, by podkreślić motywację Rose, która wywodziła się z jej głęboko zakorzenionej miłości do Boga.

Końcowa część artykułu przedstawia podobieństwa między dwoma postaciami. Podkreślona została zarówno ich ludzka, grzeszna natura, jak i nadludzka miłość oraz zdolność do poświęceń. Starano się uwydatnić, iż mimo wielu działań sprzeciwiających się zasadom wiary oraz Kościoła, mogą być oni postrzegani jako

święci, ze względu na wyższość ich moralności w odniesieniu do ich miłości do Boga i bliźnich, których dobro stawiali nad własne.

Key words in Polish

Graham Greene (1904-1991), powieść, literatura XX wieku, chrześcijaństwo, Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory,

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Роксана Згерская, магистр. В 2012 году получила диплом магистра английской филологии в Гданьском университете, защитив диссертацию «I will show you *The Waste Land* in *A Handful of Dust* – A Discussion of the Correlation Between Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust* and T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*» («Я покажу тебе “Бесплодную землю” в “Пригоршне праха”: дискуссия о связи текстов Ивлиина Во “Пригоршня праха” и Т. С. Элиота “Бесплодная земля”»). В настоящее время – докторант Гданьского университета, изучает проблему формирования внутреннего читателя в произведениях Ивлиина Во. Заинтересована интертекстуальностью, модернизмом, развитием английского романа и сатиры в XX веке. Редактор периодического издания «Hwaet», посвященного английской и американской культуре и литературе. Кроме того, занимается переводами и преподаванием английского языка и литературы. Писала о Ч. Диккенсе, Т. С. Элиоте, И. Во, Дж. Кутзее для известных периодических изданий, в том числе „*Tekstualia*”, „*Cambridge Scholars*”, „*Hwaet!*” и др. E-mail: zgierska.roksana[at]gmail.com

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