

Journeying Toward the Deep Incurable Egotism of Passion
in Graham Greene's *Travels with My Aunt*

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Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

— Dylan Thomas “Do Not Go Gentle
Into That Good Night”

Phony threats they bluff with scorn
Suicide remarks are torn from the fools gold mouthpiece ;
The hollow horn plays wasted words and proves to warn
He not busy being born is busy dying.

— Bob Dylan “It’s Alright Ma,
I’m Only Bleeding”

Much critical ink has been spilt trying to make *Travels with My Aunt* one of either pure entertainment or pure dread of encroaching death. On the one side, Peter Wolfe even sees it as a “charming suspense comedy” which “sets no exciting artistic challenges” (7)¹. On the other side, some, like Richard Kelly (*Graham Greene* 86–89), have performed clever stunts

with the novel, turning Henry and Aunt Augusta into Greene himself.² Robert Pendleton, however, in his recent book *Graham Greene's Conradian Masterplot* challenges this notion with a fresh and stimulating reinterpretation of the text. "For Augusta," he writes, "this constant threat of death paradoxically makes life worth living" (148).

While as Porteous has pointed out, Greene's "realism ignores the kindly act, the fresh wind, the bowl of flowers, in favor of an instance of betrayal, a chamber pot, a flushing toilet. Greene's eyes are always open for the ageing prostitute; the cheap brothel; the dark, violent, criminal side of life" (109), Henry must learn to function, grow, and even flourish in such a world. Certainly Aunt Augusta does not shy away from it. As Greene has said, the novel is only "accidentally" entertaining. The novel is entertaining because of the character that Aunt Augusta is; however, it is also solemn because Aunt Augusta is at the end of a life in which she herself has flourished in such a world and learned to do so with relish. *And the question of the novel is whether or not she will be able to prepare her son, well into his fifties, for his own journey in this world before she dies.*

As Aunt Augusta draws Henry into the journey, she is at the same time drawing him away from death while preparing him for it. It is this point that I would like to examine in this paper by exploring this process through the traditional stages of the journey.³ The value of such an approach is that it situates the novel within a tradition rather than simply viewing it as it has been, purely within one specific genre or another. Arguments over whether or not the novel is comedy, drama, adventure, or follows some combination of these serve an important function but are finally less critical to an understanding of the novel than what actually happens to Henry. It is my view that an examination of the novel within the tradition of the journey motif will best serve this purpose.

Written in 1969, *Travels with My Aunt* is the second of Greene's novels in succession, the first being *The Comedians* written in 1966, which focuses on the discovery of the mother. The second novel, however, deals with this discovery in more depth. Although the novel is told in the past

tense from Henry's first person point of view, Aunt Augusta is the prime mover, the goddess, the inciting force behind the action. According to Greene, the novel was only "accidentally funny." This is a good description of it. Angelica Pulling, who raised Henry as her son, was a severe energetic woman who remained a virgin even in her marriage to Richard, Henry's father. Aunt Augusta, on the other hand, was sexual and vibrant.⁴ How she drew her son slowly into her sphere and out of the realm of the bank and a retirement walking among the dahlias in his garden and into his journey in the outer world is the focus of this novel.⁵ Henry discovers that Aunt Augusta Bertram is his mother through a series of increasingly larger journeys and becomes transformed in the process.⁶ On one level, Henry's non-life in the bank can be seen as an extended gestation period. Henry has been in danger of dying in old age in still-birth. Without the discovery of his mother, Henry was in danger of never having been born into the world.

Travels with My Aunt is especially significant because it is Greene's most personal novel, the closest to his most private feelings. While it is dangerous to attach too much significance to an author's personal life at the time of publication, it cannot be denied that Aunt Augusta resembles his lover at the time, Yvonne Coletta. Also the near completely sexless relationship between Graham and his wife Vivien is significantly reflected in Angelica Pulling. At the time Greene was writing this novel, his marriage to Vivien, a woman strongly reminiscent in many ways to Greene's own mother, was virtually dead. The name, Pulling, is a play on her demands upon Greene. Her death at the opening of the novel clearly refers to the end of her hold over him. Significantly then according to Greene unlike others of his novels, *Travels with My Aunt* largely wrote itself. As Greene explains it in *Ways of Escape*,

When I began with the scene of the cremation of Henry Pulling's supposed mother and his encounter with Aunt Augusta I didn't believe for a moment that I would continue the novel for more than a few days. I didn't even know what the next scene was

likely to be — I didn't know that Augusta was Henry's mother.
(297)

Greene wrote this novel, as he claims, "for the fun of it" (296). He was in the perfect frame of mind to allow his mind to flow and simply write whatever came to him. Making this novel all the more personal is the fact that Henry is actually Graham Greene's legal first name.

Every day when I sat down before the blank sheets of foolscap... I had no idea what was going to happen to Henry or Augusta next. I felt like a rider who has dropped the reins and left the direction to his horse, or like a dreamer who watches his dream unfold without power to alter its course. I felt, above all, that I had broken for good or ill with the past. (297)

Henry, like Greene, had lived his life in a holding pattern above and away from any form of personal involvement. However in *Travels with My Aunt*, Henry's aunt thrusts him head long into life and experience. From early on in the novel, the hints are there that Aunt Augusta is really Henry's mother: she encourages him to travel, draws him into the world of the journeyer, and gives him permission, commissioning him as a representative of a different family identity, one that is his by right of birth.

At the beginning of the novel, Henry explained that he met the woman whom he supposed to be his aunt at the funeral of his mother, Aunt Augusta's older sister. As they meet, his primary concern is where in his home to place his mother's ashes. Henry is an unborn man in his fifties carrying about his womb of history, an urn filled with lifeless ashes. And the first thing Aunt Augusta does is shake up Henry's plan to place the urn amidst his dahlias, pointing out that during the winter it would "look a little bleak." Henry, then, decides that the solution might be to take the urn inside during the winter. Aunt Augusta responds, "Backwards and forwards. My sister seems hardly likely to rest in peace."

But Henry must divest himself, in Jager's words, of the past in order

to journey into the future. "Thinking and journeying start with a divestiture, with a ridding oneself of excess baggage" ("Theorizing" 217). Henry must get rid of the urn in order to become a participant in life, in order to be born. Henry's first introduction into his supposed aunt's life begins immediately after the funeral at her apartment where he meets Wordsworth, her African lover. After Henry leaves her apartment, he realizes that he has forgotten the urn with his mother's ashes and returns to Aunt Augusta's apartment to pick it up; however, Wordsworth, realizing that the London authorities were on to him, pours Henry's mother's ashes down the sink and fills the urn with his marijuana stash. This is the end of Henry's concern for the urn once the authorities reveal to him what Wordsworth has done.

In relinquishing his mother's ashes, Henry relinquishes his bond to a lie that has spanned his whole life. Aunt Augusta continues to shake her son loose by explaining that while he is the son of the man that raised him, he is not the son of his father's wife, Augusta's sister; yet she leaves it to her son to earn his right to sonship by refusing to tell him any more than he needs to know. In short, she treats him like a child who is not yet ready to learn the harsh realities of life. He must learn these truths himself if he is to grow to manhood.

When Wordsworth learns that the authorities have discovered that he was in possession of marijuana, he flees to France leaving Aunt Augusta without a traveling companion and giving her another excuse to draw Henry into her adventures. Their first trip is to Brighton. In Brighton, Henry is able to begin his education, at first learning a little of the history and character of his aunt. Henry meets Hatty, an old friend of his aunt, and learns that Hatty and his aunt had been discussing him since he was a child. He had been a part of his aunt's thoughts and concerns. Henry begins to question himself about his relation to his aunt: "Why should I have been discussed all those years ago? Had she let Hatty into the secret of my birth?" (39).

Hatty is a fortune-teller and reads both Aunt Augusta's and Henry's tea leaves. For Aunt Augusta, Hatty indirectly foretells Wordsworth's

death by stabbing. For Henry, she is able to see the divestiture of the urn. And as she puts it strongly, "That's the recent past." It is neither part of the present, nor will it have any role in Henry's future. He, she explains in spite of his protests, will travel. When Henry and Aunt Augusta return from their mini-journey to Brighton, Henry contacts the police for his urn and learns that Hatty had been correct. He is separated permanently from the contents of the urn. And while he is having dinner with his aunt that night, she informs him that she has booked them on the Orient Express for Istanbul. She has first entered him into her history with a brief excursion to Brighton; now she is drawing him into the realm of journeying, the extended world in which she is a part of the festive and a representative of a community to which her son has yet to be fully introduced.

Henry complains that he would not be an adequate companion; however, Aunt Augusta counters his argument with an argument from history, from his ancestry. She explains that it was his own father that initiated her into her journey; and when Henry insists that his father "never traveled further than Central London," Aunt Augusta replies that,

"He traveled from one woman to another, Henry, all through his life. That comes to much the same thing. New landscapes, new customs. The accumulation of memories. A long life is not a question of years. A man without memories might reach the age of a hundred and feel that his life had been a very brief one." (59)

But even in this, both of their perspectives of Richard Pulling's travels will prove to fall short.

As they eat dinner together before their journey to Istanbul, Aunt Augusta reveals more of her history. She reveals that she was once a prostitute:

"The business I was in," my aunt said, "was peripatetic. We moved around — a fortnight's season in Venice, the same in

Milan, Florence and Rome, then back to Venice. It was known as la quindicina." (63)

And like a small child, Henry asks, "You were in a theatre company?" Aunt Augusta can only reply, no doubt with some incredulity, "The description will serve."

As a form of preparation and instruction for what is to come, Aunt Augusta tells Henry the story of his uncle Jo who moved from room to room during the last days of his life after he had had a stroke which had taken much of his strength. The point of this long story is that the journey is the whole thing, the goal of life. As Aunt Augusta says, " 'The point is the journey,' my aunt had replied. 'I enjoy the traveling not the sitting still.' "

As Jager points out, the would be journeyer must prove himself in several smaller journeys before he is prepared to embark on his final journey as a representative of a community. But as we can see, while Aunt Augusta introduces Henry to these smaller journeys, she is on a journey of her own. She, as yet, has no firm ground other than herself to offer her son as a base or ground of dwelling. She has only her motherhood. In this, in her motherhood, she represents a dwelling place for her son without possessing a dwelling herself. And as yet she is not prepared to expose this motherhood until, as we shall see later, Mr. Visconti, a true rogue and the love of her life, comes into the picture. The two of them, Aunt Augusta and Henry, set off for Paris, and Aunt Augusta is careful to explain all of the little details of her smuggling operation without coming right out and telling Henry what it is that she is doing. In this way, she instructs her son how to look beneath the surface of events, giving him the tools for doing it; however, that actual seeing, Henry must develop for himself.

Lodged in an expensive hotel suite, for example, Aunt Augusta allows Henry to catch a glimpse of one of her suit cases loaded with ten pound notes as she wheels and deals with men. Henry is allowed to see but he is not yet allowed to participate in his aunt's life. He is still a child on

one of the smaller journeys that he must take into real manhood.

Henry is also an empty vessel. He has neither a good nor a bad character. He is amorphous, unformed. He has no character at all. This is why, after her business dealings and after Henry returns to the hotel, she consents to tell Henry about Monsieur Dambreuse. Aunt Augusta had once had an affair with him that had lasted six months until she discovered that besides a wife, Monsieur Dambreuse had another lover just across the walk from the hotel Aunt Augusta was staying in. Monsieur Dambreuse walked into a restaurant with his wife and children one afternoon and discovered his two lovers enjoying tea together. And again Henry responds innocently :

“But surely, Aunt Augusta,” I exclaimed, “you couldn’t bear the man after you had discovered how he had deceived you all those months?” She got up and strode towards me with her small hands clenched. I thought she was going to hit me. “You young fool,” she said as if I were no more than a schoolboy. “Monsieur Dambreuse was a man, and I only wish you had been given a chance of growing up like him.”

Suddenly she smiled and put her hand comfortingly against my cheek. “I am sorry, Henry, it is not your fault. You were brought up by Angelica. Sometimes I have an awful feeling that I am the only one left anywhere who finds any fun in life. That was why I was crying a little when you came in. I said to Monsieur Dambreuse, ‘Achille, I love the things we do just as much as before. I don’t mind knowing where you go in the afternoons. It doesn’t make any difference.’ But of course it did to him, because he had no secret any more. His fun had been in the secret, and he left us both only so that somewhere he could find a new secret. Not love. Just a secret.” (95)

This has the effect of shaking Henry out of his complacency. For the first time he realizes that a man may have more than dahlias and ashes inside

of him. He may actually have an eventuality and a history. Henry's first person narrative continues,

I had listened to her with amazement and some perturbation. I realized for the first time the perils that lay ahead of me. I felt as though I were being dragged at her heels on an absurd knight errantry, like Sancho Panza at the heels of Don Quixote, but in the cause of what she called fun instead of chivalry. (95-96)

Henry is right, of course. But he is not yet a knight or a full-fledged journeyer. Rather, at this point, he is merely being dragged forth into the birth, kicking and screaming. He is a wanderer. He is not yet fully a partner in life. He has not learned how to have fun. He is still innocent and a certain complacency still hangs, albeit by a thread, about him.

Aboard the train to Istanbul Henry meets Tooley, a young streetwise college girl sent to London by her father to study.⁷ Through their conversations and Henry's innocent smoking of marijuana with Tooley without even realizing it, Greene is expanding Henry's vision of the world. As Henry notes, "I was badly out of my depth with Tooley in terms of culture and human experience. She was closer to my aunt." But at the same time, she draws out his first feelings of protectiveness and responsibility for a child. For the first time in his life, he wants to understand someone else's concerns and troubles.

In the hotel in Paris with his aunt, his desire to hear Aunt Augusta's story of her love affair simply reflected his own desire to be entertained. By his own admission, it was a form of theater. His aunt is a spectacle, he the spectator. However, he listens intently to what Tooley has to say. He had never done that before, not even with Barbara Keene, the shy daughter of Sir Alfred whom he almost married years before. It is with Tooley that his feelings for someone else first begin to emerge. He becomes a participant in her effort to deal with her most immediate problems, and he responds with concern. His heart begins to open up. And when they part, as he explains, "I scowled at my own face in the glass,

but I was really scowling at her [Tooley's] mother in Bonn and her father somewhere in the CIA, and Julian [her boyfriend] afraid of castration, and at all those who ought to have been looking after her and yet felt no responsibility at all."

Nevertheless, as Aunt Augusta attempts to explain Mr. Visconti to Henry throughout the trip, Henry is still unable to listen with compassion. He is still isolated from the world around him, a guest and a spectator in everyone's presence. But the historical value of Aunt Augusta's explanation is more important to drawing Henry into her world than his understanding of all the nuances of her relationship with Mr. Visconti. So, with patience, she persists and Henry listens with occasional childish outbursts.

His own isolation from the world begins to come to him in Istanbul at the bar where the taxi driver has taken him. Henry sees men dancing and suddenly sees his own sense of isolation in the world against the foreground of a room full of men dancing together in unison arm in arm. At the bar, his position as nonparticipant and as outside spectator in all of life becomes overwhelming. Unable to bear this isolation, he requests that the driver return him to the hotel and his aunt.

At the hotel, he discovers that his aunt had purchased a gold ingot with the ten pound notes that he had seen in her red suitcase back in Paris and that she had smuggled the ingot inside of a candle. Aunt Augusta had wanted to sell the ingot to General Abdul, an old acquaintance of hers; however, Abdul had been shot and was probably dead, so the deal falls through and Aunt Augusta and Henry are forced to fly back to London with the ingot still safely hidden. Through this experience of the gold ingot and General Abdul, Henry gets a in-depth view of the scope of Aunt Augusta's adventurous involvement with the world. He learns how she explains the necessity of certain actions that are less than legal. But even more than this, he is learning an attitude and a way of looking at things that will be important in his own journeys.

Once back in London, Henry clutches his old life and memories with renewed ferocity. The images at the bar have unsettled him. Tooley's

youthful wisdom has unsettled him. He sees himself as a wanderer without any ground when he is away from his dahlias. But even they aren't enough. Aunt Augusta has implanted the notion in his head that he is without a mother, and he cannot escape from this. He begins to wonder about his family and realizes that he has never seen his father's grave. In fact, he doesn't even know where his father was buried. So on the same evening that he arrives back in London, he calls his aunt.

Aunt Augusta explains to Henry that his father has been buried in Boulogne and while she is not in favor of observing grave sites, she would not be against a little travel. They leave right away. For her, it is the continuation of a journey. Henry, however, is still trying to find his ground. He feels right at home in Boulogne because his father is there. It gives him the sense that he can feel the ground beneath his feet. His senses come alive as he smells the salt sea air.

The next morning, Henry and Aunt Augusta go to the cemetery where they meet Miss Dolly Paterson, one of Richard Pulling's former lovers. This woman loved Richard as much as Aunt Augusta had. This galls Aunt Augusta for a number of reasons that become obvious in the narrative. First, Dolly Paterson is a weak sentimental person living in a dead past. Aunt Augusta sees this as an insult to Richard's memory. She finds the image that Dolly paints of Richard dying "gently gently" in her arms disgusting.

Second, Aunt Augusta is clearly, at the same time, jealous of Dolly's enduring love for Richard. And finally, it disturbs her greatly that Henry, her own son, must find out the intimate details about the death of his father from someone else.

In their argument after Dolly leaves about Aunt Augusta's attitude toward Dolly, Henry is unable to see through his aunt's motivations; however, he does get closer to seeing the life force that thrives within her.

Perhaps she did have reason to despise Miss Paterson. I thought of Curran and Monsieur Dambreuse and Mr. Visconti — they lived in my imagination as though she had actually created

them : even poor Uncle Jo struggling towards the lavatory. She was one of the life-givers. Even Miss Paterson had come to life, stung by the cruelty of her questions. (183)

He continues, wondering what he would become in her imagination if she were to tell his story. Thus wrapped up in his own thoughts, he refuses to listen to another of her stories. This offends Aunt Augusta. At the end of their trip, she parts with him and goes on to Paris, and he returns to England alone.

According to Jager, the journeyer is able to begin his journey when it is felt by those, under whose charge he has been prepared for his journey, that he is worthy of representing them. Henry is coming to the end of his preparation for journeying. In the charge of his aunt, he has been trained and prepared for journeying.

Neither his real mother, nor his father is in England. His illusions of being a part of his neat tidy life with his urn among his dahlias are dying.

I returned to London on the car-ferry. Two days before, from the window of the train, I had watched a golden England spread beside the line — now the picture was very different : England lay damp and cold, as grey as the graveyard, while the train lagged slowly from Dover Town towards Charing Cross under the drenching rain. (186)

He returns to his apartment. Time passes and he hears nothing from his aunt. He loses interest in his dahlias and lets them die. Weeds take their place. Old acquaintances fail to recognize him as he wanders the streets. He begins to question the values of his youth. As a child he had been,

afraid of burglars and Indian thugs and snakes and fires and Jack the Ripper, when I should have been afraid of thirty years in a bank and a take-over bid and a premature retirement and

the Deuil du Roy Albert. (187)

He is beginning to understand. During Christmas he goes to church and, at his neighbor's urging, attends a political meeting. But he is estranged from all of it by the new identity that is taking shape within him. He is becoming the child of his real parents. And just as Aunt Augusta was never able to find any identity in England, neither is he. When Tooley sends him a postcard from Kathmandu, he feels a sense of pride in her and "her casual remembrance."

As the months pass, he becomes concerned that there may be something incriminating in Aunt Augusta's apartment. Before she went to Paris, she had given him her apartment key in case she needed him to retrieve something for her from there. This concerns him because his sense of loyalties is beginning to shift dramatically.

All my working life I had been strictly loyal to one establishment, the bank, but my loyalty now was drawn in quite another direction. Loyalty to a person inevitably entails loyalty to all the imperfections of a human being, even to the chicanery and immorality from which my aunt was not entirely free. I wondered whether she had ever forged a cheque or robbed a bank, and I smiled at the thought with the tenderness I might have shown in the past to a small eccentricity. (204-5)

The ground is shifting underneath his feet. And this period of separation from his aunt/mother is crucial to his development and identity as a journeyer.

With regard to this developing sense of loyalty in Greene's characters, compare *Travels with My Aunt* with Greene's more popular novel *The Comedians*. This latter novel was the first of Greene's novels to feature a mother, the Comtesse de Lascot-Valliers, interacting with any character whatsoever.⁸ Only Augusta Bertram, Henry's mother in *Travels with My Aunt*, has more vitality than the Comtesse de Lascot-Valliers.

In *The Comedians*, Brown and his mother are strangers and wanderers in Haiti.⁹ Both lack any historical foundation. The Comtesse describes the father that Brown never knew as "a bit of a swine." She is androgynous earth mother and father all rolled into one. She is the central energy of the hotel, master of ceremonies with a black lover who, like Wordsworth in *Travels with My Aunt*, serves his woman's every need. She knows Brown as a person but not really as a son. When she dies she leaves him with a memory but with almost no history. Thus, Brown takes over as the owner of his mother's hotel not out of a sense of loyalty to family or even just his mother but rather in an attempt to establish for himself a ground of being out of the hotel, only to watch it disappear under the forces of political corruption.

The critical difference between these two novels is that a true parental foundation is developing *within Henry*, and it has nothing to do with either country or occupations. Aunt Augusta has been drawing him in to herself with parables and stories that illustrate the larger concepts of love and justice that have to do with living in a brutal, sometimes impersonal world, but also a world of adventure and possibilities. Such notions have, up to this point in Henry's protected world, been completely foreign him.

Thus, with this growing sense of loyalty toward his mother, Henry went to his aunt's flat looking for incriminating evidence. As he is looking, Detective-Sergeant Sparrow and Inspector Woodrow arrive with a search warrant and superficially search the premises and find nothing.

The purpose of this intrusion is mechanical. The reader discovers that something significant having to do with art work is to be expected in the upcoming part of the novel. We learn that Visconti is referred to by Interpol as the Viper, an obvious allusion to Marjorie Bowen's *The Viper of Milan* in which Greene has often claimed to have been first introduced to the concept of evil.

Significantly, this is the end of Part One. Henry is ready to be called forth into the world as a journeyer. When he is called, he will have a choice to remain among the dead or move on into the journey to which he has been called by his mother. During the more than six month period

following the experience with the police in his aunt's flat, he receives a final appeal in the mail from Miss Keene. While he is pondering this missive from South Africa, a letter arrives from his aunt: "My aunt made no appeal; she simply issued a command, and there was no explanation of her long silence." Aunt Augusta has been preparing Henry for this journey ever since she met him at her sister's funeral. Now she calls him forth into his own journey. He must leave everything behind, moving closer to Aunt Augusta's, and thus his own, true identity.

In its form and structure, the language of the command to journey that follows is Pauline. Aunt Augusta considers herself a Catholic. Thus, Greene uses the language here to strengthen Aunt Augusta's calling of her son into the world. It is reminiscent of The Second Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy 4: 11 and 13,

11. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me...
13. ...and when thou comest, bring with thee, ...the books, especially the parchments.

Only Aunt Augusta's command is to bring an ostensibly worthless painting in its original frame. Her appeal, "I want very much to have with me a member of my family whom I can trust in this rather bizarre country" is also extremely Pauline as throughout the Epistles, St. Paul continually appeals to his "brothers" in Christ to bring Timothy or bring Titus without whom he would soon fall into despair. Aunt Augusta has made all financial arrangements. Henry has only to enter into the journey which he does immediately and without question. As Morrison has pointed out in his dissertation on the quest motif in Greene's novels, this is the mark of a true knight. But beyond this it is also the mark of a representative of a community for which the journeyer feels a sense of responsibility and loyalty, qualities that we have watched develop in Henry. Before he leaves, he throws away the empty urn, symbolic of the empty history that he had previously clung to.

And he includes with him the parchments of his youth, the only objects that connect him to his lived past and his future :

Palgraves *Golden Treasury*, the collected poems of Tennyson and Browning, and at the last minute I added *Rob Roy*, perhaps because it contained the only photograph I possessed of my aunt. When I opened the book now the pages naturally divided at the photograph, and I found myself thinking not for the first time that the happy smile, the young breasts, the curve of her body in the old-fashioned bathing costume were like the suggestion of a budding maternity. (216-17)

The scales of his insufferable innocence are beginning to fall away. Even though the novel is only two-thirds of the way through, the narrative suddenly begins to rush towards its conclusion. Events are thrown up against one another in rapid succession while at the same time giving the illusion of leisurely travel.

By leaving England in response to his mother's call, Henry begins his own true journey. He arrives in Buenos Aires without too much difficulty. There is no one to meet him, only a note that tells him he must travel to Asuncion by boat. But Henry is able to handle the inconvenience with much more ease than he could have before he met Aunt Augusta. Still, as in the traditional Grail sequence, Henry must meet instructors and those who will test him along the way, and Henry must prove himself in each case.

On the river boat, Henry meets James O'Tool, Tooley's father, who is working for the CIA, when the latter offers to translate for a Spanish speaking palm reader. The palm reader, like Hatty, predicts Henry's future, including Wordsworth's death, correctly.

The boat lands temporarily at Formosa, half way between Corrientes and Asuncion. As Henry walks about the town he has a dialogue with himself.

I remembered Southwood now with a kind of friendly tolerance — as the place which Miss Keene should never have left, the place where Miss Keene was happy, the place where I myself once belonged. It was as though I had escaped from an open prison, had been snatched away, provided with a rope ladder and a waiting car, into my aunt's world, the world of the unexpected character and the unforeseen event. (234)

And later, thinking further of Miss Keene,

Perhaps we might have comforted ourselves once and been content in our prison cell, but I am not the same man you regarded with a touch of tenderness over the tatting. I have escaped. I don't resemble what ever identikit portrait you have of me. (235)

Henry has changed.¹⁰ His interaction with others aboard the boat is much more forceful and confident than it would have been in the beginning of the novel. As a journeyer and representative of a vital parental unity, he is able to meet others face to face rather than withdrawing into himself as he tended to do at the beginning of the novel. His responses to O'Tool, for example, are quite the opposite of his earlier behavior. He even toys with him, teasing him in a friendly way about being employed by the CIA. Henry is not deceived by O'Tool's cover of "social researcher" for the U.S. government.

When Henry runs into Wordsworth in Formosa, he is able to greet him with pleasure rather than irritation. Henry's heart is open to the world and to other people because he feels a universal connection to them. This is a connection, as Jager has pointed out, that must come from some ground or authority in the world. Henry has made peace with his father at Boulogne, and he has been called into the world by his aunt. And daily he is growing into the awareness that Aunt Augusta is his real mother.

At Formosa, Wordsworth sneaks aboard the boat and Henry discovers him hiding in his room. Wordsworth is there to insure that the picture

that Henry has brought with him is safe. At Asuncion, Wordsworth arranges for them to be taken to meet his aunt in an old dilapidated mansion that Aunt Augusta and Visconti plan to restore.

When Wordsworth delivers the picture to Aunt Augusta, she releases Wordsworth. She asks him to leave. She makes it clear to him that she is at home now. She has found Mr. Visconti, and he wants Wordsworth to leave; and she wants what Mr. Visconti wants. She and Mr. Visconti have formed a home together within the framework of what a home means to them. And when Henry, trying to verify his place in her life, tells Aunt Augusta that he had planned to leave after seeing her, she is surprised. And wanting to be talked out of a death in life marriage with Miss Keene, he tells her about Miss Keene and the fact that Miss Keene wants him to marry her. Aunt Augusta replies not simply with a good argument for not marrying Miss Keene but also with an argument that springs from her nature and his father's nature, arguing that for him to dwell within this framework in South America would be the most natural life for him to lead.

“Do you know what you'll think about when you can't sleep in your double bed? Not of women. You don't care enough about them, or you wouldn't even consider marrying Miss Keene. You will think how every day you are getting closer to death. It will stand there as close as the bedroom wall. And you'll become more and more afraid of the wall because nothing can prevent you from becoming nearer and nearer to it every night while you try to sleep and Miss Keene reads. What does Miss Keene read?”

“You may be right, Aunt Augusta, but isn't it the same everywhere at our age?”

“Not here it isn't. Tomorrow you may be shot in the street by a policeman because you haven't understood Guaraní, or a man may knife you in a cantina because you can't speak Spanish and he thinks you are acting in a superior way. Next week, when we have our Dakota, perhaps it will crash with you over Argentina.

(Mr. Visconti is too old to fly with the pilot.) My dear Henry, if you live with us, you won't be edging day by day across to any last wall. The wall will find you of its own accord without your help, and every day you live will seem to you a kind of victory. 'I was too sharp for it that time,' you will say, when night comes, and afterwards you will sleep well." (259-60)

Peter Wolfe (1972 : 125) in his comments seems to be equating "rootlessness" to the "insecurity" found here at the very heart of this novel. "Rootlessness," he says "is a great threat in Greene. The discovery of Lime's crimes shatters Martins [referring here to *The Third Man*], and he resents Lime for leaving him so unprotected. (Not until 1970 and *Travels with My Aunt* does Greene accept insecurity as the norm of life.)"

While Aunt Augusta is espousing insecurity as a way of life, it is not the same as rootlessness, nor is it the same type of insecurity suffered by Rollo Martins who ends the life of his hero and friend Harry Lime.

To begin with, rootlessness and insecurity are two entirely different issues. Rootlessness, as the word implies, has to do with grounding, with a history and foundation that carries with it the authority to send or call one forth into the world. The insecurity that Aunt Augusta is espousing has everything to do with rootedness because it is a way of life based upon her and Henry's father's established traditions and way of life.

Predictably it does not take long for Henry to get himself punched in the nose and thrown in jail. He blows his nose on a red handkerchief during National day; and as it turns out, red is the color of the ruling Colorado Party of General Stroessner's tyrannical regime. O'Tool springs Henry and takes him back home where the two of them meet Mr. Visconti. After some negotiations, Mr. Visconti sells a copy of a drawing of a dredge and catapult by Leonardo da Vinci to the U.S. government for ten thousand dollars and an assurance of his security there in Paraguay. After Visconti settles with O'Tool, Henry walks the CIA agent to the gate in front of the house. O'Tool explains that he is sending Wordsworth home on the next boat and asks Henry why he doesn't join him. Henry re-

sponds automatically, "My family..." Henry is settling in to stay.

Mr. Visconti and Henry sit down to talk and Mr. Visconti explains, as a father might to his son, that the burden of the business will fall to Henry. And later that evening Aunt Augusta comes to Henry's room as he is preparing for bed and tells him that as she and Visconti have decided to get married, her journey is at an end. It is time for her to build a dwelling. She wants to know if Henry intends to remain with her.

Henry tells her of his former life in London. And then finally, at the end,

"I've been very happy." I concluded as though it needed an excuse.

"Yes, dear, yes, I know," she said.

I told her how very kind to me Sir Alfred Keene had been, and I told her of the bank and of how Sir Alfred threatened to remove his account if I did not remain as manager.

"My darling boy," she said, "all that is over now," and she stroked my forehead with her old hand as though I were a school-boy who had run away from school and she was promising me that I would never have to return, that all my difficulties were over, that I could stay at home. I was sunk deep in my middle age. All the same I laid my head against her breast. "I had been happy," I said, "but I have been so bored for so long." (296-97)

Still, it is not until the party, or at least until four o'clock the next morning of the party as it is still going on, that Henry finally comes to a firm decision: "I felt oddly elated to be alive, and I knew in a moment of decision that I would never see Major Charge again, nor the dahlias, the empty urn, the packet of omo on the doorstep or a letter from Miss Keene."

Henry's decision to remain, signals the end of his own journey. He is ready to build his own dwelling. Walking in the garden after that, he comes upon Wordsworth's dead body, stabbed to death with his own knife.

He pockets the knife and enters the ballroom where Aunt Augusta is dancing with Mr. Visconti.

They were dancing a slow waltz now and they never saw me enter, two old people bound in the deep incurable egotism of passion. ... At one moment the shadow gave my aunt a deceptive air of youth: she looked like the young woman in my father's photograph pregnant with happiness, and at another I recognized the old woman who had faced Miss Patterson with such merciless cruelty and jealousy. (306-7)

Henry calls out to Aunt Augusta as she dances by with Mr. Visconti to tell her that Wordsworth is dead, but she does not respond; then,

I took a few steps further into the room as they returned towards me, calling to her a second time, "Mother, Wordsworth's dead." She only looked over her partner's shoulder and said, "Yes, dear, all in good time, but can't you see that now I am dancing with Mr. Visconti?"

A flashbulb broke the shadows up. I have the photograph still — all three of us are petrified by the lightning flash into a family group: you can see the great gap in Visconti's teeth as he smiles towards me like an accomplice. (307)

Henry begins to form a relationship with a dwelling rather than passively submitting to one.

Jager ("Space of Dwelling" 312) points out that "Mythologically speaking, the place of dwelling emerges at the end of an arduous journey." And this too involves a process of settling in and setting the necessary criterion for active inhabitation. "To inhabit means to bind one's fate, one's life to a small corner of the world" (324), to a corner of the world that bears the imprint of the one inhabiting the space of dwelling. Thus, Henry begins to settle in after his arduous journey from London to Asun-

cion.

In dwelling man accepts new limits only in order to gain access to an hitherto invisible horizon. Dwelling, which at first instance speaks so plainly of our mortality and which severs our primordial relationship with a surrounding natural expanse, forms also the basis for an intensified new contact with the soil, the sky, with plants, animals, seasons. This severance makes possible labor. (326)

This is indeed a complicated process, but Henry accepts and balances the darkness with the light that goes with his new work. Although it was probably Mr. Visconti who ordered the hit on Wordsworth, Henry sees to it that Wordsworth's actual killer, Mr. Visconti's body guard, "He had been first with the news [of Wordsworth's death]," is sacked: "Mr. Visconti sacked him later at my insistence (my mother took no part in the dispute, which she said was a matter to be settled between men), so Wordsworth did not go entirely unavenged." Henry learns to live with the partial justices and injustices of the world. Referring in part to this novel, Salvatore makes the point that "Greene's fictional representatives of humanity suggest the impossibility of human knowledge; the lack of real freedom; the constant flux, conflict, and ambiguity; and certainly the repeated failure of human beings to achieve, or even become aware of, their own goals" (4). Henry takes over the running of the smuggling business and prepares to marry the sixteen year old daughter of the customs official for its obvious business advantages. Here, at the end of the novel, the journeyer begins to form a dwelling in his mother's world. From Greene's point of view, Henry has become as much of a whole human being as anyone can expect to become.

Notes

- 1 With all due respect to Peter Wolfe who has, over the years, been a major contributor to Greene scholarship, I must side with Brian Diemert in his observation that "...although it is always tempting and sometimes useful to do so, anyone who quotes Greene for support does so at his or her peril"(8). See also Diemert p.185 n.11 for a more in-depth explanation.
- 2 A recent sensationalist contribution from the popular press is Michael Shelden's *Graham Greene : The Man Within*. Of the many biographies that have been published on Graham Greene to date, this proves to be the least academically responsible. Shelden writes,

At the height of the Vietnam War, he [Greenel was safely lost in the farcical world of *Travels With My Aunt*, a novel that is an extended version of the entries he submitted to various 'Graham Greene' writing contests. (458)

Not only is this a gross overstatement, the facts that he then enumerates in describing the novel are out of sequence and often completely false raising the question of whether or not Mr. Shelden ever even read the novel.

- 3 In doing so, I will be drawing upon Bernd Jager's material, in particular "Theorizing, Journeying, Dwelling" and "Horizontalty and Verticality"; however, the basic patten is as old as Western tradition itself. That is, the journeyer is born into the dwelling of a mother and father who are known to a local community. Thus the journeyer is backed, according to Jager, by a maternal ground.

The maternal face imparts an inviting "beyond" to all reality entering within the field of experience of the child. The child's experience of himself also acquires a horizon. He moves toward this horizon of Self while moving towards the horizon of objects. All exploration thus becomes at the same time also self-exploration ; all revelation concerning the world also becomes self-manifestation. The "what is this" has as its correlate a "who am I?" Horizon as an "inviting beyond" turns out to be a multidimensional evocation which finds its inception in the hospitable face of the maternal figure. The call of the horizon is primordially the call of the mother inviting us to come to her, to ourselves and to the world. ("Horizontalty" 214)

The child then moves from the sphere of the mother and with the sanction of the father into the community at large. The journeyer grows and develops within this larger community until he has fulfilled certain basic requirements and passed through related rituals. He is then passed into the hands of those who are specifically assigned to train him for his journey. After his training and preparation which include both physical tests of skill and psychological development he is sent forth as a representative and defender of the Truth of the community in search of the gods, some further Truth, or maturity and growth.

At the end of the traditional journey, there must always be a return to build one's own dwelling. In Western tradition, there is never a journey simply for the sake of a journey. Even Aunt Augusta must accept this at the end of the novel. If there were no return, there would be no one to train the next generation of journeyers. There would also be no ground upon which to prepare further journeyers or send them forth.

- 4 Of course the film version of any novel should always be viewed separately as something other than the novel. The difficulty arises when both carry the same name. This is certainly the case with *Travels with My Aunt*. While Aunt Augusta in the novel was strong, she was neither shapeless nor brittle. Maggie Smith as Aunt Augusta was terribly miscast in the MGM film version of this novel. Katherine Hepburn who was originally cast for the role would have been perfect. As a result of this difficulty Henry, played by the colorless Alec McCowen, remains a sort of hapless wanderer throughout the film. Even at the end, he is seen more as a follower who never really comes to the birth. And the question of the film itself becomes whether or not these two people will become friends or not. Seen next to the novel, the revelation of Maggie Smith as the mother becomes more irritating than anything else.
- 5 With all deference to Dahl, the Swedish botanist who named the flower, the obvious word play from Greene's point of view with *dalliance*, the trifling away of time, cannot be overlooked. The novel is filled with word games, references to other novels, as well as personal references.
- 6 The focus of the film version, on the other hand, is the Oedipal struggle between Henry and Visconti played by Robert Stephens. Henry must con Visconti in order to overcome his mother.
- 7 The use of Cindy Williams to play Tooley in the MGM film version is again a complete and even offensive departure from what Green is trying to do. In

the novel, Tooley is not a scatterbrained idiot. In fact, Greene intentionally uses her to contrast youthful worldly wisdom with the elder Henry's simplicity and innocence.

- 8 In *A Gun for Sale*, Raven's mother committed suicide by cutting her throat, intentionally leaving her body in a place where it would be discovered by her son. In *Brighton Rock*, Pinkie is disgusted with his mother's willingness to have sex with his father. In *Our Man in Havana*, the mother deserts her husband and daughter for a better life. In *The Honorary Consul*, Dr.Plarr's mother has given up on life and lives in Buenos Aires growing fat on chocolate eclairs. In *The Human Factor*, Mrs. Castle, given the opportunity, would be all too willing to betray her own son to the authorities.

But after *The Human Factor*, there is a shift in the image of the mother that I believe grows out of *The Comedians* and *Travels with My Aunt*. Both *Dr.Fisher of Geneva or the Bomb Party* and *The Captain and the Enemy* have sympathetic mother figures. Both Mrs.Fisher and Liza are reminiscent of Dolly Paterson in whose arms Richard Pulling, Henry's father, died.

- 9 Boardman (1971) uses the same terms to describe Brown and his mother albeit in a less specific way. Neither of them are even certain of their names. The Comtesse is uncertain whether or not her latest husband was really a Count ; and Brown is uncertain whether or not his mother simply made his name up.
- 10 This is a focal point. In the film version, Alec McCowan plays the role of Henry as the repressed banker quite well ; however, towards the end when we would expect him to emerge into his own character, he seems awkward and unconvincing.

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