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THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE NOVELS OF JULIEN GREEN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	THE EARLY NOVELS	12
III.	THE MIDDLE NOVELS	81
IV.	THE LAST NOVELS	135
V.	CONCLUSION	179
BIBLIOGRAPHY		186

THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE NOVELS OF JULIEN GREEN

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Julien Green is a talented French novelist of the twentieth century. He is a good novelist, and his works merit considerable study. Green has one clear advantage over the majority of other novelists: he is the product of a dual cultural heritage, French and American. He was born in France and led the typical life of a French schoolboy. However, at home he lived with his large American family. His brother and four of his five older sisters were born in the United States. His parents were both from the South and still deeply resented the Yankees for destroying their "country." The family spoke English and held daily Bible readings. Unmistakably, the strict puritanical atmosphere, so ordinary in many American homes, reigned in the Green household, albeit in the middle of Paris.

Thus, from the time he was a boy, Green has had the rare privilege of being able to view two cultures simultaneously, of delineating the faults and advantages of both. He has escaped the narrow provincialism which so often results

in the angry proclamation of "America, Love It or Leave it" for the American and the haughty complacency of the Frenchman who believes unquestioningly that his culture is superior to all others. Green's novels contain a smattering of both the good and the bad in both American and French societies. It is in large part as a result of Green's dual heritage that the ideas in his fiction are often so extremely unusual, striking and penetrating.

Green has devoted virtually his entire life to literature. His first novel was published in 1926, and at present he is working on the completion of his lengthy Journal. His principal works include eleven novels (Mont-Cinère, 1926; Adrienne Mesurat, 1927; Léviathan, 1929; Epaves, 1932; Le Visionnaire, 1934; Minuit, 1936; Varouna, 1940; Si J'étais vous, 1947; Moïra, 1950; Le Malfaiteur, 1956; and Chaque Homme dans sa nuit, 1960), three plays (Sud, 1953; L'Ennemi, 1954; and L'Ombre, 1956), a small number of short stories, and his voluminous memoirs, most of which are contained in his Journal.

A great many critical articles appeared on Green's works in the twenties and thirties when he was at the height of his popularity. Such noted critics as Dayton Kohler, Clifton Fadiman, and Gabriel Marcel, as well as Green's good friend, Robert de Saint Jean, have studied and commented on his works. In the last two decades several books on Green have appeared. The bulk of the material now being published

on Green is produced in Europe. His most prolific critic in the United States, and probably the best as well, is Marilyn Gaddis Rose who has published numerous articles on Green.

Although he has been losing readers since the end of World War II, Green is still a popular author with both French and American readers. His ability to incite reader interest stems primarily from his consummate skill as a storyteller. One guage of his popularity among the general public is that his novels, in translated form, are a standard item on the shelves of most American public libraries. From the first page, the reader is informed of the location of the setting and the identity of the principal character. This basic information generally suffices to persuade the casual reader to read further. Green is not interested in the esoteric structure of the nouveau roman or the verbal acrobatics of James Joyce or Samuel Beckett. His style is polished to such a degree, so meticulously concerned with detailing the most minute actions and emotions of his characters, that at first glance it sometimes appears almost artless. However, the essential simplicity of his style stems solely from its purity, from its integral classicism. The seemingly effortless development of plot and character in his novels must undoubtedly be the final result of many belabored hours of composition and revision.

Unfortunately, a cursory reading of Green's novels will occasionally leave the careless reader with the impres-

sion that he is nothing more than a weaver of fantasy and tales of senseless murder. But he is by no means a hack writer whose first consideration in writing is the sale of his books. He is an uncommonly intelligent author with an uncanny insight into some of the unpleasant vagaries of mankind. While the intricacies of his plots are agilely and carefully woven together and clearly illustrate the care Green has exercised in writing them, there can be little doubt that his foremost concern in his novels is not the cleverness of his plots but rather the validity of their thematic content.

A study on the nature of thematic development must of necessity begin with an attempt to identify what theme is. Thrall, Hibbard, and Holman give a rather summary definition in their Handbook to Literature:

> The central or dominating idea in a literary work. In non-fiction prose it may be thought of as the general topic of discussion, the subject of the discourse, the thesis. In poetry, fiction, and drama it is the abstract concept which is made concrete through its representation in person, action, and image in the work.[1]

Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren delve a little more deeply into the nature of theme.

> But we go to literature for something more than a collection of moralizations on life, and the relation of a piece of fiction to its theme is a complicated one. It is on this latter point that it is easiest to go astray. The most tempting account of the relation of the story to its theme is that which explains the story as merely

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[1]William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature, revised and enlarged by C. Hugh Holman (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1960), p. 486.

> an illustration of the theme: accordingly the story gives a concrete instance of the generalization, and furthermore, it recommends the abstract generalization to us by clothing it in emotional terms. The danger of this account is twofold: it overemphasizes the didactic element in fiction and thus distorts the writer's intention; more important still, it neglects the fact that the organization of the story, if it is valid, does much more than illustrate--it qualifies and modifies the theme. The form of the story states the theme so precisely that for an exact statement of it we must turn to the whole body of the story itself.[1]

From the preceding quotation it can easily be understood why the tracing of thematic development in a novel cannot be undertaken ipso facto. It is quite possible to write a character sketch devoid of theme. It is impossible, however, to convey a theme effectively in a novel without also developing character, style, plot, structure, and rhythm.

It is in these last five qualities that the mechanics of novelistic writing are contained. By diligence and practice, one can learn to create believable characters, a passable style, fairly interesting plots, an intelligible structure, and the basics of rhythm. However, the world's best novels are not simply a well thought-out combination of these five ingredients; they also inevitably contain the germ of an idea or emotion. The very best novels have ideas that incite a fire in man and emotions that remind the reader continually that he is a man. The ideas and emotions of a novel constitute its thematic make-up; plot, character, style, rhythm,

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[1]Cleanth Brooks, Jr. and Robert Penn Warren, Understanding Fiction (New York: F. S. Crofts and Co., 1948), pp. 286-287.

and structure constitute the artistic or aesthetic side of a novel. In a good novel these two elements are always present and each aids the other. Wellek and Warren state that "philosophy, ideological content, in its proper context, seems to enhance artistic value because it corroborates several important artistic values: those of complexity and coherence."[1]

In the glossary to an Anatomy of Criticism Northrop Frye makes a highly technical differentiation between the thematic and the fictional in literature.

> Fictional: Relating to literature in which there are internal characters, apart from the author and his audience.
>
> Thematic: Relating to works of literature in which no characters are involved except the author and his audience, as in most lyrics and essays, or to works of literature in which internal characters are subordinated to an argument maintained by the author, as in allegories and parables.[2]

Within the text there is a clarification of this differentiation between the two terms:

> It is easy to say that some literary works are fictional and others thematic in their main emphasis. But clearly there is no such thing as a fictional or a thematic work of literature, for all four ethical elements (ethical in the sense of relating to character), the hero, the hero's society, the poet and the poet's readers, are always at least potentially present. There can hardly be a work of literature without some kind of relation, implied or expressed, between its creator and its auditors.

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[1]René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1956), p. 123.

[2]Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 366.

> Hence every work of literature has both a fictional and a thematic aspect, and the question of which is more important is often simply a matter of opinion or emphasis in interpretation.[1]

Frye further elucidates the distinction between thematic and fictional by stating that Austen's Sense and Sensibility, although it is a novel named after its theme, is essentially fictional while Uncle Tom's Cabin and The Grapes of Wrath are both essentially thematic, for in these novels the primary purpose of the plot is to show the novels' themes. According to this line of reasoning, then, Green's fiction is more fictional than thematic. However, this is due solely to the fact that he has chosen the novel as his mode of communication rather than the essay, not because his themes are without import.

Thematic possibilities in literature are not infinite. The boredom of life, the inevitability of death, a love which cannot be consummated--all of these are common themes in many fine novels as well as in a good deal of drivel. The bulk of Julien Green's thematic material is contained in his first published work, an English short story, "The Apprentice Psychiatrist," which was published in 1920 in the University of Virginia Magazine. It is not listed by bibliographies and is generally ignored by its author. It is the tale of a destitute young student of medicine who turns to tutoring as his principal means of support. His pupil is plagued with a touch of hereditary insanity. Eventually the tutor becomes

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[1] Ibid., pp. 52-53.

absorbed in his pupil's illness and endeavors to force the mania to pursue its full course. Shortly before the end of the term the tutor enters his pupil's home, talks to him gently for a while, and then kills him. When the police arrive, they find a raving maniac sitting in the corner playing with his gun.

I. W. Brock comments:

> Crude though it be, the story contains certain ingredients basic in all Green's work, viz., introversion, insanity, schizoida, unrelieved tragedy. These were to be the mainstays of his future writing.[1]

The fact that Julien Green has chosen to concentrate on these particular themes does not indicate that his scope of understanding of life is too narrow to enable him to pursue vaster horizons but rather that he has wisely chosen to develop those themes which he knows and feels most deeply.

Nevertheless, that lyric, passionate quality, the *je ne sais quoi* of great literature which even the dullest reader can hardly help but find in the works of Dostoyevsky or Tolstoy is absent in the novels of Green. E. M. Forster says: "His (the author's) theme is the universe, or something universal, but he is not necessarily going to 'say' anything about the universe; he proposes to sing. . . ."[2] This singing, this imbibing with sentiment a fictional character is the

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[1]I. W. Brock, "Julien Green: A Biographical and Literary Sketch," French Review, XXIII (1950), 356.

[2]E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927), p. 181.

standard-bearer of a truly great novelist and naturally a rarity in literature. Green is a good novelist but falls short of the mark of a great novelist; he is either unable or perhaps simply unwilling to entrust his entire personality to his novels. Any novel that is completely honest will inevitably have a spark of universality, something that affects everyone, no matter how insignificant or unlikely the plot seems. This idea is probably most nearly expressed in Terence's dictum: "Homo sum; humani nil a me alienum puto."[1] The outward events in Oedipus Rex and Hamlet are certainly less likely to happen than the occurrences portrayed in the comic strip Blondie and Dagwood. Hardly anyone really marries his mother and rarely are so many people killed over a particular incident. Yet everyone has felt the passions of Oedipus and Hamlet; everyone who reads these works finds in them a chord profoundly common to his own life.

Few novelists are capable of creating the aura of universality in their works. In a discussion of George Eliot, Forster describes the nature of the fiction by a writer incapable of universal utterance.

> George Eliot talks about God, but never alters her focus. God and the tables and chairs are all in the same plane, and in consequence we have not for a moment the feeling that the whole universe needs pity and love--they are only needed in Hetty's cell.[2]

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[1] P. Terenti, Comoediae: Hauton Timorumenos, notes and introduction by Wilhelm Wagner (Cambridge: Deighton Bell and Co., 1902), p. 98.

[2] Forster, Aspects of the Novel, p. 192.

To Green's characters the meaning of their existence is usually incomprehensible. In the avertissement to Varouna Green says that human existence is "comme un fragment isolé dans un long message dont elle ne nous livre qu'une faible partie souvent indéchiffrable."[1] The Greenien hero lives forever under an oppressing weight of unhappiness simply because he is alive. Almost all of his heroes are fuyards both literally and figuratively. They have the animal instinct which directs them to escape destiny, the horribly decaying prison of everyday life.[2] Green's heroes feel they are continually being watched by some mysterious, invisible being who also controls their destiny. They are not free to choose the road of chance and through that means seek their salvation.[3] In spite of the pitiable situations in which Green's characters often find themselves, they receive a minimum of sympathy from the reader. His failure to create a link between his fictional characters and his readers is the reason why the process of catharsis is usually not effected by a reading of his novels and also why themes that seem common to every man are not in his works.

It is the purpose of this dissertation to illustrate

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[1]Julien Green, Varouna (Paris: Editions de la Maison Française, Inc., 1941), p. III.

[2]Antonio Fongaro, "Le Thème de la fuite dans les romans de Julien Green," Letterature Moderne, VI (1956), 389-390.

[3]Julio Lago Alonso, "Desde la otra orilla de Julien Green," Insula, año VII, No. 81 (sept. de 1952), 1.

the various methods which Green has chosen to develop his themes, to evaluate which methods are the most effective and which are the least effective, and finally to discuss the validity of Green's themes and the degree of their impact on the reader. One of the most absurd phases of scholarship is the practice of summing up a novel's themes in a few words.

> Frequently literature is thought of as a form of philosophy, as 'ideas' wrapped in form; and it is analysed to yield 'leading ideas'. Students are encouraged to summarize and to abstract works of art in terms of such generalizations. Much older scholarship has pushed this method to absurd extremes; one thinks especially of such German Shakespeare scholars as Ulrici who formulated the central idea of the Merchant of Venice as Summum jus summa injuria.[1]

This dissertation will review a novel's thematic development only within the entire scope of the novel and will not extract and elaborate on a few pithy statements. For this reason, this dissertation will perforce sometimes discuss elements of the novel other than theme, but the ultimate goal of such diversions will nevertheless remain as a study of thematic development in Green's novels.

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[1]Wellek and Warren, Theory of Literature, p. 110.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY NOVELS

Between the years 1926 and 1929 Green published his first full length novels: Mont-Cinère (1926), Adrienne Mesurat (1927), and Léviathan (1929). All three are marked by their intense realism, a complete absence of humor, and the portrayal of mentally unbalanced characters. This triumvirate shows Green's interest in personality and his knack for developing absorbing plots; it also clearly points the way to the distinct contributions Green was to make later to the French novel of psychology.

The thematic links among these first three novels are multiple. In each of them one can see the evidence of an author who has an "uncanny skill in conveying a sense of monotony, a very special ability in depicting feminine inhibitions, and a cold absorption in the presentation of a morbid passion."[1] However, although the general thematic tone in these works is strikingly similar, the thematic development in each is individual, and only a separate analysis of each novel will illustrate the method of development

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[1]Clifton P. Fadiman, "The Closed Garden," Nation, CXXVI (May 23, 1928), 592.

amply

Mont-Cinère

Like Green's first work, the short story "The Apprentice Psychiatrist," Mont-Cinère is a mixture of several thematic components. The novel's most prominent motifs are niggardliness, melancholia, rage, pyromania, murder, insanity, and suicide. The thematic scope of the novel is clearly far too comprehensive for Mont-Cinère's length (250 pages) and reveals to the reader that Green is just beginning to learn the rudiments of novel writing. Green's thematic selection also shows, however, that his lack of experience does not impede his writing on ideas of major import and that he is gifted with feelings of tolerance and understanding for the abnormal and mentally disturbed.

The unity of place is almost as carefully observed in Mont-Cinère as it is in a classical play. Virtually all the action occurs in 1887 in an isolated country mansion, named Mont-Cinère, which is located in Fauquier County, Virginia. The heroine, or probably better labeled the anti-heroine, Emily, a girl of fifteen, lives at Mont-Cinère with her widowed mother, Mrs. Fletcher, and her maternal grandmother, Mrs. Elliot. Mrs. Fletcher far surpasses Silas Marner in niggardliness. Her husband has left her quite a substantial income, but she refuses to buy her daughter sufficient clothing and food and even denies her a few logs to make a

fire in her room. More importantly, Mrs. Fletcher has never given Emily any love or affection. Emily herself has never had any friends or even acquaintances when the novel opens. As time progresses, Emily begins to assume some of the miserliness of her mother's personality. She becomes possessed with the idea that she alone should be the mistress of Mont-Cinère and develops an irrational fear that her mother will somehow manage to cheat her out of her inheritance of the house. Her desire to own Mont-Cinère completely finally leads her to marry the widower Frank Stevens, a former gardener of the Fletchers, in the false belief that a husband will be able to keep her mother in tow and allay her fears concerning her mother's encroachment on her property. One evening Emily says something that annoys Frank, and he strikes back angrily by informing her that, legally speaking, he is now as much an owner of Mont-Cinère as she is. In a rage, Emily attempts to kill the baby daughter of her husband. When she is prevented from doing this by the old Negro cook, she sets fire to Mont-Cinère and burns herself and her home in the conflagration.

Some of the principal themes of Mont-Cinère--niggardliness, insanity, murder, and suicide--can be seen in this brief synopsis of the novel's plot. The development and intensity of all the themes can only be understood, however, through a careful analysis of three components of this novel: imagery, characterization, and style.

Green has utilized imagery more effectively in Mont-

Cinère than in the majority of his subsequent novels. His rendering of the mansion and his usage of fire in particular are handled in such a manner that both seem to be alive, to be actual personages in the novel rather than inert objects only incidentally necessary to the plot.

Not long after the beginning of the novel Green devotes almost an entire page to a lengthy and sometimes tedious and involuted description of Mont-Cinère. This description reveals that his stylistic technique is still primitive and even crude in places but also forcefully illustrates that he is undoubtedly capable of endowing his fiction with an aura of bleakness and despair through the use of effective imagery. The description of Mont-Cinère begins in a highly literal vein. The reader is informed in a matter of fact way of the physical proportions of the house, its general aesthetic appearance, and the trees near the mansion. The meaning of Green's words is absolutely clear, and no vestige of obscure symbolism is inserted for the reader to puzzle over.

> Représentez-vous une maison bâtie selon le modèle le plus simple des habitations américaines, c'est-à-dire en forme de coffre, avec un porche à colonnes qui règne sur presque toute la longueur de la façade. Basse et percée de petites fenêtres, elle n'a qu'un étage au-dessus du porche. Les murs sont peints en gris clair et le toit en pente douce est recouvert de tuile brune. Aucun ornement ne relève la simplicité de la façade; à peine un filet rouge souligne-t-il les moulures plates des colonnes; c'est là la seule note de couleur dans cet ensemble monotone. Des arbres gigantesques, plantés un peu au hasard devant la maison, lui donnent un air de magnificence et

> s'élèvent par-dessus le toit en caressant les murs de leurs branches puissantes.[1]

In the second paragraph describing the house Green gives a more figurative turn to the meaning of his words.

> Du porche, la vue est belle et bien dégagée. De grands rochers noirs cachent le rebord du plateau sur lequel est bâti Mont-Cinère et forment un mur naturel au fond du long jardin. Tout au loin, l'horizon est borné par une ligne ininterrompue de hautes collines. La distance les fait paraître bleues; à peine y distingue-t-on, quelquefois, les taches plus sombres qu'étalent sur leurs flancs les bois dont elles sont recouvertes jusqu'à hauteur. Mais si l'on va jusqu'au bout de la grande pelouse, on découvre un autre paysage dont on ne pouvait guère soupçonner l'existence et qui surgit tout d'un coup comme on s'approche de la masse rude et trapue des roches noires: une profonde et fertile vallée s'étend entre Mont-Cinère et les collines; d'immenses étendues de terres cultivées se déroulent à perte de vue, du nord au sud, des champs de maïs, de blé, de trèfle déployant leurs couleurs sur le fond plus terne des prairies. De longs chemins traversent la campagne et unissent de gros villages plantés d'arbres. Ça et là, un coin de terre nue se montre, d'un ton ardent et foncé, et repose en bordure des moissons qui se creusent sous le vent. Retournez-vous maintenant et voyez Mont-Cinère. Les chênes et les sapins le cachent à moitié, mais entre les troncs noirs vous en apercevez les parois grises et les petites fenêtres carrées: vous pensez voir une prison.[2]

As the above quotation shows, Mont-Cinère has two strikingly different landscapes. If one stands on the porch, the house is surrounded by the rude magnificence of nature. But one cannot see far as the view of the horizon is cut short; there are no towns or houses visible, no trace of other human beings. If Emily had had occasion to stand on the porch, she would have been satisfied: she could have visualized herself as

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[1] Julien Green, Mont-Cinère (Paris: Plon, 1926), p. 16.

[2] Ibid., pp. 16-17.

the eventual owner of Mont-Cinère; she need not have worried about her looks, her imposed poverty, or lack of communication with others. Nor need she have worried about whether or not she were happy, for she would have been possessor of Mont-Cinère and its immediate surroundings, and nothing would have intervened to contradict her.

The other view from the edge of the lawn, that of cultivated fields, normally gives a feeling of peacefulness to onlookers. To Emily, however, this landscape must have presented a constant rebuke for her indolence and estrangement from the world. And in a fitting response, the world saw Mont-Cinère as a prison.

It seems that Mont-Cinère was built to be a counterpart to the wilds of nature and to be aloof to all human beings other than those who actually inhabited it. But the few unlucky inhabitants of Mont-Cinère seem to be held there as if by a magnet or some sinister evil spirit, and unlike most residents of a prison they have no desire to escape but only to establish themselves in their ill-omened abode as securely as possible. Emily's father, Stephen Fletcher, had an opportunity to settle in Savannah but chose Mont-Cinère instead. Green concludes his lengthy description of the house with these negatively tinted words regarding Fletcher's decision: "C'est là, cependant, que Stephen Fletcher était venu s'établir dans le dessein d'y passer le restant de sa vie."[1] Emily's

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[1] Ibid., p. 17.

mother is induced to allow her mother to live at Mont-Cinère partly because the latter has promised "Tant que je vivrai ... vous ne vendrez pas Mont-Cinère."[1] Emily is the novel's personage who is most concerned with the possession of Mont-Cinère, and her madness is brought on from her fears that she will be deprived of it.

The unrelieved simplicity and mournfulness of the house's façade penetrate the character of its residents. Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher, Mrs. Elliot, and Emily are all unable to experience happiness; they do not even laugh occasionally. The house seems to bequeath a part of its somberness to all of its inhabitants, and this bequest is both malevolent and ineluctable.

Fire is used as a leitmotif throughout the novel. One of Emily's main goals has always been to keep warm in the long and cold Virginia winter. The only fire allowed in the house is in Mrs. Elliot's room, and Mrs. Fletcher's penny-pinching nature saw to it that this one fire was kept to minimal proportions. Physical warmth, of course, is especially precious to Emily who has never received any spiritual warmth from anyone. Emily's dreams are far distant from those of typical adolescent girls: they revolve only around the essentials of life, and fire is naturally quite prominent.

Elle ne voulait pas d'amis, elle ne demandait qu'une

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[1] Ibid., p. 31.

> chose: Mont-Cinère. Etait-ce beaucoup exiger? Elle vivrait là comme il lui plairait, maîtresse de ses biens, maîtresse de sa vie. Cette chambre et les autres seraient à elle; elle aurait du feu, une table suffisante.[1]

When Emily is married to Frank, she is finally able to disobey her mother's wish to save twenty cents a day by not lighting any fires.

> Emily passait ses journées au coin de la cheminée, dans la salle à manger où elle avait allumé du feu le matin même de son mariage. Maintenant, les bûches y flambaient sans arrêt et sa grande occupation était d'en modifier l'arrangement, de glisser des fagots et des brindilles dans la cendre, de tout faire pour que l'intensité du feu ne diminuât pas une seconde. Penchée au-dessus des flammes, son visage dur et sévère tout empourpré de chaleur, elle rappelait d'une façcon saisissante la sorcière traditionnelle perpétuellement soucieuse du sort de ses tisons. De temps en temps, elle prenait un livre, lisait quelques pages jusqu'au moment où le craquement d'une bûche qui se rompait lui faisait jeter son roman de côté et saisir sa pelle et ses pincettes.[2]

Emily's decision to commit suicide by burning herself is hardly surprising. Life had never given her even a modicum of warmth; perhaps death will. She will at least be gloriously warm while dying.

Fire is a traditional symbol for life in practically all cultures. Even the stone-age man could easily comprehend that the sun, a ball of fire to him, gave warmth to the world and thus maintained his existence. Emily's longings for fires in every room of Mont-Cinère are a symbol of her desire to communicate with others, to be free to live her own life and to cease being a prisoner to the wills of her mother and

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[1] Ibid., p. 177.

[2] Ibid., pp. 219-220.

grandmother, to simply be herself.

Like so many of Green's protagonists, Emily views her existence as a veritable nightmare. One critic states:

> There is . . . the boundless and dreary selva oscura from which the only apparent means of escape are insanity or suicide, the desperate protagonists whose struggles to free themselves serve merely to sink them hopelessly deeper and deeper. In this world of the irredeemable, liberation from the detested prison of the self is at no time possible; effective communication or contact with someone or something outside and beyond the self is never more than a mirage. The sole reality, existence, is hideous, nightmarish.[1]

Emily finds no happiness in the simple act of existence as Albert Camus's Sisyphus did. Her single attempt at revolt, her marriage, was, of course, a failure because it was an act performed primarily against her mother rather than for herself. Indeed, up until the age of fifteen Emily had obeyed her mother in an almost servile way, catering, although she was deeply resentful, to all her mother's whims and fancies.

As has been seen, the two most forcefully constructed components in Green's imagery are the mansion Mont-Cinère and fire. Neither can correctly be considered a theme of the novel, but both contribute measurably to the overall thematic development of Mont-Cinère. Fire is a life-giving symbol, and Mont-Cinère is a life-destroying symbol. Both together show that the novel's chief personage, Emily, is driven between them or between life and death. Both illustrate the decision every human being must make--to live or to die.

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[1]John H. Meyer, "Familiar Territory," Renascence. X (Spring, 1958), 153.

While Emily's final decision to commit suicide ostensibly indicates that she has opted for death, she has in reality chosen life, for this is the first time in her life that she has done something entirely by herself and for herself. She is a free person at last, even if it is only for a few minutes.

Green has shown this pull in the novel between life and death much more cogently and realistically through imagery than would have been possible through plot development. Emily must be a fairly intelligent girl, for she has read many of the novels in her father's library, including such books as The Last Days of Pompeii and some of the works of Disraeli. However, her intelligence is not sufficient to enable her to relate anything she reads about to her own life.

> Ce qui la chagrinait le plus, c'était qu'il n'y eût dans sa vie aucun élément de ce romanesque qu'elle aimait tant, et que toutes ses difficultés, toutes ses souffrances eussent un air commun, et si peu d'intérêt. Quel romancier eût voulu parler, par exemple, de l'odeur insupportable que dégageait son feu? C'était ignoble.[1]

If Green had chosen to portray Emily as fully understanding her predicament, this would have destroyed her portraiture as a naive young girl, who has never questioned the existence of God or the validity of Christianity, ignorant of all psychology and unable to comprehend any metaphysical idea. On the other hand, to have delineated the subconscious

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[1]Green, Mont-Cinère, p. 185.

workings of Emily's mind would have required a stream of consciousness technique, and this is no doubt neither Green's preference nor his forte. The use of thematic imagery was clearly the best means Green could have used to portray some of the metaphysical ideas which constitute one of the many undercurrents in Mont-Cinère.

In Mont-Cinère Green relays most of the novel's thematic content through characterization. Apparently this modus operandi in his first novel pleased Green, for he has continued the practice in all of his subsequent novels. In Mont-Cinère a fair number of characters is introduced, but most are little more than names on paper. Only four personages in the novel, Emily, Mrs. Fletcher, Mrs. Elliot, and Mr. Fletcher, are actually characterized.

In Green's most recent novels only passing consideration is given to the heredity of his characters. Mont-Cinère, however, fills almost one-sixth of the book with the background of Emily's mother, dead father, and maternal grandmother. It is impossible to know whether or not Green believes that personality traits are inherited, but Emily unmistakably possesses traces of characteristics which are quite prominent in her forebears: niggardliness from her mother, melancholia from her father, and pettiness and suspiciousness from her grandmother.

Stephen Fletcher has been dead for eight years when Mont-Cinère begins, and only a few pages are devoted to a

brief outline of incidents in his life. Nevertheless, the influence of his person is quite strong throughout the novel. It has already been mentioned that he had an opportunity to settle elsewhere but chose Mont-Cinère. Like Emily, his personality was deeply affected by his home. "Quelque chose de la mélancolie de sa maison natale s'était glissé en lui et faisait partie de son caractère."[1] Fletcher married Kate Elliot during the one period of his life when he was bored because of loneliness. "Il l'avait épousée parce qu'il s'ennuyait dans sa solitude et il se remit à aimer cette solitude dès que la vie conjugale lui en eut fait connaître les avantages."[2] He was singularly unmoved by the birth of his daughter and never paid her the slightest attention. "Stephen Fletcher, qui se confinait à sa bibliothèque lorsqu'il ne faisait pas ses promenades solitaires autour de la maison, ne se souciait aucunement de sa fille et il était bien entendu qu'on ne lui en parlerait jamais."[3] When Fletcher was stricken with his final illness, he commenced to fear even seeing his daughter and went to great pains to avoid meeting her accidentally.

In sum, the portrait of Fletcher presents a melancholy, morose man, educated and well traveled but friendless and unable to give love or affection to anyone. At first he seems to be utterly uninterested in Emily but when he is later shown to avoid seeing her purposely Green reveals to the reader that his indifference is only feigned, that in

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[1]Ibid., p. 17. [2]Ibid., p. 18. [3]Ibid., p. 25.

reality he is afraid to see his daughter, perhaps because he senses that Emily has been tainted with the same melancholy nature that he has and that further contact between the two of them will only increase this quality in both.

The characterization of Emily's maternal grandmother, Mrs. Elliot, is given more attention in Mont-Cinère than the portrayal of Stephen Fletcher, but the overall impact of the character is less momentous. Mrs. Elliot arrives at Mont-Cinère shortly after Fletcher's death to the considerable grief of her daughter who believes she will be financially ruined by having to feed and house another person. Mrs. Elliot possesses a gentle mien but has a way of making herself feared and her will obeyed by her daughter. When she first sees Emily, she calls her a "petite sotte," but nevertheless the two take an immediate liking to each other.

Mrs. Elliot, unlike her daughter, is not afraid to spend money. One of her first acts as soon as she is installed in her room is to give an assessment of what redecorating is needed at Mont-Cinère. Fortunately for her daughter, she is stricken by an attack, evidently a stroke, before she can manage to spend any of her daughter's money. After the attack she spends the rest of her days in bed, filling her time by supposedly teaching her granddaughter to read and write but actually by inculcating in Emily a fear and hatred of her mother. Her first step is to attempt to induce Emily to slander her mother:

> Oh! ma petite Emily, dit alors Mrs. Elliot d'un air contrit, je t'ennuie un peu, mais sois patiente et douce. Je suis malade, j'ai besoin que tu me ménages. Assois-toi, ma petite-fille. Ecoute-moi. J'ai de gros défauts et je veux simplement savoir ce que ta mère en pense. Elle lui prit les mains de nouveau et les serra doucement. Elle peut fort bien me trouver maussade, par exemple; je ne m'en offenserais pas. Elle peut penser aussi que j'ai des goûts de dépense et qu'on brûle trop de bois dans ma cheminée. Dit-elle que je suis ingrate, eh?[1]

Later she succeeds in instilling in Emily the idea that her mother is trying to rob her of Mont-Cinère.

> T'ai-je fait dire que Mont-Cinère était à toi? Tu l'as vu par toi-même, tu es intelligente, Emily, sois forte aussi, ne te laisse pas faire, ne sois pas une victime. Je t'aiderai de mes conseils; jamais tu ne connaîtras ta mère comme je la connais; elle est faible, mais là où son avarice est en jeu, elle ne cède pas.[2]

Like many older people, Mrs. Elliot is consumed by fear because of her impending death. Irrationally, she looks for a rational cause for her death. She finds it easiest to blame the necessity of her death on her daughter and accuses her daughter of wishing to murder her and Emily.

> Eh bien, cela n'a fait qu'empirer depuis la mort de son mari. Elle a perdu la tête en se voyait maîtresse d'une grande maison où elle était libre d'agir à sa guise. Maintenant, elle n'a qu'une idée, qui est de se débarrasser de nous. Et qu'est-ce qui l'en empêcherait? Elle me déteste, elle souhaite, elle demande ma mort dans ses prières, j'en suis sûre. Quant à toi ...[3]

When Mrs. Elliot dies, of natural cause, her death is little mourned. There is scarce cause to pity a woman so filled with hatred for her daughter and so willing to share this hatred with her granddaughter.

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[1]Ibid., p. 67. [2]Ibid., p. 94. [3]Ibid., p. 119.

The attribute most readily assigned to Kate Fletcher is avarice. At the beginning of the novel she appears to the reader to be a brazenly cruel and heartless woman. Her niggardliness not only inflicts cruel suffering on others but also has no apparent purpose. She has not simply been bestowed with reasonably comfortable living expenses by the death of her husband; she is, in fact, exceptionally wealthy. Yes she insists on ridding the enormous house of its servants and on keeping a minimum number of fireplaces burning in the house, thus letting her own daughter sleep in an unheated room. She has already sold some of the house's furnishings, such as the living room candlesticks and mosaics, and she wishes to continue this gradual selling of furniture and ornaments in order to get pocket money and thus avoid completely drawing on her capital in the bank.

One of the few humorous incidents in the entirety of Green's fiction results from the excesses of Mrs. Fletcher's niggardliness. On a shopping trip she first manages to get a ride from their hired-hand in order to avoid paying train fare. On arriving at Mont-Cinère that evening she triumphantly shows her purchases to Emily. Emily, however, is not too impressed by her mother's used coat and points out that not only is it clearly a coat for a man but that also some stripes have been torn from it. Emily then enjoys one of her few genuine victories over her mother in announcing "C'est un vieux manteau de l'armée confédérée qu'on vous

a vendu."[1]

Cowardliness is also a part of Mrs. Fletcher's wholly unpleasant personality. When she decides to dismiss a servant, she delegates that task to her daughter.

Kate Fletcher is as stingy with her affection as she is with her money. Indeed, she rarely even bothers to speak to her daughter unless it is over an economic or absolutely essential matter. "Presque toujours elle commençait par il faut ou par toute autre expression traduisant l'idée de nécessité."[2] She married Stephen Fletcher, as one might expect, not because she was in love with him but because of the economic security the marriage would provide.

Mrs. Fletcher is completely motivated by self-interest. Her egocentricity is so envelopping that she completely fails to perceive that her own child needs heavier clothing, fires in her room, more food, and of course, love. Ironically, she inwardly believes that she is a normal woman. In a conversation with Emily she says:

> --Mais je suis bonne, je suis chrétienne! Je n'ai pas fait de mal à ta grandmère. Je suis une femme comme les autres. Je n'ai jamais voulu que tu fusses malade.
> --Vous ne voulez pas que je fasse du feu.
> --Ah! ce n'est pas la même chose, mon Dieu, s'écria Mrs. Fletcher.[3]

It is difficult to tell whether Mrs. Fletcher is hypocritical or simply obtuse in her self-imposed religiosity. She is a devout reader of the Bible, especially after her

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[1]Ibid., p. 109. [2]Ibid., p. 6. [3]Ibid., p. 228.

daughter's marriage. Yes in spite of her daily readings she apparently sees no connection between the charity and tolerance called for in the Bible and her own selfish and avaricious mode of living.

Mrs. Fletcher's personality is constructed on a single theme, that of self-interest, with the most obvious manifestation being niggardliness. A figure who can be so completely wrapped up in herself is virtually incredible. Nevertheless, Mrs. Fletcher's portrayal is a realistic, if exaggerated, description of the miser.

The protagonist of Mont-Cinère, Emily, is the most carefully and fully developed character in the novel. Only in the character of Emily can personality growth be observed.

Mont-Cinère begins with a brief preliminary scenario which depicts a typical feud between Emily and her mother; this time it is over the fact that her mother wishes Emily to dismiss the maid as she herself is too timid. Emily's resentment towards her mother is presented in this introductory part of the novel, but the reasons for this resentment are not conveyed at all, and, at least to some extent, Emily briefly appears to be only a typical adolescent girl who dislikes her mother because of all the inane things she forces her to do.

It is after this first scene between Emily and Mrs. Fletcher that Green commences his rather lengthy account of the personalities of Emily's ancestors: her mother and

father and maternal grandmother. Although there are undoubtedly traces of her mother's avarice and her grandmother's suspicious nature in Emily's personality, Green never states flatly that she has inherited these tendencies. In this section of the novel, however, he does show that Emily is clearly the recipient of her father's melancholia so far as can be deciphered from her general appearance. "Comme lui encore, elle avait les yeux noirs, extrêmement mobiles, les pommettes hautes et décharnées, une physionomie inquiète jusqu'à paraître chagrine et mélancolique."[1]

After all this preliminary footwork is finished, Green begins his laborious dissection of Emily's personality. Emily is a strange girl. She has never had any friends, indeed she has rarely left the confines of the house. She does not go to school or to church nor does she ever venture to some of the nearby villages. Moreover, she does not seem to mind being cooped up continually at home. Her favorite spot in the house is her own room in spite of the fact that it is cold, small, and poorly furnished. She delights in saying "Je suis chez moi, ici, tout ceci m'appartient."[2] Green further comments on Emily's love for the possessions in her room:

> Il lui semblait qu'on lui eut presque ôté la vie en la privant de ces meubles qu'elle s'était accoutumée à voir dans sa chambre depuis l'époque la plus reculée de son enfance et qu'elle chérissait comme elle n'avait jamais chéri des êtres humains.[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 27. [2]Ibid., p. 57. [3]Ibid.

At this point in the novel Emily's love for material objects seems abnormal but it does not yet seem uncontrollable.

It is at this time in the novel that Emily comes under the influence of her grandmother and begins to suspect her mother of trying to rob her of Mont-Cinère. As her fear of losing the house grows, she becomes increasingly more melancholic. She begins to realize how boring her life is but feels utterly helpless to do anything about it.

> Elle était sans force contre la mélancolie qui l'envahissait; tout lui paraissait futile ou odieux, ce repas qu'elle finissait; ce chale dont elle sentait la chaleur autour de son cou et sur ses épaules, tous les soins qu'elle prenait pour entertenir une vie misérable.[1]

Shortly after this Emily's psychotic tendencies become much more pronounced. From time to time she is seized by violent feelings of disgust. She wishes to die and never to see her mother again. She feels profoundly sad and lonely. Her entire world is joyless and gray. Most important, she sees no possible way to extricate herself from her environment. Unlike most adolescents, Emily does not refuse to obey her mother's will. She is sulky in carrying out her mother's demands, but she does not possess enough self-assurance to refuse. The suggestion of Prudence Easting, a church social worker for whom Emily does some sewing in the latter part of the novel and who is the closest approximation to a friend that Emily has, that she marry is received with bewilderment

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[1] Ibid., p. 70.

by Emily who states categorically that she cannot leave Mont-Cinère for anyone. "Il ne peut pas être question d'abandonner Mont-Cinère. La maison est à moi."[1] After her grandmother's death Emily is more estranged from the world than ever. The only person with whom she has been able to converse is gone. Moreover, even her very occasional talks with her mother are diminished because her mother has found a bosom friend in her new boarder, Miss Gay.

It is Miss Gay who brings the novel to a climax. When Emily is introduced to her, she immediately dislikes Miss Gay, for she sees her as yet another obstacle to her gaining complete control over the house. Emily asks Miss Gay abruptly if she intends to rent a room. Addressing Mrs. Fletcher, Miss Gay says "Y a-t-il contestation, madame, cette maison n'est-elle pas à vous?"[2] Mrs. Fletcher replies, naturally enough , "assurément,"[3] This reply from her mother astonished Emily. It seemed to her that a "vaste bourdonnement emplissait l'air et noyait tous les sons autour d'elle. Jamais comme à cet instant elle n'avait senti en elle-même cette espèce de force bondissante et frénétique de la colère."[4] Upon returning to her room, she makes the decision which she believes will rid her of the fear that her mother will take Mont-Cinère all for herself. She decides to marry Frank Stevens.

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[1] Ibid., p. 180.

[2] Ibid., p. 192.

[3] Ibid., p. 193.

[4] Ibid.

The marriage naturally fails to provide Emily the security she wants. True to Emily's conjecture, Mrs. Fletcher is too afraid to refuse pocket money to Emily when she is flanked by Frank. But to Emily's total surprise, when Mrs. Fletcher runs out of cash, she refuses to draw on her bank account, ignores the bills, and finally decides to leave Mont-Cinère. The day of her departure Emily is extremely distraught. To mock her, Frank sits with his baby daughter and tells the baby that the house will be hers some day. Emily can no longer control herself. She lunges toward the baby and almost succeeds in strangling it. Later that afternoon she burns herself and Mont-Cinère. Her final decision to commit suicide comes because she cannot fathon the prospect of living without Mont-Cinère. The house is an integral part of Emily, and she realizes that existence for her without it would be impossible. She cannot bear to live only with herself. In his Sickness unto Death Kierkegaard gives a moving explanation of Emily's final act.

> Despair is never ultimately over the external object but always over ourselves. A girl loses her sweetheart and she despairs. It is not over the lost sweetheart, but over herself-without-the-sweetheart. And so it is with all cases of loss whether it be money, power, or social rank. The unbearable loss is not really in itself unbearable. What we cannot bear is in being stripped of the external object. We stand denuded and see the intolerable abyss of ourselves.[1]

In his Journal Green states that his novels are not

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[1] A Kierkegaard Anthology, ed. by Robert Bretall (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 358.

planned out in advance.[1] This statement is surprising at first, for in Green's fiction the action seems uncommonly well coordinated and character development is exceptionally logical and psychologically sound. In Mont-Cinère even the most insignificant act is usually inextricably tied up with a major thematic note in the novel. Of the four characters on whose development Green concentrates, none can be said to possess a single major trait not in line with the general tone of the novel.

The brief insertion of Stephen Fletcher's personality heightens considerably the thematic note of melancholia. By intimating that melancholia can be inherited, Green strengthens the idea that melancholia is a pervasive force, saturating its victims and making them helpless to combat it.

Mrs. Elliot's portrayal sharpens the thematic note of the absence of love. She clearly suspects her daughter of trying to kill her; she has no love, respect, or even affection for her daughter. She enjoys the company and affection of her granddaughter but is unable to give her any real love.

Kate Fletcher has one obsession in life: the hoarding of money. She, like her mother, is too stingy to give away either money or affection. Her sole interest is in her own security. Thus, through this personage Green presents the themes of niggardliness, self-interest, and the absence of

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[1]Julien Green, Journal 1928-1934 (Paris: Plon, 1938), p. 5.

love.

But it is with the character Emily that Green presents the synthesis of his themes in Mont-Cinère. Melancholia, boredom, inability to revolt and the resulting stagnation and feelings of incompetence, suspicion, provincialism resulting from living isolated in the country, niggardliness, incapacity to love, a blind groping for security--all of these thematic ideas are found succinctly in Emily's personality.

The final element which adds measurably to the thematic impact in Mont-Cinère is style. A casual reading of the novel will probably produce the feeling that Green's style is overpowering and that his college literary training is still too much in evidence. The utter humorlessness of the novel makes it difficult for the reader to peruse this work without several breaks. However, an examination of the style and its relation to the novel's themes shows that Green no doubt purposely chose to write in such a heavy vein. The style of Mont-Cinère, to use some of the vocabulary typically utilized in describing style, is concrete, rather pedestrian at times, sincere, dignified, and vivid. Green uses long paragraphs and very precisely worded descriptions of the house, the countryside, and the house's inhabitants with few conversations interrupting these descriptions. Such a heavy style inevitably gives the novel a gloomy atmosphere. It serves to show markedly the gloominess and despair of the characters in Mont-Cinère. This definite, concrete

style seems to repress any purely lyrical, imaginative outburst. A spirit of frivolity in the novel would appear grossly out of place; likewise no imagination is expected on the part of the characters. They must accept the role accorded them at the beginning of the novel and learn to live in the melancholy prison Mont-Cinère represents.

One important factor to acknowledge in any discussion of theme in the works of Julien Green is that he is not a moralistic or didactic writer in any sense. In Mont-Cinère, as in his other later novels, he chooses to portray some of the unpleasant, occasionally even morbid aspects of mankind. However, although he evidently prefers to create and expand upon human abnormalities in his novels, never at any time does he pretend to offer a solution.

Adrienne Mesurat

Adrienne Mesurat was published only a year after Mont-Cinère, but during that year Green seems to have improved immensely both as a novelist and as a psychologist. All of the novel's interest is concentrated on the protagonist, a young girl who is slowly but inevitably being driven towards insanity. The appearances made by the novel's other characters serve only to intensify the portrayal of the quickly developing dementia in the principal personage. The end effect of such concentration on the protagonist is that Adrienne Mesurat is a consummately finished novel insofar as the depiction of a psychological aberration is concerned.

However, there still remain in the novel a few verbal gaucheries and awkward, unlikely happenings, natural enough, of course, in a young novelist.

Adrienne Mesurat takes place in 1908 in a small provincial town in France, La Tour-l'Evêque. Adrienne, a pretty eighteen-year-old,lives with her father, a retired instructor of penmanship and her considerably older spinster sister, Germaine. Their home, the villa des Charmes, while not as imposing nor as foreboding as Mont-Cinère, nevertheless plays an important role in the novel. Rather poorly constructed and of an inferior quality in comparison with the other houses in the immediate neighborhood, the villa des Charmes is a three-story structure with many windows. Adrienne, like the antecedent Greenien heroine Emily, has no friends, does not go to church or school, and chooses to spend practically all her time at home. A fortnight before the novel's chronological beginning, Emily has by chance seen the local doctor, Denis Maurecourt, and immediately imagines herself in love with him. She begins to take walks over the route where she has glimpsed him in the hope that fate will present him again but later she drops that habit and begins instead every evening only to cross the street, from where she can clearly see his house, and watch. This practice does not go on indefinitely, however, as it is soon noticed by her sister and father, who instinctively realize the reason for her nocturnal promenades and force her to admit that she leaves at night

to see someone. When she refuses to admit his name, they decide that as a punishment she will be kept locked in the house except for an afternoon walk with her father.

At this point the novel shifts its focus to Germaine, a sickly old maid who finally becomes so provoked by her father's insisting she present herself at the table for meals in spite of her illness that she decides to leave home. She makes all the arrangements in secret with only the help of Adrienne who is glad to see her go since only from Germaine's room does the villa des Charmes command a view of Maurecourt's home. The very eve Germaine plans to depart, while they are attending an outdoor concert on one of their afternoon outings, Adrienne and her father meet their new neighbor, a summer renter, Mme Legras. Adrienne is entranced by her and promises to pay her a visit the next day. Luckily for Adrienne, Mesurat, contrary to his usually strictly enforced habits, is away practically the entire day. She is thus easily able to escape from her home to spend the afternoon with Mme Legras. That evening her father confronts her with his newly discovered knowledge that Adrienne has helped her sister leave the villa des Charmes. Trying to force Adrienne to give him Germaine's new address, Mesurat threatens first to kill Adrienne and then mocks her love for Maurecourt. In a rage Adrienne pushes her father down the stairs to his death. She sits awake that night, not realizing the enormity of

her deed. The next morning, when the maid discovers the body, Adrienne says she slept all night and heard nothing.

From this juncture in the novel Adrienne's life becomes increasingly more monotonous. She bides her time mostly by talking with Mme Legras and nervously dusting the furniture. When she learns from a local gossip the shocking news that Mme Legras is a kept woman, she resolves to have nothing more to do with her but ultimately, in an extreme state of agitation, relents. As soon as she is in Mme Legras' garden, she faints. When she is revived, Mme Legras succeeds in inducing Adrienne to tell her the name of her beloved. Adrienne then gives her a letter which she in turn gives to Maurecourt. The next day, when Adrienne has returned to her own home, the doctor pays her a visit. Adrienne is naturally beside herself and confesses that she has killed her father and how much she loves Maurecourt. The doctor, one of the few genuinely kind characters Green has created, wants only to help Adrienne to live a more normal life. When he leaves, Adrienne is immediately visited by Mme Legras who attempts to console her and then asks for a small loan. While Adrienne is getting the money, she suddenly remembers how her father warned her after she lent Germaine some money to leave that a small dowry would mean she would have only a small chance ever to marry. She states bluntly that she has changed her mind and cannot lend Mme Legras the money. While Mme Legras is attempting to reason

with her, Adrienne falls into a trance during which Mme Legras takes all her money as well as her watch and then leaves town. That evening, madness overtakes Adrienne. She is found on the outskirts of the town remembering nothing.

The major thematic concern in Adrienne Mesurat rests with the questions of how and why madness develops in the protagonist. Green evokes in great detail and with considerable skill the various stages through which Adrienne progresses until she becomes totally mad. The monotony of life, the narrow-minded attitudes and habits of provincial townsmen, and the individual's natural fear of death sharpened by a life in which the only major event will be death are used as minor themes which illustrate some f the reasons for the incipience of Adrienne's madness. Adrienne's final fall into insanity is synonymous with every man's essential estrangement from the world because man is only himself and can be no one else.

Green begins the novel with a strongly Balzacian flavor. The Mesurats' home, the furniture, the neighboring houses and streets are detailed with careful exactitude by the author. The end result of such minute description instills in the reader the feeling that Adrienne is helpless against the forces of her environment, that she is a prisoner subject to her house and furniture and can do nothing to change her situation.

Dans Adrienne Mesurat, le milieu provincial est évoqué avec une exactitude presque photographique:

> Adrienne n'est pas seulement plaquée sur sa province avec autant de force qu'Emma Bovary ou Thérèse Desqueyroux sur leurs domaines de Normandie ou d'Aquitaine. Elle est également "engluée" dans un milieu aussi "nauséabond" que celui du Bouville de Sartre dans La Nausée: les concerts publics de mauvaise musique dans le kiosque de la Grande Place, l'architecture rocaille, bourgeoise, de la villa des Charmes, les horribles meubles de son intérieur, les moeurs reglées de ses habitants, tout cela forme un admirable cadre réaliste à l'histoire des amours malheureuses d'Adrienne Mesurat et conditionne en quelque sorte l'évolution de sa psychose.[1]

Besides being hemmed in helplessly by her environment, Adrienne leads a monotonous life which as the novel progresses becomes increasingly more monotonous. Adrienne does not have any happy memories of her childhood. She is not sour, like her sister, but simply never has any ambitions or hopes. "Rien n'avait de prise sur elle; elle ne craignait rien et rien ne l'attirait. L'ennui et une sorte de résignation mécontente se lisaient seuls sur ses traits."[2]

At the beginning of Adrienne Mesurat Green aptly describes life in the Mesurat household:

> Des années s'écoulèrent ainsi dans une monotonie profonde. A la villa des Charmes, les heures suivaient le rythme que lui imprimaient Germaine et M. Mesurat et la vie n'était plus qu'une série d'habitudes, de gestes accomplis à des moments fixes. Un changement quelconque eût pris un aspect anarchique.[3]

The key word in this description is monotonie and Green uses this word or one of its derivatives a great deal in depicting

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[1]Pierre Brodin, Julien Green (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1957), p. 44.

[2]Julien Green, Adrienne Mesurat (Paris: Plon, 1927), p. 23.

[3]Ibid.

Adrienne's life. At the end of one of the novel's chapters, Green devotes a paragraph to a moving and eloquent description of life in the provinces. It can easily be particularized to describe Adrienne's life exactly.

> Il y a quelque chose de terrible dans ces existences de province où rien ne paraît changer, où tout conserve le même aspect, quelles que soient les profondes modifications de l'âme. Rien ne s'aperçoit au dehors de l'angoisse, de l'espoir et de l'amour, et le coeur bat mystérieusement jusqu'à la mort sans qu'on ait osé une fois cueillir les géraniums le vendredi au lieu du samedi ou faire le tour de la ville à onze heures du matin plutôt qu'à cinq heures du soir.[1]

Antoine Mesurat is the very essence of a man who feels he is obligated to do everything at the same time and in the same order every day. Adrienne has unconsciously picked up this habit from her father, but unlike him she does not derive happiness from such a meticulously ordered way of life.

> Elle aussi connut le besoin d'accomplir sa tâche à un instant donné, mais, par une contradiction singulière, cela lui déplaisait, et elle ressemblait à une religieuse qui n'a plus la foi, mais qui conserve pour la règle une espèce d'attachement irrité, parce que c'est la règle qu'elle s'est choisie.[2]

Suitors have come to seek Adrienne's hand, but the father refuses to pay serious attention to them because a wedding and Adrienne's subsequent departure would destroy his daily routine. As for Adrienne herself, she can simply see no need to complicate her life with marriage.

Living day after day, anticipating no joy or sorrow, Adrienne is at last constrained by the crushing forces of boredom to invent something to make her life worthwhile.

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[1] Ibid., p. 79.

[2] Ibid., p. 23.

More poetically, she is "une naufragée qui implore un secours."[1] She decides she is in love with a man of forty-five, a man whom she has just barely glimpsed and about whom she knows nothing. Although Adrienne chose Dr. Maurecourt in particular by chance, it was no chance that she chose to fall in love with someone. Having lived eighteen years with no love or affection from family or friends, with no interests or hobbies, Adrienne was literally starved for some sort of emotional outlet. Her decision to love Dr. Maurecourt came as a last, futile endeavor to love and be loved.

Adrienne's love for Maurecourt becomes immediately a monomania. She is obsessed with childish schemes for getting Germaine's room, with the view of the doctor's house, for her own. When her sister tells her that she too has suffered, Adrienne cannot understand how anyone but she can ever feel what true suffering is. As Adrienne's love grows more realistic and more meaningful to her, so does her frustration. Her life is now not only excessively monotonous but also excessively frustrating. This combination demands some sort of emotional release and for Adrienne the release culminates in the killing of her father.

> Une horrible frayeur la saisit et, sans savoir comment, à peu près comme si elle eût été jetée dans le noir par une force irrésistible, elle se rua vers l'escalier; tout son poids porta sur les épaules de son père qui perdit

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[1]Michel Gorkine, Julien Green (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Debresse, 1956), p. 106.

> l'équilibre et tomba en avant, tandis qu'elle se retenait à la rampe.[1]

After the murder Adrienne manages to return to her regular routine, but naturally frustration and boredom begin again to take their toll on her. For a while she finds a strange kind of solace in Mme Legras. She dislikes her neighbor but yet feels compelled to visit her every day. She desires to be with no one other than Mme Legras. "Par une sorte de magie dont elle ignorait le principe, le perfide bavardage de Mme Legras lui donnait un semblant de paix intérieure."[2] After having learned Mme Legras' disgraceful history, Adrienne takes a short trip. After the trip Adrienne realizes completely for the first time that she is indeed a prisoner to her town and her home.

> Elle avait cru qu'elle ne pouvait plus vivre à la villa des Charmes; au contraire, elle ne pouvait plus vivre que là. Matériellement d'abord, il lui était impossible de rien changer au présent état de choses. Elle était mineure, sa fortune ne lui appartenait pas. Mais aussi elle ne concevait pas qu'elle pût vendre la maison pour en acheter une autre. Elle avait hérité de son père une sorte de vénération de l'habitude qui la retenait dans ces murs, au milieu de ces objets dont chacun lui rappelait une enfance mélancolique et une jeunesse douleureuse. Sans doute, elle pouvait en modifier l'arrangement, déplacer les fauteuils et les chaises, mais elle avait besoin de les voir autour d'elle.[3]

The logical deduction from this realization which Adrienne undoubtedly knows unconsciously is that she is also fated to be a prisoner to eternal boredom and a helplessly futile

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[1]Green, Adrienne Mesurat, p. 159.

[2]Ibid., p. 201.

[3]Ibid., pp. 270-271.

love for Maurecourt.

The definite onset of Adrienne's madness occurs when she wakes up in the middle of the night at Mme Legras' home after she fainted in the garden that afternoon. She feels that she is being split into two persons. "Il lui semble qu'elle s'échappait de cette masse immobile et qu'elle flottait au-dessus d'elle."[1]

Adrienne's conversation with the doctor paves the way for her final, irremediable breakdown. Maurecourt is a kind man and tells Adrienne he will help her make new social contacts to aid her in escaping her solitude, but he also tells her frankly that he does not love her and cannot marry her. Thus Adrienne is now forced to abandon whatever vain hopes she may have held concerning Maurecourt. Such a disillusionment is too great for her to sustain. She goes into a trance twice and finally into total amnesia.

> As the circumstances of her environment offer no possible outlet for expression, she is driven to construct a mad fantasy-world of desire; and the energy thus accumulated finds terrible release in the killing of her father. The release is but temporary and as her mute desires continue to grow without any satisfaction being offered them, her naturally unironic mind, deprived of the beneficial effects of humorous self-examination, decays until madness intervenes.[2]

In Adrienne Mesurat Green has successfully shown that he understands the inner workings of a provincial mind which is hopelessly bored and frustrated. To Adrienne every hour of

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[1]Ibid., p. 300.

[2]Fadiman, "The Closed Garden," p. 592.

her life must have passed as slowly for her as a single day in the life of someone who is more involved in the affairs of the world. At the end of the novel, which is fairly lengthy, the reader feels as though the action has lasted for several years. Green has outlined Adrienne's thoughts and emotions so minutely that the reader feels the action must have lasted longer than two months, the actual time elapsed in Adrienne Mesurat, for him to know the heroine so intimately.

In this novel Green has carefully traced the progress of Adrienne's insanity and has delineated the factors which contributed to its onset. Monotony and frustration are, of course, the principal causal factors. A slightly didactic note is inserted when Dr. Maurecourt suggests to Adrienne that she try to make more friends and to get out of the house more often. In spite of the notion that Adrienne could conceivably be helped to ward off her madness, one feels that her madness is inevitable and that regardless of what she does or what happens to her, she is inexorably on the road to insanity. Adrienne is essentially alone in the world, and for her such loneliness is unbearable. The logical conclusion to draw from Adrienne Mesurat is that Green seeks to convey the idea that all men are alone but that some, perhaps through the success of their social contacts, are able to persevere in their loneliness and to maintain their identity while others, like the unfortunate Adrienne,

cannot sustain their loneliness and are driven to insanity.

A minor theme, which runs throughout the entirety of Adrienne Mesurat, as well as in many subsequent novels by Green, is the fear of death. It is only natural, of course, for Green to be interested in the role that fear of death plays in the lives of most people. Given his background, his deeply religious nature, and the emphasis that Christianity puts on death and the afterlife, an intelligent man such as Green could hardly have escaped pondering on the nature of death as an adolescent and later incorporating some of his ideas into his novels.

Julien Green is heavily indebted to his Christian heritage. He was born into a strict, Protestant home and raised in a Catholic country. He was thus bombarded constantly with religious conflicts and problems. As neither the Presbyterians, the religion of his father, nor the Episcopalians, the religion of his mother, had a church in Paris while he was growing up, Green did not go to church every Sunday as he undoubtedly would have if he had been brought up in America. About twice a month, however, he did go to either an Anglican service or to the temple. During the summers, while the family was vacationing in the country, he went to Mass. One Protestant custom that Mrs. Green never did relinquish consisted of daily Bible readings. From these Green no doubt gained his rather intensive knowledge of the Bible.[1]

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[1]Samuel Stokes, Julian Green and the Thorn of Puritanism (New York: King's Crown Press, 1955), pp. 3-4.

When Green was fifteen he was converted to Catholicism on his own initiative. Shortly before his conversion, he had experienced a moment of religious ecstasy while saying the Lord's prayer with his mother. The joy emanating from this early religious experience was no doubt a factor in his decision to convert. From the time of his conversion to 1924 the intensity of Green's faith varied considerably. His first work, Pamphlet contre les catholiques de France, published in 1924 under the pseudonym Théophile Delaporte, is a dialectic on the nature of faith and a criticism of Catholics. The Pamphlet is also Green's "farewell to youthful religious fervor."[1] From this point on he grew increasingly less linked with any sort of formal religion although his deep interest in spiritual problems remained.

When Green wrote Adrienne Mesurat, he was already far removed from the intense, specific faith he had when he was converted at fifteen, but he was still haunted by the mysterious joys and fears of his religion. One of these fears is that of death. "En y réfléchissant, j'ai constaté que la plus importune de mes phobies, et la plus persécutante, est celle de la mort."[2] Accordingly, then, fear of death is a minor but pervasive theme throughout the novel.

At the beginning of the novel, Adrienne does not attend the services of any church and does not seem to be par-

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[1] Ibid., p. 12.

[2] Green, Journal 1928-1934, pp. 118-119.

ticularly bothered by her lack of faith in God. Her fear of death commences only after she has murdered her father.

When her father has fallen to the bottom of the staircase, Adrienne calls out "Papa" and then sits down at the top of the stairs. What immediately strikes the reader as strange is her failure to see whether or not her father is dead and if he is alive to see if she can help him in any way since she did not kill him purposely, at least not in her conscious mind. Adrienne does nothing of this nature because she is completely unable to bring herself to the realization that her father may be dead. Her inability to achieve this realization the night of the murder and for some time thereafter stems from her fear of death which comes to the surface only with the death of her father. In speaking of the role fear of death plays in Green's novels Stokes says "In Adrienne Mesurat . . . the fear is created by an actual murder. Having killed her father by pushing him downstairs, Adrienne cannot get death off her mind."[1]

While she is sitting at the top of the stairs, Adrienne first calms herself by imagining that the whole horrible scene was only a nightmare.

> A un moment, elle s'imagina qu'elle était dans son lit en train de rêver qu'elle était assise dans l'escalier et qu'elle se souvenait d'une scène avec son père et cette illusion lui donnait une espèce de tranquillité.[2]

After this phase Adrienne briefly remembers the murder but

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[1]Stokes, Julian Green and the Thorn of Puritanism, p. 38.

[2]Green, Adrienne Mesurat, p. 160.

does not believe it actually occurred. Rationalizing as to why she is not in her bedroom, she says "Peut-être que je suis somnambule."[1]

When she has finally managed to return to her own room, she thinks she hears her father but does not go to him reasoning that he cannot be speaking since he has gone to bed. She later changes her mind, however, and decides to go to his room to see if he is all right. When she finds his door locked, walking as if against her will, "comme à contrecoeur et en murmurant: 'Non,'"[2] she goes to the parapet of the staircase from which she sees her father's body sprawled on the floor. Her mind closes to the deed she has perpetrated, and she does not recognize the body as her father's. Stupefied, she goes down the stairs and returns to her room.

> Elle posait un pied devant l'autre avec le soin que l'on apporte inconsciemment aux gestes les plus ordinaires lorsqu'un impérieux sujet de méditation s'est emparé de l'âme et en absorbe toutes les facultés. Ses yeux étaient vides, mais il y avait dans le fond de ce regard sans expression quelque chose comme le paroxysme de la surprise qui répandait une stupidité horrible sur le reste du visage.[3]

She tries to sleep but cannot because of a continual humming she keeps hearing in spite of her attempts to stop it by singing, clapping her hands, and covering her ears.

Finally she is completely overcome by terror. She lights a lamp and tries to think about events and people in her childhood. But this effort to delve into the past

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid., p. 162. [3]Ibid., pp. 162-163.

is unable to save her from falling even more deeply into the abyss of terror. She screams, but no one comes. It is then that her fears of death are personalized. She suddenly is afraid she will catch cold and become ill like her sister. She is afraid she will catch the fever or become delirious. She worries about who will stop her from jumping out the window. Then she is seized by another type of terror.

> Et, tout à coup, elle fut pénétrée d'une épouvante sans nom. Ce n'était pas, comme tout à l'heure, ... c'était un ignoble effroi d'elle-même, de ses moindres gestes, de son ombre et jusqu'à ses pensées où elle croyait deviner les symptômes de la démence.[1]

She again cries out for help with no results. But this time her cry for release from the responsibility for the murder and from her growing madness which she intuitively understands gives her a sense of tranquillity and she falls asleep.

All of Adrienne's reactions after the murder--her stupefied gaze, her failure to be able to sleep, her need for a light in the dark, her inability to acknowledge the fact that she is a murderess and that her father is dead--point to the fact that Adrienne is terribly fearful. She now understands that people live and then die and that she too must die.

In Adrienne Mesurat death also has a prominent role in the personage of Adrienne's ailing sister Germaine. In the early morning on the day of her departure Germaine holds out her hands to Adrienne, but Adrienne cannot bring herself

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[1]Ibid., p. 167.

to take them.

> Elle regrettait de ne pas avoir embrassé Germaine ou, plutôt, de n'avoir pu l'embrasser, car au moment où elle avait vu ses bras se tendre vers elle, un sentiment d'incoercible horreur l'avait fait rentrer dans sa chambre. Peut-être, en effet, ne suffisait-il que d'un baiser pour lui communiquer cette maladie dont souffrait sa soeur.[1]

After Germaine leaves, Adrienne waits many days before entering her room for fear of being contaminated. "Quelque chose l'avait retenue de le faire plus tôt. D'abord le vague effroi d'une contagion possible."[2] Later when she is reading a letter from her sister, but written by someone else, she regrets that she has to touch it. "Elle traversa la rue et regretta de ne pas avoir eu ses gants aux mains pour lire cette lettre que la malade avait peut-être lue, sur laquelle peut-être, elle avait soufflé."[3] On her short trip Adrienne develops a fever and immediately and quite irrationally interprets it as Germaine's disease.

Adrienne's fear that she will somehow catch Germaine's illness is absurd. Germaine has told her many times that she need not worry since her illness cannot be contracted by others. Nevertheless, Adrienne is cognizant that her sister is on the verge of death, and this realization makes her irrationally afraid that she too will get Germaine's disease.

Fear of death in Adrienne Mesurat has only minor thematic significance, but this fear is nevertheless one

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[1] Ibid., p. 129. [2] Ibid., p. 189. [3] Ibid., p. 193.

of the contributing factors in promoting Adrienne's madness. Green has shown his skill in conveying themes effectively and powerfully by introducing this theme from two viewpoints: the effects of the murder of Mesurat on Adrienne and Adrienne's fear of Germaine's illness. "By combining the effects of a murder with the possibility of fatal contagion, Green gives a most important role to death in his second novel."[1]

As has been seen, the cause for the development of insanity in the principal personage is the major theme in Adrienne Mesurat. Green has developed the character of Adrienne most vividly, but the question still remains as to whether he has adequately explained her madness. He has portrayed her monotonous life in a small provincial town, her fear of death, the absence of love and affection, and her frustration in such a way that these seem at first to be the ostensible cause of her madness. Nevertheless, one of Adrienne's most important acts--the murder of her father--is never fully explained. When Adrienne rushes toward him, she feels as if she is being driven by "une force irrésistible."[2] In a psychological novel, which otherwise so carefully and almost scientifically delineates the progress of Adrienne's madness, such a lapse into the mysterious and un-

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[1]Stokes, Julian Green and the Thorn of Puritanism. p. 38.

[2]Green, Adrienne Mesurat, p. 159.

explainable seems a curious oversight, especially when the act being described is so crucial to the novel's development.

> Du Voyageur sur la terre (1927) à Moïra (1950) et au Malfaiteur (1956), Julien Green a écrit une douzaine de romans qui offrent une unité remarquable: dans chacun d'entre eux, les personnages sont affectés beaucoup moins par ce qu'on est convenu d'appeler les réalités quotidiennes que par les "forces inconnues" mystérieuses et surnaturelles, auxquelles ils sont en proie.[1]

Another trait in Adrienne's character which has occasionally been interpreted as a flaw in her psychological development is her utter failure to revolt, to try to change her situation on her own. If this failure to revolt is inconsistent with her character, then Green's principal theme that Adrienne is driven to madness solely by boredom and the frustration of her love is partially invalid.

While Green has never married, he is surely no stranger to the feminine heart, having grown up with an extremely doting mother and five older sisters. Green's mother was truly a southern belle in the old tradition. Her father, Julian Hartridge, was an active supporter of the Confederacy. Green's mother was very devoted to her parents, especially to her father. She was also quite pretty and could thus play the role of the coquette to the full. Her temperament was unpredictable; she would be happy one day and grief-stricken the next.[2] Green was exceptionally

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[1]Brodin, Julien Green, p. 39.

[2]M. Rose, "Julien Green's Heroine, the American Child-Woman: To Escape through Delusion and Death," Forum H., III (Fall, 1961), 30.

fond of his mother. In his Journal he lauds her virtues, praises her beauty, and exalts her maternal perfection. His manifest affection for his mother is so extravagant it often appears slightly unnatural.

In spite of the fact that Green did have a brother, Charles, the oldest of the seven Green children, he was, no doubt because of the age difference, far closer to his five sisters: Eleanor, Mary, Lucy, Retta, and Anne. But his sisters were far from normal examples of either French or American girls. They all discovered ghosts in the various apartments where they lived. To get her father's attention after Julian was born, Lucy, who was deeply attached to her father, hit him on the head with a spoon. Retta was supposedly in contact with the supernatural, and Eleanor, the most beautiful of the sisters, tried to commit suicide because she was engaged to a man whom she did not love.[1]

> In all, it was a rich home environment for a future novelist. Every day he absorbed the reactions of protected American women to nuances of love, parental authority, jealousy, greed, and the supernatural, all put into sharper focus by the family's isolation in a foreign country.[2]

It is noteworthy that Eleanor and Charles were the sole Green children who ever married. It is also significant that Mrs. Green went to considerable pains to instill in her children definite ideas about two concepts which are wholly American: daily oral readings from the Bible and a devotion

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid.

to the ideals of the Confederacy. While it was certainly not a major principle of the Confederacy, one of its traditional concepts has always been that of the helpless yet coquettish girl. The typical southern belle is close to her parents, over-protected, and never really encouraged to become a mature individual in her own right. She retains through her life unmistakable vestiges of childhood.

When Green came to the United States as a young man to study at the University of Virginia, the impression of women he already held was further strengthened by the then reigning queen of American womanhood, the flapper. His later critical studies of the Brontë sisters, Charles and Mary Lamb, William Blake, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, and his readings of such authors as Dickens, Austen, Thackeray, and Dickenson could hardly have impeded his image of the female as being half-child, half-woman.[1]

With this knowledge of Green's background it is easy to see how he formed his conception of the "American Child-Woman" as Rose labels her.

> In general, Green sees his child-woman heroine as pretty in the unripened manner of an adolescent. (Only humpback Emily is ugly.) He orphans her (either one or both of her parents are dead), thereby accentuating her sense of expatriation. She would ordinarily be sought after but, being essentially foreign, feels herself unfairly ignored. She is so capricious, moody, fickle, and wilful that she is incapable of self-analysis. Although she is very much dissatisfied with her role as a child-woman, she is too naïve, too stubborn, too sensual, or too inured to routine to work out her redemption. Seldom over twenty-five, she still looks back on childhood

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[1] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

> as her golden age. Consequently, she tries to escape through delusion or death, despite her intuitive grasp on reality, frequently coupled with a leaning toward the supernatural.[1]

Adrienne has always been treated like a small child. It is, consequently, no surprise that she is unable to conceive of herself as capable of altering her desperate environment. Unlike Emily, who understands very little at all of her situation, Adrienne is intelligent enough to analyze her predicament to a certain degree. She realizes that she does not really want freedom and enjoys being a prisoner to her father's dictates. "Et par une contradiction singulière, elle éprouvait quelque chose comme du contentement à se savoir impuissante. Si elle avait été libre, qu'aurait-elle fait?"[2] Adrienne is, of course, not lucid enough in her reasoning to understand that her lack of desire for freedom comes from her being so used to the routine and monotony of her life that it is actually painful for her to imagine doing anything completely on her own. Adrienne's failure to revolt, taking into consideration Green's background and the type of women he was exposed to, is not at all unusual and is entirely consistent with her character as an American child-woman.

With the publication of Adrienne Mesurat Green was well on his way to financial independence. The book was quite popular and was chosen as the November, 1927, selection

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[1] Ibid., p. 31.

[2] Green, Adrienne Mesurat, p. 77.

by the Book-of-the-Month Club under the English title, The Closed Garden. However, in spite of the novel's popularity with the general reading public and the resulting fame Green enjoyed, Adrienne Mesurat shows that Green has not yet become a master of his craft. The novel is excellent at times in its delineation of the progression of the heroine's madness but there is an element absent which is vitally important if a novel is to achieve greatness: a touch of humor. Only humor can round out a novel and give it a sense of touch with the world.

> Can a really great novel dealing with the psychological effect of a repressive puritanism be written by someone without a sense of humor? His absorbed grimness, his resolute determination never to lose sight of the fact that he is dealing with an unpleasant subject and a group of highly unpleasant people, has a curious effect on the reader. At the beginning it seems effective, it appears to lend an atmospheric unity to the story, something stark and Greek. But as one reads on one becomes aware of a slight sensation of dulness, a sensation which never grows to any appreciable proportions, but which is nevertheless present in sufficient quantity to prevent a very intelligent novel from achieving a finally powerful effect. The pathos of Adrienne's tragic fate is, of course, communicated; but is it not reasonable to suppose that that pathos would be sharpened and made more subtle if the author had shown himself aware that his poor heroine was also, after all, a trifle ridiculous?[1]

Léviathan

Léviathan, a Harper prize novel, was published in 1929 when Green was twenty-nine years old. It is the last of the works of his youth. His ensuing novels are not nearly so

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[1]Fadiman, The Closed Garden, pp. 592-593.

starkly realistic, so concerned with exact descriptions of the milieu where the novel takes place. Like its two predecessors, Mont-Cinère and Adrienne Mesurat, Léviathan is a tale of horror. All the major characters are completely incapable of understanding the world about them and their place in that world. They are forced by society to live in a town which to them seems almost foreign, to pursue a profession in which they have no genuine interest, and to live with families whom they no longer love or perhaps never have loved. Love is a rare experience for the characters of Léviathan, and when one person does love another there is such a gross misunderstanding on the part of both that tragedy is the result. Moreover, they feel that they are helpless either to escape or overcome their environment. Consequently, as a natural reaction to society which is so malevolent in their eyes, they commit with impunity deeds that are horrendous to more normal members of society. As a result, they become even more estranged from society. They have lost all chance of ever rejoining the world. Each person has only himself to look to for solace, love, and the will to continue living--a situation which is difficult for even the most well-adjusted member of society to face.

In Léviathan man's estrangement in a hostile world and his realization that he can do nothing to change his condition are the central ideas Green utilizes for the novel's thematic content. Man's helpless predicament in Léviathan

is caused essentially by the same factors--monotony, loneliness, frustration, and fear--that are the key instigators in driving the heroines of his previous novels, Emily and Adrienne, to madness. However, in the last two novels, Green was able, or perhaps chose, to delineate only the character of the protagonist in its entirety. The other characters served only to intensify one or more traits of the protagonist. One result of this technique was that the subordinate personages became mere caricatures; another result was that Green did not manage to get across to his readers the feeling that the lot of his protagonists was allied to every man's fate. With Léviathan Green illustrates the aloneness of not only the protagonist but also of several other characters. In this way he shows that one man's essential aloneness is far from a rarity. By implication one easily comes to the conclusion that estrangement from the world is the plight of every human being. Thus for the first time Green begins to insert a tone of universality into his writings.

The principal character in Léviathan, Guéret, has long been bored with his wife, his job, and life in general. The novel opens with a scene portraying Guéret on his way to a rendezvous with Angèle, a young girl who works at the laundry and is a part-time prostitute. At the meeting Guéret is too shy to make any advances toward her or even to offer her any money. Later that evening Guéret decides to take his evening meal at a restaurant run by a certain Mme. Londe.

Mme Londe has one obsession which she must satisfy to gain any contentment from her drab life as the proprietress of a restaurant: curiosity. She insists upon knowing every detail in the lives of her regular customers, and, with this purpose in mind, she has brought up Angèle, her orphaned niece, to spend her Sundays with various customers. Angèle then recounts to her the next day all the minutiae she has learned about the men. When Guéret enters her restaurant, Mme Londe views him as a virtual enemy because she knows nothing whatsoever about him.

During the day Guéret is employed as a tutor to the young son of a locally elite couple, the Grosgeorge. M. Grosgeorge is considerably older than his wife and has never taken much interest in her although he does court young local girls on occasion, among them Angèle. Mme Grosgeorge, at forty-five, is beginning to smoulder with resentment and hate at having to live with her husband and her son whom she did not want. She yearns for sexual adventures and regrets not having left her husband years ago. Mme Grosgeorge is a woman who is naturally superior in intelligence, looks, and taste to the provincial people by whom she is surrounded, and this fact only compounds the boredom she derives from living in her home and the small town of Lorges.

Léviathan begins to move toward its climax when one night at dinner at Mme. Londe's Guéret learns definitely what he has always suspected: that Angèle is a prostitute and

apparently gives herself to everyone but him. It never even occurs to him that she is genuinely fond of him and fears that if he knew of her prostitution he would cease seeing her.

That evening Guéret is tormented with his desire to see Angèle. He decides to break into her room which is on the second floor of Mme Londe's house. After a harrowing and exhausting struggle, for the house has no convenient ledges for him to climb on, he succeeds in entering her room but only to find it vacant. He hurriedly takes her pillowcase, leaving blood from his torn hands over everything and barely escapes before Mme Londe begins to shout for help.

The next morning he wanders around Lorges in a stupor looking for Angèle. By chance, Angèle sees him and goes to him. As soon as she learns that it was Guéret who invaded her room, she becomes frightened and wants to leave him. He forces her instead, however, to take a walk on the beach with him. There he loses control of himself and begins to beat her violently, especially her face. He leaves only when he feels she is surely dead. For the rest of the day and the following night he imagines people are after him. Once, imagining an old man is looking at him accusingly, he kills him.

After remaining in hiding for several months, Guéret returns to Lorges. He finds Angèle, who is still alive but with a face marred for life, and makes her promise to meet

him the next evening, telling her that he will somehow have some money then and that they will leave the country together. He then goes to Mme Grosgeorge who gives him money but makes him spend the night at her home, telling him the best time to leave will be at noon. As he has no choice if he wishes to get the money, Guéret stays. Mme Grosgeorge, who has at first failed to recognize the emotion she feels for Guéret, finally realizes she is in love with him. While talking with him she also learns that her love is unrequited since he loves Angèle. With this realization she reports him to the authorities and then returns to the room where he is hidden and shoots herself. When Angèle learns that Guéret has been reported and that Mme Grosgeorge is barely clinging to life, she nevertheless goes faithfully to her rendezvous with Guéret. She is found the next morning dead of overexposure.

As has already been stated, the central thematic note in Léviathan revolves around man's estrangement in a hostile and foreign world and his inability to do anything about it. Green uses four of the novel's characters, Guéret, Angèle, Mme Grosgeorge, and Mme Londe, to exemplify this idea. Not all of them are affected by their estrangement from the world in the same manner or to the same degree, and, as might be expected, their cognizance of their situation varies greatly among them.

Guéret is a most pitiable man. Although obviously

educated since he earns his living as a tutor, he has no interest in anything or anyone except Angèle. Religion, politics, reading, sports, his wife, and his companions at Mme Londe's all fail to entice his interest. He lives without hope of happiness and realizes that he does.

> Il s'arrêta et s'appuya au mur d'une maison. Puisque le passé lui donnait de telles garanties d'infortune pour plus tard, quel bien espérait-il de l'avenir? Pourquoi se dire que dans un an, dans deux ans, il serait peut-être heureux? N'était-il pas tout aussi niais que jadis, lorsqu'il attendait qu'un généreux destin lui prodiguât la joie? Et dans dix ans, quinze ans, vieux et décu, ne gémirait-il pas comme aujourd'hui de sa naïveté d'autrefois?[1]

The end result of Guéret's aloofness and self-imposed isolation from other human beings is that they only aggravate his misunderstanding of his fellow men. Consequently, when Guéret does finally meet someone whom he wants to love and be loved by, he is so bewildered that he acts as if he were a sixteen-year-old boy on his first date. He is so inexperienced in human relationships that he has no conception of the meaning behind Angèle's words and acts. He falsely concludes that she loves all the customers whom she goes out with on Sundays since she sleeps with them but does not love him since she does not submit herself to him. In reality, and this should be obvious to any intelligent adult man. Angèle's feelings are just the reverse. As a result of Guéret's misinterpretation of Angèle's true feelings, she naturally does not know what to make of his mannerisms with her or whether or not he

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[1]Julien Green, Léviathan (Paris: Plon, 1929), p. 31.

loves her. "When one or more of his characters develops love or affection for anyone, it almost always meets with indifference, refusal, or misinterpretation by the person to whom it is directed."[1] Guéret's dismal failure in his attempt to establish a relationship with Angèle only increases his estrangement from others. Thus Green shows that regardless of what Guéret may do his life is a circle of inevitable tragedy.

Guéret is removed from the mainstream of society not merely because he is a loner but also because he is mentally ill. In the Journal Green states: "Voici la vérité sur ce livre: je suis tous les personnages."[2] While Julien Green has no doubt never attempted to kill a girl in a fit of irrational rage, he has probably felt emotions akin to this arising from the monotony and frustration of life that everyone experiences. Green has an uncanny gift for seeing the relationship between events in his emotional life, which while marred by a possible Oedipus complex, has been outwardly uneventful, and events in the lives of extremely mentally disturbed people. Green has written Léviathan, and to a certain degree Mont-Cinère and Adrienne Mesurat as well, as if he possessed considerable knowledge, far beyond the scope of the layman, of some of

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[1]Milton C. Albrecht, "Psychological Motives in the Fiction of Julien Green," Journal of Personality, XVI (March 16, 1948), 285-286.

[2]Green, Journal 1928-1934, p. 3.

the technicalities of psychology and psychiatry. However, in actuality he read his first book on the subject, Wilhelm Stekel's Conditions of Nervous Anxiety and Their Treatment in 1933, four years after the publication of Léviathan.

At first the reader suspects that Guéret's illness is allied with manic-depressive psychosis as he possesses numerous symptoms of that disease: listlessness, indifference, sluggishness, dullness, withdrawal, and a desire to be left alone. However, it soon becomes apparent that he cannot be classified with this group of the mentally ill, for he never does lose interest completely in everything as is characteristic of manic-depressive victims.[1] Guéret's sole remaining interest is, of course, in Angèle. His desire to see Angèle is greater even than his desire for freedom as is proven when at the end of the novel he returns to Lorges to see her knowing full well that he is putting himself in considerable jeopardy of being apprehended by the police in doing so.

While it is difficult to label exactly Guéret's illness, he is definitely mentally disturbed. Unfortunately, this does not make the reader sense to a greater degree the keenness of his estrangement from the world. Instead, one feels that Guéret is in a class apart and that his mental abnormality naturally creates a gulf between him and others. Green's predilection to write about the insane has the un-

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[1]Albert Deutsch and Helen Fishman (eds.), The Encyclopedia of Mental Health, V (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1963), p. 958.

happy consequence of rendering his themes less forceful in their impact on the average reader. Although criminal instincts play a prominent role in the phantasies of almost everyone, these asocial desires are usually repressed and played with only in the subconscious or in dreams. It is thus natural for the reader to refuse to see the connection between his life and the life of a murderer.

The theme that man is not only isolated in the world but also helpless to pull himself out of this situation is brought out by the powerful role that fate plays in Léviathan. The very title of the novel is symbolic of a huge, yet indefinable, force which directs and controls inexorably the lives of the characters.

> His point of view sees men and women broken by powerful incomprehensible forces within and without themselves, forced by heredity and environment into set ways of conduct which serve partly as chemical reaction upon their own personalities. They fail not through turn and play of circumstance but because they lack strength to struggle and endure in their attempts to rise above that circumstance.[1]

This force or leviathan is not viewed by the characters as a coercive and malevolent pressure. Indeed, as is revealed in the early pages of the novel, Guéret takes a certain delight in feeling that he is absolved of the responsibility of making decisions.

> Comme Guéret refermait derrière lui la porte du restaurant, une pensée lui vint à l'esprit, une pensée familière qui le visitait depuis des années, dans des moments de grand trouble: "C'est le destin, c'est mon

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[1]Dayton Kohler, "Julian Green: Modern Gothic," Sewanee Review (April, 1932), 141.

> destin." Et cette constation le rassurait, comme tout être faible est rassuré lorsque son sort est mis entre les mains d'une puissance supérieure, même s'il doit en souffrir, même s'il doit perdre la vie. Désormais, il n'aurait plus rien à décider de lui-même; les événements, bons et mauvais, se produiraient tout seuls.[1]

By allowing fate to take control of his life, he is guiltless and can consequently commit with impunity any asocial act.

Later, the morning after Guéret has invaded Angèle's room, he fears for a moment Angèle may be dead but quickly realizes she cannot be because fate has promised her to him.

> Si elle était morte? Cette pensée le força à s'arrêter comme si, subitement, une main invisible l'avait frappé en pleine poitrine. Il répéta tout haut la question, sans terreur, sans émoi, mais avec la surprise de prononcer des paroles étranges dont le sens était difficilt à saisir; et il se remit à marcher plus vite. Elle ne pouvait pas mourir avant qu'il l'eût tenue dans ses bras; elle était à lui; la vie la lui avait donnée, la volonté mystérieuse qui règle nos destinées, cette force qui domine le monde lui avait donné cette femme.[2]

These references to the considerable role fate plays in the lives of Léviathan's characters are illustrative of how Green conveys his theme that man is trapped by his destiny.

Besides the two major themes of man's isolation and his inability to alter this situation which are drawn in large part by means of the character Guéret, Green also uses Guéret to convey two of Léviathan's minor themes: flight and fear of death.

While Guéret seems at times to accept almost with

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[1]Green, Léviathan, p. 30.

[2]Ibid., p. 109.

gladness the role in life fate has doled out to him, at other times he is driven to seek to change it. He particularly seeks to fulfill his frustrated sexual desires. This is illustrated in the novel through his repeated meetings with Angèle which he undertakes time and again even though he feels that each rendezvous only augments her dislike for him. Guéret's mismanagement of his attempts to flee his frustrating sexual life only makes him more frustrated. After he has beaten Angèle, he feels an uncontrollable urge to flee.

> Au bout de cette rue, tournerait-il à droite ou à gauche? Il n'en savait rien. Ses jambes le porteraient où elles voudraient, où elles pourraient. Il ne comptait plus que sur cette dernière ressource du désespéré qui est l'inspiration subite du hasard. L'important était de courir malgré les terribles battements dont son coeur ébranlait sa poitrine, malgré le vertige qui alourdissait sa tête et brouillait tout devant ses yeux.[1]

When in the course of this mad flight he sees an old man approaching him, he is utterly confused. Guéret has been so preoccupied with fleeing those he imagines to be chasing that he has not reckoned on the possibility that he might come upon someone. Since he believes the old man to be one of his pursuers he has no choice but to kill him. Guéret's illogical flight is caused not because he is particularly afraid of the police and prison but rather because he is compelled to flee from his own oppressing anxiety.

Dans Léviathan, Guéret nous est présenté comme un

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[1]Ibid., p. 119.

> homme traqué. Traqué d'abord par le désir sexuel, qui le pousse sans cesse dans une quête haletante. Traqué, ensuite, par la police, en apparence, en réalité par l'angoisse de son crime.[1]

The second minor theme, recurrent in many of Green's novels, is fear of death. This fear is most obvious during Guéret's attempt to murder Angèle. At one point in the beating he stops for a moment moved with a sudden tenderness at the sight of her white skin. But Angèle, who is terrified and thinking she will be murdered at any moment, cannot stop screaming. Her terror at the approach of death invades Guéret, and he begins striking her with wild abandon.

> Sa seule pensée était de faire cesser les abominables cris qui sortaient de cette bouche, ce son aigu qui pénétrait dans son cerveau comme une arme et le déchirait. Une terreur subite, la propre terreur de sa victime le gagnait. Il ne savait plus comment échapper à lui-même, à son crime, comment empêcher ses mains d'agir, comment arrêter ces cris.[2]

Guéret's fear of death is more concerned with whether he has inflicted death upon someone rather than with his own death.

Guéret is the central character in Léviathan, and the principal action of the novel is dependent on his movements. It is through the personage of Guéret that Green succeeds in portraying most vividly man's estrangement. Nevertheless, three other characters, Mme Londe, Mme Grosgeorge, and Angèle, contribute to the novel's thematic elements considerably.

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[1]Antonio Fongaro, "Le Thème de la fuite dans les romans de Julien Green," Letterature Moderne, VI (1956), 393.

[2]Green, Léviathan, p. 114.

Mme Londe is the least intelligent of the four characters whom Green models to depict the novel's themes and is consequently the least cognizant of her inability to communicate with others.

If one looks at Mme Londe objectively, she surely must seem a cruel woman. She is only interested in herself and will do anything to satisfy her maniacal curiosity. She is quite willing for Angèle to consort with her customers although she fully realizes what Angèle must do to bring back money and to pry such intimate secrets from them. She has already realized that the bloom of Angèle's beauty will not last forever and is training another little girl, thirteen-year-old Fernande, to take her place.

However, in spite of Mme Londe's manifest selfishness, the reader is not repulsed by her. Green describes her with a touch of pathos which produces both laughter and tears, and, although only a caricature, she somehow seems more realistic than many of Green's characters. His description of her waiting in anxiety every day for her customers to appear for supper is tinged with humor and sadness alike. Her last resource to induce her customers to appear, undertaken only in a state of desperation, is to order that the soup be served. After this command has been given, she is helpless to do anything but wait for her clientele to appear.

> Faire monter la soupe, c'était sa dernière ressource, le moyen qu'elle employait lorsqu'elle se sentait gagnée par le désespoir. Il lui semblait que cela faisait "venir le client", comme elle disait. Car bien des fois

> elle avait remarqué que l'arrivée du garçon portant la soupière coïncidait avec celle de M. Goncelin, marchand de grains, qui prenait ses repas chez elle et qui, en général, était le premier à faire son entrée dans le restaurant. Mais elle tremblait qu'un jour l'opération magique ne demeurât inefficace, que son marchand de grains ne vînt en retard, comme les autres, et qu'elle ne perdît la foi. Aussi n'avait-elle recours à cette mesure que lorsque sa patience était tout à fait à bout.
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> Elle mit son visage dans ses mains et, s'accoudant au comptoir, écouta dans cette position le bruit des pas qui allaient et venaient au fond de la cuisine. On eût dit qu'elle offrait au ciel la mortification de cette dernière et cruelle minute d'attente. Il était inutile de recommander au garçon de se hâter; cet homme ne demandait qu'à en finir pour aller courir en ville le plus tôt possible. D'autre part, M. Goncelin serait ou ne serait pas à l'heure et la volonté de Mme Londe n'y pouvait rien. Il n'y avait plus qu'à laisser les choses se faire toutes seules.[1]

Through this scene Green shows how Mme Londe longs to be with people. She knows that she keeps her customers by various artificial contrivances: low prices, easy credit, and her services as a panderess for Angèle. But while she suffers the realization that the men continue coming to her restaurant not because they love her but because of what she offers them, she still is happy just to see them come. Her need to have some sort of association with the world is so acute that she is willing to undergo a thousand humiliations just to keep her old customers or to secure a new one. Thus, through the personage of Mme Londe, Green illustrates the loneliness and the helplessness of the common, uneducated human being, who does not verbalize the reasons for his sadness nor understand the desperate anxiety he derives from life.

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[1]Green, Lêviathan, p. 18.

Of the four major characters in Léviathan Mme Grosgeorge is the most intelligent and the most cognizant of her isolation from others and of the effects this isolation has upon her. As a child she had everything--money, beauty, health--but still was never happy. With such a profusion of blessings she was denied the right to desire. She began to scorn everything, including herself, and finally accepted as her husband an egotistical man whom she did not love and settled down to a life of passivity, even to the point of disregarding the ugly, distasteful furnishings of her home.

Like Adrienne, Mme Grosgeorge does not attempt a revolt although occasionally she does acknowledge her need to rebel.

> A quarante-cinq ans elle se sentait plus vieille qu'une autre femme à soixante parce qu'elle s'était laissé prendre aux petites habitudes d'une vie médiocre et que tout ce qui lui restait d'énergie semblait s'être insensiblement retiré d'elle. Si quelquefois un mouvement de révolte venait la troubler, sa raison ne manquait pas de lui dire qu'elle était trop âgée pour songer à se rendre libre.[1]

She rationalizes her refusal to leave her detested home and husband by reasoning that ten years ago she would have left but that now she is too old, that her beauty has deserted her. The fallaciousness of this reasoning is seen in the fact that ten years ago she lived in exactly the same stiflingly boring environment and yet never decided to leave. She also feels that, like Guéret, she is obliged by fate to live with the

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[1] Ibid., p. 144.

monstrous boredom of her daily life and that it is futile to protest.

> Cette sensation d'être la proie d'une force capricieuse ne la quittait jamais: elle était le jouet de la volonté qui domine le monde et sa liberté n'était qu'une moquerie. A quoi bon gémir en secret sur la laideur et la monotonie de sa vie?[1]

As a result of her continual repression of all natural emotions Mme Grosgeorge has become extremely bitter and intolerant of the sufferings of others. Her one emotional outlet lies in beating her young son. Her unmitigated cruelty towards him is her last resort against the ominous *néant* which threatens her existence. She yearns to experience emotion. Consequently, after she has heard that Guéret is wanted by the police for the beating of Angèle and the killing of the old man, she is secretly happy. She feels a complicity in the crimes with Guéret and begins to wonder whether she may not have been the actual inspirer and thus the instigator of these horrendous deeds. Her ability to experience a genuine emotion, guilt, gives her a feeling of elation for several hours. Later she reverses her opinion and revels in the emotion of innocence. "Quel bonheur de se sentir innocente devant un crime d'une telle férocité!"[2] Once Mme Grosgeorge comes to the realization that she loves Guéret but that he loves Angèle, she knows her last attempt to gain happiness by helping Guéret and to experience the usual emotions of human beings has been futile and that she

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 148.

is doomed once more to begin living again her monotonous life.

> La colère la saisit à la pensée des terribles échecs que le sort lui avait infligés. D'autres étaient heureuses, mais elle ne le serait jamais; s'il était vrai qu'un être humain est mis au monde pour jouir de la vie, elle aurait pu aussi bien ne pas naître.[1]

She can no longer live in this state of despondency with the complete realization that she is forever cut off from all ties with the human race and attempts to kill herself when she returns to Guéret.

With the character Mme Grosgeorge, Green shows the lengths to which extreme monotony and isolation from others can drive an intelligent person. After years of being able to indulge in only one emotional release, the sadism she feels toward her son, the brief presentation of the hope that she will be able to love and be loved by Guéret and her speedy disillusionment in this regard are too much for her spirit to bear. She is a woman who desperately needs to establish a meaningful relationship with another human being. When all hope of this is gone, she knows that she cannot return to the monstrous forces of boredom and isolation and chooses instead to die.

The final character through whom Léviathan's themes are portrayed is Angèle. Her life is a representation of a life which seems on the surface to be relatively pleasant but which is made that way only by chance. In Angèle's case

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[1] Ibid., p. 238.

her ostensible happiness derives from the beauty of youth. She is desperately frightened by the loneliness she feels when alone, and her beauty only aids her in flitting from one casual male companion to another. When she does find someone whom she can love, luck is against her, for Guéret is a madman totally unequipped to deal with a girl of Angèle's naïveté. Only when Angèle's beauty has been destroyed, does she awaken to the tragedy of her lonely and loveless life.

At the beginning of the novel Angèle is presented as a thoughtless, fun-loving girl satisfied with her life. She delights in taking walks through the town in her spare time and is seeing people speak to her with a casual greeting or just smile at her. It makes little difference to her that they may disparage her behind her back because of her profession.

> Sans doute n'ignorait-elle pas qu'on la jugeait durement et que plusieurs des personnes qui lui parlaient avec douceur, lorsqu'elle les rencontrait, ne se faisaient pas faute de la rudoyer dans leurs conversations entre elles, mais cela lui était à peu pres égal. Un extérieur de cordialité lui suffisait. Sa tranquillité dépendait de la bonne humeur apparente de ceux qu'elle voyait tous les jours. Un mot d'impatience, une mine renfrognée lui faisaient mal et la jetaient dans une tristesse profonde.[1]

Angèle dislikes solitude. Her desire to be surrounded by people reveals that she is afraid of herself and the loneliness she feels. One of her most poignant experiences occurred when some soldiers once passed through Lorges. There

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[1]Ibid., p. 75.

were many who impressed her with their handsomeness but she could do nothing to attract them to her. She could only watch them pass by her and realize that one of them could probably have made her life happy, but that he is not to be hers.

> Et cette scène lui semblait l'image et le résumé de sa vie: elle était au bord d'une route, immobile, pendant que ces êtres pleins de force et de joie passaient devant elle, sans que, par un mystérieux ordre de choses, elle pût faire un geste pour les retenir.[1]

She does not bemoan her assignation in life as a spectator to the happiness of others but accepts this as her fate. With this same vein of reasoning she accepts the fact that she is a prostitute and consequently suffers no pangs of guilt.

> La réputation qu'elle avait acquise ainsi ne la gênait guère, parce que, de même que toutes les natures sans résistance, elle n'imaginait pas qu'il en fût autrement. La vie lui apparaissait obscurément comme une espèce de sort, quelque chose de bon ou de mauvais, suivant qu'on avait de la chance ou qu'on n'en avait pas, mais de toutes les façons irrévocables.[2]

When she first meets Guéret, she is unhappy that fate has made the only man who loves her ugly, middle-aged, poor, and timid. Later Angèle reveals she is not so frivolous as she first appears when she comes to the realization that if Guéret offers her real love his appearance and material wealth have no importance.

> Et, dans le trouble où cette pensée la jetait, elle se leva. N'était-ce pas cela le bonheur, après tout, l'amour d'où il vînt? Et même si cet amour n'était pas

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[1] Ibid., p. 82.

[2] Ibid., pp. 75-76.

> celui qu'elle avait rêvé, dans sa solitude inquiète, fallait-il pour cela qu'elle méprisât le don mystérieux qui lui était offert?[1]

Angèle now realizes that she can no longer continue living with Mme Londe. "Il y a ... la fuite comme libération d'une existence matérielle et sociale insupportable. Angèle ... ne peut plus tolérer as vie rebutante, elle veut se libérer, s'en aller."[2] It is because of her incipient love for Guéret and her own growing maturity that Angèle has left Mme Londe's the night Guéret invades her room.

The permanent disfigurement of Angèle's face is a terrible shock for her. She has up to this point in her life depended on her beauty rather than on her personality to draw people to her and thus avoid isolation and loneliness. For her now all hope of love is gone. "Dès maintenant, elle devait s'accoutumer à la pensée qu'elle avait tout perdu. Une vie nouvelle commençait pour elle, une vie de fille laide, mais laide de telle façon qu'elle éloignait l'amour."[3]

The tragedy of Angèle's life is that she has no inner resources to support herself in an isolated life. Estrangement from the world is unbearable for her, and without her beauty she can see no means of making contact with this world. Consequently, she again flees Mme Londe's to go to her death.

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[1] Ibid., p. 83.

[2] Fongaro, "Le Thème de la fuite dans les romans de Julien Green," p. 260.

[3] Green, Léviathan, p. 189.

> Si le bonheur existait quelque part, il fallait le chercher sur cette route et non dans cette ville qu'elle quittait à jamais. Après des mois d'angoisse, elle était enfin heureuse, elle allait partir; elle ne reverrait plus Mme Londe, ni ses odieux clients qui la faisaient souffrir.[1]

The thematic treatment in Léviathan shows a measurable improvement over that in Green's first two novels, Mont-Cinère and Adrienne Mesurat. In the latter novels Green attempted to intensify the thematic impact by centering virtually all the attention on the protagonist, although minor aspects of the themes were occasionally viewed in some of the subordinate characters. In Léviathan Green has utilized four characters to portray the novel's themes of man's isolation and his inability to change or modify his predicament. Guéret, Mme Londe, Mme Grosgeorge, and Angèle all illustrate man's estrangement from the world, but each illustrates it in a slightly different manner. The result of Green's using four characters, rather than one, to convey the novel's themes, gives a significance to Léviathan's themes which is absent in the previous two novels. The four characters show that estrangement from others is an integral part of everyone's nature and not just an isolated quirk found only very rarely in a few individuals.

Julien Green's first three novels are all characterized by the intensive depiction of the characters' motivations and emotions. The psychology of these works is somewhat less re-

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[1] Ibid., p. 254.

fined and subtle than that found in his later novels. But even in these early novels Green shows that he has without a doubt a miraculous intuition into the mechanisms of the human mind.

Green clearly enjoys exploring the realms of the unreal, the bizarre, and the atypical. As a result of this predilection, morbidity plays a rather dominant role in his novels.

> Ces premières oeuvres se distinguent par le caractère morbide de leurs thèmes. L'auteur y présente, en effet, des personnages en proie aux affres de la violence et de la passion. Le climat d'horreur qui prévaut dans ces écrits, et les excès auxquels s'abandonnent les héros, reflètent dans leur excessive noirceur, un pessimisme radical vis-à-vis de l'homme et du monde en généra..[1]

Mont-Cinère, Adrienne Mesurat, and Léviathan are all marked by the portrayal of either suicide or murder and the mentally unstable. An aura of gloom presides in these novels which suggests more strongly on Green's part than any didactic utterance could that he holds little hope for a gradual amelioration in the relations of human beings with one another. Green views man as already thwarted in his attempts to improve his lot even before he begins. "In the world of Julian Green men and women are foredoomed to certain failure. Their tragedies are the tragedies of frustrated lives, their struggles are against internal and external

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[1]Anne Gruson-Karplus, "Esthétique de l'imaginaire dans les romans de Julien Green," French Review, XXV (1962), 540.

forces which they dimly perceive but never wholly understand."[1]

Green appears to be like a psychology student who has read intensively and with great interest numerous case histories but became so depressed over them that he failed to read further and skipped the section of suggested treatments and curative measures. In his first three novels Green has described minutely a portrayal of some of the mental abnormalities of mankind but a hearty suggestion for a cure is completely absent. In the Greenien world man is doomed to a life of estrangement.

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[1]Kohler, "Julian Green: Modern Gothic," p. 140.

CHAPTER III

THE MIDDLE NOVELS

Between the years 1932 and 1947 Green published five novels: Epaves, Le Visionnaire, Minuit, Varouna, and Si J'étais vous. All are different in both style and subject matter from the trilogy of horror with which he commenced his career as a creative writer. It is no doubt largely as a result of the many innovations added to his fiction during this middle period that he does not benefit as much by the experience of writing his first three novels as would normally be expected from such a talented writer. It is only in the final phase of the writer's production that he is able to combine successfully the best points of the first two periods of his literary life.

The novel Epaves marks a distinct turning point in Green's technique. The macabre strokes which were so frequently predominant in the three previous novels are absent. The characters in Epaves suffer intensely but they understand and accept their role in life well enough to avoid criminal behavior. To be sure, the major part of the novel emits, as one critic puts it, an air of "âcre désespé-

rance,"[1] and in this respect Epaves is more akin to his preceding novels than to the four subsequent novels. But for the first time Green inserts in his fiction the positive force of death. In his Journal he states "J'aborde enfin le sujet qui m'attire, me fascine et m'épouvante. C'est l'obsédé qui se jette dans l'abîme qu'il redoute."[2] The positive aspects of death are dealt with only slightly in Epaves but in the four other novels of this period they are brought out in considerable detail.

Although the works of the author's middle period are written in a realistic style, at times reminiscent of Balzac, a feeling of unreality pervades them.

> Or, le monde romanesque de M. Julien Green nous donne toujours l'impression d'être à la fois très proche et très lointain. Il est réel, mais frappé d'un coefficient d'étrangeté. Tout y est comme dans notre monde, avec la plus scrupuleuse précision, avec même une présence presque contraignante que notre réalité n'a pas toujours. Mais il y a un décalage, dont l'éloignement dans le temps ou dans l'espace n'est que l'indice, et qui tient en vérité à ce que tout semble perçu à travers le désir et la souffrance.[3]

Within these five novels he explores the realms of the unconscious. In a short story, L'Autre Sommeil, published in 1931, the writer displays his understanding of the mechamisms of the unconscious mind.

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[1]Charles E. Koella, "La Puissance du rêve chez Julien Green," PMLA, LIV (June, 1939), 603.

[2]Green, Journal 1928-1934, p. 119.

[3]Robert Kanters, "Julien Green," Revue de Paris, LXXI (août-sept., 1964), 132-133.

> Peut-être toute cette vie qui s'agitait autour de nous n'était-elle qu'un songe, un autre sommeil qui ne nous fermait pas les paupières, mais nous faisait rêver les yeux ouverts. ... Ni les paroles des hommes, ni leurs livres, ni, probablement, rien d'eux-mêmes n'avait de réalité.[1]

The idea that the part of life one normally thinks of as real is only a dream is of course certainly not original with Green. Nevertheless, his utterance of this ancient concept shows that he is broadening his horizons and will henceforth include in his fiction more than a simple portrayal of outward reality.

Epaves

Epaves is the only novel in which Paris, Green's home town, is described at length. The principal characters of the novel, and virtually the only characters, are Philippe Cléry, his wife Henriette, and his sister-in-law Eliane. Philippe has inherited his father's wealth, but fate neglected to give him his father's courage. Henriette is Philippe's wife in name only as she has a lover and rarely even sees Philippe since she leads a nocturnal life. Eliane has lived with the couple for eleven years and for all eleven years has been in love with Philippe although she has never confessed this to him.

The novel opens with Philippe's witnessing a quarrel between a man and a woman. At one point the woman calls to him for help but he is too cowardly to go to her aid even

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[1]Julien Green, L'Autre Sommeil (Paris: Gallimard, 1931), p. 151.

though he is quite robust and clearly the physical superior of the man. After this episode which forces Philippe to admit to himself that he is a coward, he begins to seek ways of adding meaning to his life and at the close of the novel he seems to be on his way to achieving this goal. Eliane has always realized the frustration her love for Philippe brings her. At one point in the novel she leaves home in an attempt to begin life anew but soon returns to resume the circle of despair her life represents. Henriette is a prototype of one of the novelist's child-women. She does not really love her lover but goes to him faithfully because he is poor and the poverty of his apartment reminds her of her childhood.

As is suggested from this synopsis of the novel's action, Epaves is not filled with multiple recountings of events. It is rather concerned with the depiction of the thoughts and dreams of its main characters.

All of the characters are human wrecks as the novel's title implies. Like flotsam, they float about in life helpless to control their destinies or to avert bringing disaster upon themselves. They accept their role in life not with the admirable resignation of a stoic but simply because they are too debilitated to do anything else. Two of the characters in Epaves, Philippe and Eliane, are more intelligent and contemplative of their situation than any of the characters thus far encountered in Julien Green's fiction. Eliane

has been completely cognizant of the mounting frustration of her love for Philippe for eleven years. Philippe has recognized from his adolescence that he has failed to inherit from his father the necessary acumen to devote himself with enthusiasm to some venture such as business or writing. When, at the beginning of the novel, he is forced to admit to himself that the one characteristic on which he prides himself, his physical prowess, is in effect useless since he lacks courage, he also must acknowledge that his life is devoid of even a semblance of meaning. In the course of the novel both Philippe and Eliane pursue different methods in an endeavor to change their status as an épave. The third major character, Henriette, leads an empty, directionless life also but since she has remained emotionally and mentally a child she is powerless ever to graduate to a higher level of existence than that of the épave.

Many of the same themes Green used in his three previous novels are seen within the framework of Epaves. The boredom of life, man's isolation from others and his resulting loneliness, the difficulty in achieving effective communication between human beings, and extreme sexual frustration are predominant motifs in Epaves just as they are in Mont-Cinère, Adrienne Mesurat, and Léviathan. However, whereas the overall thematic context of the trilogy was extremely pessimistic in its viewpoint of man's condition, in Epaves Green allots man a chance, if not for happiness, at

least for a meaningful life. He does this by introducing death as a positive force, which in this case actually gives regenerative powers to life.

Philippe is given to taking long walks at night along the Seine. His walks are aimless, but he feels compelled to take them. "Philippe, Adrienne, and Madame Grosgeorge tramp on and on, in search of they know not what appeasement or what way out. . . . Their wild roamings on the nocturnal roads serve only to reveal outwardly their inner turmoil."[1] Philippe is attracted to the night and the mystery of the water. The Seine draws him to it as if it were an irresistible force. It is with one of these walks that the novel presents its opening scene: Philippe's fateful witnessing of a quarrel between a woman and a drunk man. Philippe's realization that his powerful physique is not sufficient to give him the necessary courage to come to a woman's aid plunges him into the depths of despair over his "molle et vaine existence."[2]

Philippe does not relate the tale of the quarrel to Eliane. Later that evening he is compelled to take still another walk along the Seine and suffers a further humiliation when he is robbed. When he finally returns home, he feels he is a different person.

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[1]Henri A. Talon, "Julien Green: The American-born French Novelist," Yale French Studies, No. 10 (1952), 36.

[2]Julien Green, Epaves (Paris: Plon, 1932), p. 13.

> La pensée qu'il n'était plus le même l'arrêta au seuil de sa chambre. Un homme avait quitté cette pièce quatre ou cinq heures plus tôt et cet homme y rentrait maintenant. Ne s'agissait-il pas de deux personnes différentes?[1]

His room looks the same to him. His face still retains its youthful freshness. But his personality has unmistakably been altered as he intuitively senses. Twice in one day Philippe has experienced horror: first at his fear to help the woman and second at his terror of being thrown into the Seine by the thief.

While Philippe consciously acknowledges that these experiences have changed him, he does not recognize the subsequent deviations from his normal behavior as stemming from this change. In his search to find something unique in himself, Philippe learns to like and finally love his son whom until now he has completely ignored, and quits his position as director of his father's business.

One of the best scenes in Epaves describes an afternoon spent by Philippe at a business meeting. He occupies his father's chair and has his authority but knows that he is more useless at these meetings than anywhere else. His mind switches constantly from memories of his childhood to feelings of bitter remorse at his own futility.

> Pour Philippe, aucun moment n'était difficilt à passer comme celui-là. Jamais, en effet, on ne lui faisait plus durement sentir son inutilité que dans ces discussions où pas une fois il n'avait pris part depuis qu'il occupait le fauteuil de son père.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 59. [2] Ibid., p. 124.

He determines to listen carefully and proffer a well-reasoned opinion on what has been discussed. But in spite of his efforts he simply cannot grasp the sense of what is being said.

> Ce soir-là, pendant quelques minutes, il éprouva l'envie de lutter avec ces gens, le timide besoin de s'affirmer à leurs yeux, de prononcer une phrase pertinente. Etait-il si difficile de saisir quelques mots au vol, de les répéter au moment opportun avec les modifications nécessaires?[1]

When he finally does address his colleagues, he finds to their and his own amazement that he is announcing his resignation.

Philippe's feeling for his son Robert grows only gradually from outright cruelty to genuine love. The impetus that spurs Philippe to love Robert comes when Philippe learns that his son, too, is afraid of certain things. Robert's fears of the dark and the river are quite natural for a boy, and he has a far greater reserve of emotional warmth within him than has Philippe. However, it is enough for Philippe just to know that another human being also suffers the emotion of fear to allow him to love this comrade who happens to be his son. This scene occurs after Robert has avowed for the first time that he is a little afraid of the Seine.

> Un être humain l'entendait enfin. Cet enfant, comme lui, avait peur; dans l'ombre, un long rire silencieux lui ouvrit la bouche et il sentit la brume qui pénétrait jusque dans ses poumons. Sa main appuya plus fortement sur l'épaule de son fils. D'où venait tant de joie et ce soudain allégement? Suffisait-il de prononcer quelques paroles pour découvrir qu'il n'était plus seul? Tout à coup un immense besoin de vivre emplit son coeur, un désir qui ressemblait à ce fleuve, quelque chose d'irrésistible qui le portait en avant.[2]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 124-125. [2] Ibid., p. 233.

Although Philippe does not relate to his young son his own diffuse fears, he is nevertheless able to establish a line of communication between himself and Robert. He grows increasingly fond of him and begins to dread the day when Robert must begin school again. On the eve of Robert's return to school, the two take a walk along the Seine. Philippe is especially depressed as he has recently read in the newspaper that the body of a woman, dead for several days, has been recovered from the Seine and instinctively feels that this woman is the one he refused to aid. It is in the depiction of this final walk with Robert that the author first intimates the meaning of Philippe's seemingly aimless walks.

> Au milieu de cette brume, il semblait à Philippe que la matière s'évanouissait pour ne laisser vivre qu'un univers spirituel où circulait une ombre: lui-même. Que cherchait-il? Rien. Il se trouvait là parce que, au bord de l'eau il se souvenait de plus de choses que dans les rues. Sa mémoire lui parlait sans fin de ce qu'il était jadis et il s'attendrissait en écoutant cette voix. Il y avait eu dans sa vie une époque où l'homme qu'il aurait pu être l'accompagnait de jour en jour. Philippe devinait alors cette présence merveilleuse, réglant ses pensées sur les siennes avec ferveur, au point de croire enfin que la substitution s'était accomplie, et il passa de longues années dans un grand contentement intérieur. Puis le temps amena une certaine heure où la vérité se fit pressentir, premier et lointain appel de la mort. L'homme qu'il devait être n'existait pas. Depuis longtemps déjà, Philippe vivait avec une sorte de fantôme, quelqu'un dont sa mémoire seule pouvait lui dire quelque chose, mais que personne n'avait jamais vu.[1]

It is only when he is standing beside the Seine that Philippe can grasp the nothingness of his life. He is not frightened by the nothingness but receives genuine satisfaction, if not

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[1] Ibid., pp. 281-282.

happiness, because he realizes that nothingness is the truth of his life. The Seine is for Philippe a symbol of the *néant* of his life. But the imagery of the Seine extends further.

> Cette eau noire, ce fleuve mystérieux, ces quais déserts, ne sont pas seulement l'image du néant de l'âme de Philippe, c'est aussi la possibilité de la fuite totale et définitive, la possibilité de quitter non seulement sa vie ennuyeuse, mais encore son moi, aussi vide que son existence.[1]

Later he dwells briefly on suicide but rationalizes that no one kills himself when he is both healthy and rich. In the end he only dips his foot in the water. However, this tangible communication with death suffices to give him the necessary courage to continue living. An unmistakably optimistic ray of hope shines through at the end of the novel via a tugboat.

> Au-dessus de leurs têtes, quelque chose rayonnait dans la brume, une grande tache cuivrée, le soleil; et à ce moment, derrière l'impalpable muraille blanche qui s'évanouissait dans la lumière, un remorqueur jeta son long cri rauque.[2]

Eliane is similar in many ways to Adrienne and Emily. She has lived for years with sexual and emotional frustration and yet has done nothing to help herself. She is truly a prisoner within her home. "Les personnages de Green ne sont pourtant jamais seuls. La famille est la geôle dans laquelle se débat leur solitude, la cellule où on la séquestre."[3] In the course of *Epaves* she makes up her mind

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[1]Fongaro, "Le Thème de la fuite," p. 395.

[2]Green, *Epaves*, p. 286.

[3]R. Bespalov, "Notes sur Julien Green," *Nouvelle Revue Française*," I (juillet, 1936), 420.

to leave Philippe and Henriette and make her own way in the world freed of the morass of frustration under which she continually suffers. At the pension where Eliane takes refuge she has a horrible nightmare. In the dream she leaves her room and begins to walk. She is soon completely lost. She walks for what seems like several hours. Finally in the midst of the desolation around her, she sees a tree. She then wants only to touch it and walks toward it with that purpose in mind. But when she finally reaches the tree, the branch she had been planning to seize is suddenly blown away by the wind. She then finds to her amazement that she cannot keep from walking. "Dans un violent effort elle tenta de s'arrêter, mais ne le put."[1] She finally faints and falls to the ground.

After the nightmare and a talk with Philippe, Eliane gives up her fight to end her frustration and takes the tragic step of returning to Philippe and Henriette. Like Green's preceding heroines, she is unable to break the mold of suffering into which she has been cast for life.

Henriette is a recreation of the child-woman type already seem in Emily, Adrienne, and Angèle. Pretty and sweet, she does not even conceive of the possibility that her extramarital rompings might bring pain to her husband. She is incapable of a deep emotion and does not understand what it is to really love someone. Her life, filled with

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[1]Green, Epaves, p. 182.

shopping expeditions and meetings with her lover, is considerably more vapid than the lives of Eliane and Philippe, for Henriette does not even know what it is to seek meaning in one's life.

In Epaves Green portrays for the first time in his fiction a protagonist who is beginning to put some degree of meaning in his life. Philippe's long walks along the Seine afford him a means of communication with the happy world, for him, of fantasy and the unconscious. The imagery of the Seine as death allows him to die and be reborn by dipping his foot in the river. For Philippe death carries such a positive force that it actually gives him a new hold on life. The strongest thematic note in Epaves is that man is capable of living a meaningful life.

The familiar Greenien themes of estrangement, frustration, and the inability to communicate with others are seen in the persons of Eliane and Henriette. Green was apparently afraid to concentrate completely on Philippe and chose to rely on the presentation of familiar character types and themes for a great part of the novel's bulk. Unfortunately, this method of approach detracts considerably from the novel's main theme which is illustrated only in the personage of Philippe and adds an unnecessary air of gloominess to the novel.

Le Visionnaire

Julien Green's fifth novel, Le Visionnaire, is considerably more occupied with the world of fantasy and the

unreal than its immediate predecessor was. "A many-dimensioned, subtler universe"[1] which is just as concerned with the unconscious as it is with the conscious is seen in Le Visionnaire. This does not mean that his predilection for describing objects and scenes in minute detail has no foothold whatsoever in this novel but simply that these descriptions play a substantially more subordinate role to the emotional conflicts of Le Visionnaire than was the case with the other four novels.

> Chez tous les conteurs exceptionnels, en effet, ce n'est pas la justesse des détails qui compte, mais la puissance des conflits engagés et la diffusion de leur rayonnement dramatique ou psychologique, en même temps qu'une certaine vérité humaine, débordant la peinture des moeurs. C'est exactement ce que nous retrouvons chez M. Julien Green.[2]

Green came upon his initial inspiration for the story from a newspaper article about the suicide of a student in a large city in central Europe. The student had shot himself in the head but before his death managed to wash the blood off his face. After he finished writing Le Visionnaire the only connection remaining between his novel and the newspaper story, however, was the hero's obsession with cleanliness. "De tout cela, rien ne subsiste dans Le Visionnaire, sinon la propreté, en quelque sorte superstitieuse et presque maladive, du héros."[3]

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[1]N. L. Rothman, "Of Desire and Death," Saturday Review, X (April 28, 1934), 661.

[2]Edmond Jaloux, "Le Visionnaire," Les Nouvelles Littéraires, No. 597 (March 24, 1934), 3.

[3]Julien Green, "Comment j'ai écrit Le Visionnaire," Annales Politiques et Littéraires, X (juillet-décembre, 1933), 505.

Le Visionnaire is divided into three parts. The first, the récit of Marie-Thérèse, supplies the background information essential to an understanding of the subsequent development of the novel's plot. When the novel opens, Manuel, Marie-Thérèse's orphaned cousin, has recently come to live with her and her mother, Mme Plasse. Mme Plasse was once in love with Manuel's father, a handsome, robust man who passed on neither of these qualities to his tubercular son, but he married her sister and Mme Plasse married a military man whom she despised. When Manuel first comes to live with Marie-Thérèse and Mme Plasse, his aunt treats him most hatefully, making continual taunts about his ugliness and weak physical stature. When it becomes clear, however, that Manuel is genuinely sick, she does an about-face, becomes extremely solicitous about his health, and nurses him with kindness and much self-sacrifice. Healthy Marie-Thérèse is never lucky enough to receive any of her mother's affections.

The story begins to build toward its climax when Manuel takes Marie-Thérèse for a walk late one night. They do nothing but talk but at one point Marie-Thérèse becomes so moved, she faints. Although she has Manuel's assurance that nothing occurred while she was unconscious, she feels compelled to relate this tale to her confessor. He, in turn, obliges her to confess what has happened to her mother.

The second part of Le Visionnaire, Manuel's récit, begins at the moment he believes Marie-Thérèse is about to

tell her mother about their evening promenade. Manuel feigns complete ignorance when his aunt questions him about the outing, and she in turn is quick to believe him. Manuel then proceeds to tell about quitting his job because of his sickness and about another incident with Marie-Thérèse and two of her young friends during which he kisses one of them. This story spreads quickly through the small provincial town, and Mme Plasse is constantly harassed by reports of her nephew's immorality but she refuses to believe any of them.

The last part of Manuel's _récit_ is entitled _Ce qui aurait pu être_. When he and Marie-Thérèse were children, they frequently devised fantastic stories about the inhabitants and architectural design of a nearby castle. During the last few months of his life Manuel estranged himself completely from reality and lived only in the fictional world of the castle. "Desperation and sensitiveness sharpen his mind until it becomes an instrument of escape and cuts a way for him out of solid reality."[1] In the enchanted world of Nègreterre Manuel first finds work as a simple domestic helper, but is soon befriended by the Vicomtesse. She promotes him to a household worker; his sole duty is to read for an hour each day to the Vicomtesse's dying father. Manuel's continual fear of death in the real world is carried over into the fictional realm via the figure of M. de Nègreterre whose agonizings haunt Manuel's entire tale. Manuel's un-

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[1]Rothman, "Of Desire and Death," p. 661.

satisfied love for his cousin is transformed into his consummated love of the Vicomtesse. The final scene of Manuel's *récit* is one of the most bizarre in Green's fiction. Immediately after her father has died, the Vicomtesse urges Manuel to make love to her. She abstains from reaching a climax as long as she can and holds Manuel so rigidly that he cannot free himself. When she has finally been sated, Manuel at last frees himself. After he has dressed he returns to her and finds she is dead.

In the third and final division of *Le Visionnaire* Marie-Thérèse relates how she found Manuel's notebooks and also tells of Manuel's death. One day, at her insistence, she and Manuel take a walk to the castle. At this time, of course, Marie-Thérèse has no idea of the extent to which the castle is real to Manuel. They enter the castle grounds and are walking toward it when Manuel, unable to face reality, faints and dies shortly afterwards.

The main theme in *Le Visionnaire* is the fear of death. Green pursues this theme in the realistic part of the novel by describing Manuel's fears as he realizes the rapid approach of his own inevitable death. In the section which relates Manuel's fantasies the theme is illustrated through conversations and, most effective of all, through the portrayal of the moribund Vicomte, whose imminent death seems to touch and affect everything that goes on within the castle.

> Désormais, l'agonie de ce vieillard remplira tout le livre. On la voit à peine, mais on la sent partout, dans toutes les manifestations de la maison. Cette mort qui se prépare est comme une araignée cachée qui attire et préoccupe tout le monde et, en particulier, Manuel.[1]

Manuel knows that his tuberculosis will be fatal to him in spite of the reassurances of his aunt who believes only in liver ailments. In one scene Manuel and the Vicomtesse actually discuss the nature of fear of death and their conception of it. When the Vicomtesse requests Manuel's visualization of death, he becomes inarticulate but senses that he has grown spiritually as a result of his ponderings over death. The Vicomtesse then relates her rather elaborate conception of death:

> A mes yeux, la mort se présente sous la forme d'images qui prennent la place d'une réalité insaisissable. Par exemple, deux cavaliers au trot sur une route. A droite et à gauche, de vastes prairies désertes. Les cavaliers portent des vestes blanches brodées de laine. Des petits chapeaux en cuir bouilli brillent sur leurs têtes. Ils parlent une langue étrangère dont les sons rudes se mêlent au bruit délicat des sabots sur la terre. Le ciel est bas, l'horizon sans couleur.[2]

Death has another image for the Vicomtesse too:

> Je suis dans une rue ensoleillée. Je monte et la pente est si raide que je ne me retourne pas sans que mon coeur se serre. Il n'y a personne dans cette rue, qui n'est pourtant pas triste; les maisons sont fleuries de géraniums. A mesure que je monte, je deviens inquiète. Enfin, enfin, ce que je redoute se produit. Des chevaux emballés apparaissent en haut de la côte. Ils traînent un carrosse en forme de boîte et dont les rideaux de cuir sont retenus par une main que j'aperçois. Les bêtes dont le poitrail noir est couvert d'une broderie

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[1]Jaloux, "Le Visionnaire," p. 3.

[2]Julien Green, Le Visionnaire (Paris: Plon, 1934), p. 213.

> d'écume se cabrent en voyant la côte et plongent. On dirait que quelqu'un au bas de la rue leur a fait signe. Ils courent en zigzag, la carrosse bondit à leur suite, les roues volent, mais la main ne lâche pas le rideau et dans un fracas dont la violence me jette sur le sol, l'attelage fou passe près de moi; à cette seconde une voix tranquille me dit une parole du fond de la voiture, je ne comprends pas, je me relève, et je regarde; il n'y a rien, je suis à la porte de mon père, dans l'escalier.[1]

For the Vicomtesse death is a horror. It rushes upon the moribund and engulfs him utterly. It moves with swiftness and irrationality and human beings are helpless against its force.

In contrast to the Vicomtesse's terrifying conception of death Manuel has found solace in the idea of utter annihilation. He feels no desire to continue living and consequently is not terrified at the prospect that there may be no afterlife.

> Depuis quelques semaines, en effet, je me libérais, peu à peu, de mes craintes anciennes; en reniant mon héritage catholique, je trouvais un réconfort étrange dans l'espoir de disparaître à jamais. L'idée de revivre me fatiguait, me terrifiait, ou s'il fallait renaître à une vie nouvelle, je souhaitais humblement que ce fût avec une conscience amoindrie, qu'on me donnât de respirer sans souffrir, de me promener sans lassitude entre les colonnes d'un grand temple un peu sombre où le jour ne blesserait pas ma vue.[2]

Manuel is not able to persist for long, however, in this complacent and rather sophisticated conception of death. He soon anthropomorphizes death even more than the Vicomtesse. One evening he is quite afraid that death, which he visualizes as an old woman, will mistake him for the Vicomte.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 213-214. [2] Ibid., p. 215.

Eventually it is left to the Vicomtesse to state the novel's strongest thematic note on death.

> A dater de cette époque, je tombai sous la domination de cette idée que la vie est une illusion et que la grande réalité, c'est la mort. Oui, ce que mon père murmure dans un souffle entrecoupé, c'est cela, le secret des morts. Le monde que nous croyons voir n'existe pas.[1]

For Manuel the world of fantasy and imagination is far more real than the world that most persons deem to be real. Only in his sleep and dreams is the hero of the novel the _visionnaire_, only then can he see things. It is only in this other world that Manuel can exert his will and be free.

> Il n'est pas beau, il est malade, il ne peut plaire, il le sait, et il est amoureux. Passion vaine; cependant toute ressource ne lui est pas interdite, car la joie que ce monde lui refuse, peu s'en faut qu'il ne la tourne dans le monde intérieur qu'il se crée au coeur de la nuit. Le rêve ouvre ses portes au déshérité et le mène _ailleurs_, dans les régions obscures et merveilleuses _où tout désir s'accomplit_.[2]

In the real world Manuel was beset by continual fears of death which he could not understand and by a hopelessly frustrating love for Marie-Thérèse. In the end, however, it is the very magnitude of these two emotional forces which drives him to the world of the imaginary and sets him free at last. "The illusions of desire and death, at first the sources of his misery, are at last the liberating wings that carry him to an imagined world, a fancied castle."[3] When

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[1] _Ibid._, p. 244.

[2] Green, "Comment j'ai écrit _Le Visionnaire_," p. 506.

[3] Rothman, "Of Desire and Death," p. 661.

Manuel delves into his fantasy world, he is, of course, not dead, but he is deeply submerged into the realms of the subconscious. It is a natural extension of this, and in accordance with the Vicomtesse's conception of death, that only when he is dead will he be able to be truly free to do what he desires.

In Le Visionnaire, in contrast to the method used in the four preceding novels, Green employs discussions and analyses by the characters to present the thematic material. Statements relating to the nature of the theme in a novel usually tend to detract from the novel's merit by making it too didactic. However, this is not the case with Le Visionnaire, for the author is clearly not attempting to inculcate in anyone the novel's theme of fear of death. The analyses of fear of death in this novel add a seriousness and depth of meaning which is absent in most of his fiction.

Shortly before he wrote Le Visionnaire Green read Wilhelm Stekel's Conditions of Nervous Anxiety and Their Treatment. In a notation entered in his Journal on December 24, 1932, he says "Lecture du livre de Stekel sur les états d'angoisse nerveuse, lecture qui m'instruit grandement sur mon propre compte."[1] This is the first work on psychoanalysis which the novelist mentions having read, but it is certainly plausible that even before he read the book he was at least somewhat acquainted with modern psychiatric theory.

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[1]Green, Journal 1928-1934, p. 118.

A man who dined regularly with some of France's most eminent authors and critics must surely have been exposed in conversation to some of the basic ideas of Freud and his followers. Nevertheless, Stekel's work made a deep impression on him and his influence is seen in Le Visionnaire. This work could hardly have failed to incite and hold Green's interest as Stekel, a renowned Viennese physician and former pupil of Freud, writes in a vivid style and utilizes a minimal technical vocabulary. The work analyzes in detail the nature of fear and repression and includes as well multiple analyses of various dreams of his patients.

What is surely the most striking and unusual scene in the novel--the love-making of the Vicomtesse and Manuel and the Vicomtesse's subsequent death--undoubtedly has roots in Stekel's work. At the end of his book Stekel gives his first general definition of fear: "Fear is the expectation of a displeasure. In the widest sense! In the narrowest sense, fear is aversion to death. Every fear is fear of death."[1] A little later he continues in this same vein: "Fear is the expectation of the unknown. We fear only what is new. What has become familiar to us loses the capacity to produce fear. Death, too, is to us the absolutely new and unknown."[2] After having thus clarified the nature of fear Stekel explains that fear, like all emotions, is bipolar, the opposing emotion

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[1]Wilhelm Stekel, Conditions of Nervous Anxiety and Their Treatment (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1923), p. 377.

[2]Ibid.

in the case of fear being the desire for annihilation, the death impulse. The sex instinct, which insures the immortality of the species, is then naturally associated with fear, which by its basic nature dreads the annihilation of the species, and consequently the bipolar emotion of the sex instinct is also death.

> Fear, dread of destruction, and the sex instinct, the longing for creation cannot be separated. Both appear in company with the death impulse. Dying and living are equivalent factors in the great symbolic equation of the infinite.[1]

Stekel's last statement on the subject reveals where Green may well have taken the idea for his novel. "And the death-impulses may culminate in an act which is called suicide and really represents the last sexual act, the last expression of an instinct which embraces equally death and life."[2] Keeping in mind the bipolar relationship between sex and death, the development in Le Visionnaire seems quite natural.

Le Visionnaire is the work in which Green most clearly and eloquently expresses his ideas on death and the accompanying inevitable anguish. In this novel, unlike the others, philosophical and psychological influences are clearly seen. The thematic material in this novel is of major import and is presented in an interesting and convincing manner.

Minuit

Green began the study of Buddhism while he was writing

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[1] Ibid., p. 378. [2] Ibid.

his sixth novel, Minuit, with the result that the latter half of that novel is marked by distinctly Buddhist ideas and tones. He was attracted in particular to two interpreters of the religion, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, both of whom were nineteenth-century Hindu religious leaders and saints from India. The liberal attitudes these two men held towards other religions impressed the novelist and he read many selections from their works. Of course, the ramifications of Buddhism are enormous, and his study of this philosophy was too small in its scope to enable him to delve very deeply into many of its intricacies.[1] Nevertheless, there is little doubt that his study of Buddhism shaped the essential thematic content of Minuit. In his Journal Green states bluntly that one of the most important characters is a type of Buddhist. "Ce M. Edme est une sorte de Boudhiste."[2] In the novel there are two oblique references to the oriental world. The first concerns M. Edme's appearance:

> Dans son visage émacié, les traits d'un dessin hardi semblaient n'avoir pas assez de place; le nez était droit, mais fort, les sourcils épais; les yeux largement fendus et d'un noir profond, brillant d'un éclat qu'avivait le cerne violet des paupières, prêtaient à cet homme quelque chose de la beauté intimidante et presque orientale qu'on voit aux personnages de mosaïques.[3]

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[1]Stokes, Julian Green and the Thorn of Puritanism, p. 53.

[2]Julien Green, Journal 1935-1939 (Paris: Plon, 1939), p. 98.

[3]Julien Green, Minuit (Paris: Plon, 1936), p. 279.

Later a metaphor is used by M. Edme while he describes the difficulty inherent in obtaining a sense of peace within oneself.

> Comme un voleur en effet, je m'étais glissé jusque dans cette région d'ordinaire inaccessible, protégée par des Himalayas de désespoir, et qui pourtant n'est ailleurs qu'au dedans de nous-mêmes.[1]

However, the influences of the author's study of Buddhism are most keenly perceived in the ideas expressed by M. Edme and also in a considerable part of the novel's imagery.

Minuit is divided into three parts, all of which are held together by the novel's heroine, Elisabeth. The first division, written before Green had begun his readings on Buddhism, is a typical tale in the Greenien vein of a little girl deprived of her parents and forced to live in a substitute home. The novel opens with the suicide of Elisabeth's mother, disconsolate because her lover has abandoned her. Elisabeth is then compelled to live with a widowed aunt who utilizes every opportunity to talk about her dead children and husband. The first night she spends there Elisabeth wakes up after hearing a noise and finds her aunt busily mopping the kitchen floor and scolding her long dead husband for having soiled it. Terrified, Elisabeth flees the house. She wanders about aimlessly at first, torn between going to another aunt, who is sweet but distasteful to Elisabeth because of her maudlin histrionics or to the nun watching over her mother's body. Eventually, she finds

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[1] Ibid., pp. 285-286.

M. Lerat, a financial advisor for a lycée who is exploring the town while waiting for a train connection. After a little feminine persuasion, Elisabeth, who is an uncommonly beautiful child, succeeds in convincing him to take her to his home.

The novel's second division is very short and relates a few typical events in Elisabeth's life during her stay with M. Lerat, his wife, and their two daughters. It ends with M. Lerat's sudden death.

The final part of Minuit is so different in its general tone that it almost seems to be a separate tale tacked on to the preceding story by a clumsy editor. The threads that connect this part of the novel with the preceding sections are extremely tenuous. After M. Lerat's death it is arranged for Elisabeth to go to Fontfroide, a former convent now utilized as a school, as a result of the kindness of the director of Fontfroide, M. Edme, who wants Elisabeth to come free of charge. Elisabeth is escorted to Fontfroide by M. Agnel, a gentle man given to continual praises of M. Edme. After arriving at Fontfroide, Elisabeth finds that M. Edme is not to be seen and that if there are children at the school, they too are neither seen nor heard. Her only companions are M. Agnel, M. Edme's mother, and a foreign young girl, Eva. A few days after her arrival she is introduced to M. Bernard, the blind brother of M. Edme. He craftily slips Elisabeth a piece of paper with the alarming words "Sauvez-vous!" inscribed upon it. As soon as she can cre-

dibly tell her fellow supper companions that she is going to bed, Elisabeth attempts to seek out M. Bernard. She does not find him but does find the little boy, Marcel, who runs his errands. Elisabeth bribes him to come to her room and learns from him that at Fontfroide everyone sleeps during the day and wakes up at about ten in the evening. After her talk with Marcel Elisabeth decides to investigate the gigantic house and discovers a bizarre assortment of people: a woman and her little girl who plan to leave every night at eleven o'clock but never do; Cornélie, a little old lady who is continually saying that the reason houses fall is because of the lies that are told within them and that, consequently, the reason Fontfroide is crumbling is because M. Bernard only pretends to be blind; Solange, another old lady, absorbed in the actions of her cat; a man who resembles an ape more than the human species; and Serge, a young boy whom Elisabeth considers the most beautiful person she has ever seen and with whom she instantly falls in love. While Elisabeth is waiting in the kitchen as Serge, an all-around handyman one of whose duties is to serve as waiter, helps with the dinner, she has her first glimpse of M. Edme through the keyhole. M. Edme's presence clearly commands the respect of all the inhabitants of Fontfroide, but no one seems really to understand the meaning of his lofty discourses on the value of the spiritual life. While listening Elisabeth learns that M. Edme is the man over whom her mother killed herself. The novel closes with a murder and a suicide. Serge, who has de-

cided to flee Fontfroide forces Elisabeth, who is somewhat reluctant to go after having heard the alluring discourses of M. Edme, to accompany him. They elude their pursuers, M. Edme and M. Agnel, and hide in a room where they consummate their love. Afterwards, Serge tries to shoot M. Edme but accidentally hits and kills Agnel. Finally, the two young lovers realize there is no way for them to escape Fontfroide other than by jumping out the window to their death.

The first part of Minuit is narrated in the traditional Greenien manner with lengthy descriptions of the physical setting and minute analyses of the psychological make-up of the characters. However, in the novel's latter half, which must be considered the most important half as Green expounds his main points in this section, he has departed radically from this approach. Instead of presenting a few characters in detail, he has elected to show many, with attention being placed only on one or two of their eccentricities. Nevertheless, the author has not exactly created a world which could populate the theater of the absurd. The characters in Minuit do not seem unreal, merely unlikely. Indeed, "the realism with which he paints the portraits of a group of unreal people is quite uncanny."[1] Green is still circumspect in noting such details as the colors and dimensions of objects. However, because he accords the spiritual

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[1]Hélène Harvitt, "Minuit," French Review, X (October, 1936), 61.

such a major role his colors seem to be roo red or too black, simply out of proportion with the rest of the narrative; the exact description of objects merely gives the narrative an unnecessary and cumbersome aura.

> Here the psychic takes the center of the stage, and the physical intrudes only as a monstrous accident. Here our common logic of cause and effect holds no authority, replaced by the unpredictable tangents of force unnamed, unseen, unlimited by earthly laws. Light is subordinate to darkness. The characters are psychological counterparts of their background, distorted puppets that dance upon strings leading to no traceable source. They do not have motives, or passions; they have tensions, that are released in spasmodic moments of explosion. Neither time nor place is recognizable, shrouded both in a heavy atmosphere through which nothing may be perceived but the shadowy movements of the actions.[1]

The basic theme in Minuit concerns man's search for meaning in life. This theme is amplified on three levels: first through the person of Elisabeth who is able to see to a degree the value of the spirit but is unable to attain it; secondly, through the myriad minor characters who are either too stupid or too absorbed in mundane cares to realize the futility of a life without spiritual sustenance; thirdly, through M. Edme the novel's only character who has been successful in inserting meaning in his life.

M. Edme appears in only twenty of Minuit's three hundred pages, but his influence is felt throughout the entire part of the novel occurring at Fontfroide. The dominating idea in Buddhism is that of nirvana, and this is likewise the dominating idea in M. Edme's life. The word nirvana

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[1]"Julien Green's Midnight Realm," Saturday Review, XIV (Sept. 5, 1936), 7.

literally means "waning out." With the waning out of life's suffering, caused by disease, lust, hate, and idleness, the state of nirvana is attained, and the personality is infinitely enriched by being emptied of all ignoble selfishness. The final goal of nirvana is not extinction, however, but rather a form of an exalted state of consciousness.[1] Font-froide, contrary to Elisabeth's initial impressions, really is a school. It is M. Edme's school to aid others reaching the blessed state of nirvana.

Before M. Edme makes his appearance, his mother has told the disturbing news that because they are so behind with their bills, all utilities are being cut off, and that they are in imminent danger of being deprived of the house itself. The news alarms everyone, and when Edme arrives he gives them a brief lecture on the vanity of placing too high a value on material objects.

> Mes amis ... je ne vous verrais pas sérieux comme vous l'êtes à présent si vous vous souveniez de ce que je vous ai dit autrefois. Alors que nous étions plus riches, je vous répétais de temps en temps que vous accordiez une créance trop généreuse à un monde illusoire et que ce monde ne vous le rendrait pas. Si vous aviez écouté mes avertissements, vous auriez vu peu à peu les choses se décolorer autour de vous et perdre cet air de réalité qui vous abuse; aussi le désir de posséder se serait-il évanoui. Que ne cultivez-vous le goût de l'invisible! Vous seriez, comme moi, dans cette indifférence bienheureuse où je me trouve depuis des années, certain que rien ne peut nous atteindre, puisque rien n'existe de ce que nous craignons. Tous vous avez cru aveuglément au solide et je n'étais pour vous qu'un fantaisiste inoffensive dont les paroles vous divertissaient. Vous regrettiez seulement que je ne fisse point de tours avec un chapeau haut de forme et des écharpes, alors que

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[1]A. C. Bouquet, Comparative Religion (Middlesex, Endland: Penguin Books, 1962), pp. 161-162.

> je vous proposais de chercher avec moi le Palais de Nulle-Part, où l'esprit se repose enfin.[1]

Edme realizes that human beings' senses cause them to see the world in an illusory way and that man is obliged to recognize how his senses deceive him in order to free his mind from its chains to the world. He therefore exhorts his students "Que ne cultivez-vous le goût de l'invisible."

After his introductory speech, Edme recounts a dream he had several years before. The dream occurs in some distant epoch several centuries ago. Edme is at first overwhelmed by the sensation of being so removed in time. When he recovers somewhat, he examines his physical surroundings. He is beside a pond, a house which rises directly over the pond, and a woods. The house, he realizes, is Fontfroide and exists only in his imagination. "Sans doute, cette maison n'existait que dans ma mémoire ou si vous aimez mieux dans mon imagination. Qu'est-ce en effet que l'imagination, sinon la mémoire de ce qui ne s'est pas encore produit?"[2] He determines to enter the house which exists and at the same time does not. His reason forces him to acknowledge that he is in danger of drowning in the pond if he tries to enter the house since the house is situated directly over the pond. But at the same time he notices that as long as he believes his hand is holding the doorknob, he truly is holding it. As he explores the house, he enters

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[1]Green, Minuit, pp. 280-281.

[2]Ibid., p. 282.

the state of nirvana.

> En traversant ces grandes pièces vides où résonnait le bruit de mes pas, je me sentis pénétré d'une joie si douce que les mots n'en pourraient donner qu'une idée imparfaite. Il me semblait qu'ici je devenais meilleur et plus intelligent, et que l'air dont s'emplissait ma poitrine nourrissait mon cerveau d'un élément subtil et magique. Beaucoup de choses que je n'avais pas comprises jusqu'alors me parurent tout à coup d'une simplicité admirable. Plus aucun désir ne m'agitait. Le doute, les regrets, la tristesse me quittèrent, et cette incertitude de ce que nous sommes. Mes amis, si je me rappelais tout ce que j'ai appris dans cette maison, je serais le plus savant et le plus utile des hommes. Malheureusement, le souvenir de cette science aussi précieuse que la vie même me fut ravi à mon réveil, de même qu'on arrache à un voleur le butin qu'il emportait. Comme un voleur en effet, je m'étais glissé jusque dans cette région d'ordinaire inaccessible protégée par des Himalayas de désespoir, et qui pourtant n'est ailleurs qu'au dedans de nous-mêmes.[1]

Edme is able to recognize the illusions of the world. While he has so far been able to enter the state of nirvana only in a dream, he is on his way to the complete attainment of this state. His mental ability surpasses the usual limits of reason, and he can enter that state of mind intermediate between dreams and reality.

Edme's last major pronouncement concerns his relationship with Elisabeth's mother. He confesses that until he met her, he led a life like that of most men: devoid of spiritual intent and filled with material vanities. After her suicide, caused by his abrupt cessation of the affair, he decides to bring up her daughter but is opposed in this plan on several accounts. He then retires to Fontfroide

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[1] Ibid., pp. 285-286.

where he attempts but fails in an endeavor to kill himself. This action has a strong regenerative power on his spirit, however, and henceforth he knows that the body will not impede his inner self from the greatest possible development.

> Au sortir de cette maladie je me sentis une tout autre personne. D'une certaine manière, le poison avait opéré cet anéantissement du corps sur lequel je comptais, et quelque chose en moi s'éveilla. Quelque chose, je ne savais quel nom lui donner, mais je savais que désormais la chair n'empêcherait plus l'homme intérieur de se développer et d'agir.[1]

In Green's fiction "the problem of adjusting to this world can now be solved by transcending it, by repudiating the world with its sensualism and materialism and taking flight into the invisible realm of the spirit, which is revealed by dreams and imaginative visions."[2]

Elisabeth is characterized by an impulsive urge to flee. Her first act of independence as a child is to flee the home of her crazy aunt and establish herself in the comfortable, bourgeois home of M. Lerat. When she arrives at Fontfroide, Elisabeth is utterly distraught when she finds herself locked in a room and immediately begins making plans for her escape. The actual flight from Fontfroide, of course, takes her to her death.

Elisabeth is pulled by both the carnal and the spiritual but finds true peace in neither. During her stay at the

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[1]Ibid., p. 294.

[2]Albrecht, "Psychological Motives in the Fiction of Julian Green," p. 300.

Lerat home, she becomes attracted to the town knife sharpener and eagerly waits for the days he passes by her window so that she can look at him. One day she can restrain herself no longer and runs after him with a pair of scissors to be sharpened as her excuse for approaching him. When she catches up with him, however, he has entered a cafe, and she is too timid to go in after him. She is simultaneously frightened by her unreasonable behavior and madly desirous of being with him.

> Et le désir lui vint d'être là, avec lui, dans ce petit café qui devait sentir l'alcool et le tabac, d'écouter ses plaisanteries pour en rire, elle aussi, à gorge déployée, comme riaient ces gens qui paraissaient si heureux. A son plaisir se mêla presque aussitôt le regret nostalgique d'une vie dont elle ne connaîtrait les aspects que de cette manière imparfaite, à travers une perpétuelle buée. Et pourtant elle se sentait plus près du rémouleur et de ses amis que de Mme. Lerat et de ses filles, de Mlle Bergère et toutes les sonates de Clementi. Jamais plus qu'à cette minute elle n'avait si durement senti les contraintes où se brisaient chaque jour les élans d'un coeur naïf, et des larmes roulèrent sur ses joues. On voulait faire d'elle une personne bien élevée, mais c'était une fille du peuple qui pleurait doucement de tristesse et d'amour, dans ce crépuscule de décembre.[1]

Elisabeth's final decision is to leave the cafe without speaking to the knife sharpener. She is unable as yet to side completely with the carnal element of her nature.

When Elisabeth first sees Serge, she is overcome by his physical beauty and wishes to be only with him. However, after she has listened to Edme's discourses on the attainment of tranquillity of the spirit, Elisabeth quickly decides that she desires only to stay at Fontfroide, where, as she explains

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[1]Ibid., p. 114.

to Serge, "je serai plus heureuse."[1] But Serge's passion and strength overwhelm her resolve. For Elisabeth her quest for meaning in life is futile since there can be no peace for her except in death. The fight within her between body and soul is too constant and too fierce to allow her any happiness. "Only separation of the two in death permits true calm and attainment of the Absolute."[2]

Green uses Minuit's minor characters as the final medium to present his theme of the search for meaning in life. These characters are bored and frustrated, concerned only with life's commonest trivialities. They are equally removed from the passion of carnal love and the intensity of the spirit striving for tranquillity. After Edme has recounted his dream in which he explores the imaginary house, no one except Elisabeth comes even close to understanding what he is saying. M. Bernard treats it as a joke: "Ta maison n'est pas un fantôme, c'est une charade."[3] Eva thinks that the house is a type of ghost: "Oh! moi, j'ai très bien compris ... Pourquoi n'y aurait-il pas des fantômes de maisons comme il y a des fantômes de personnes."[4] M. Urbain, believing the house to be real, wants to accompany Edme but only on the

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[1]Ibid., p. 299.

[2]Stokes, Julian Green and the Thorn of Puritanism, p. 67.

[3]Green, Minuit, p. 287.

[4]Ibid., pp. 286-287.

condition that Agnel be left behind. Edme's mother accuses him of being irrational while Agnel is desperately afraid that he will be left behind. Cornélie merely says: "Moi, je suis persuadée que Fontfroide est dans la catégorie des maisons qui croulent quand on y a menti trop souvent."[1] Green is quite adept in painting characters such as these, but on the whole he illustrates through them no new thematic notes as he does with Edme and Elisabeth.

With the multiple minor characters in Minuit Green has shown, as in his previous novels, that most people live monotonous lives without even attempting to insert meaning into them. Elisabeth desperately wants to lead a significant life but is prevented from doing so because of the constant conflict within her between body and soul. Only Edme is able to achieve meaning in his life, and he does so only by transcending life through meditation and dreams.

Varouna

Green completed Varouna in 1940, four years after the publication of Minuit. One of the commonest criticisms of his works as a whole is that they fail to reflect any of the particular problems of modern man and that they completely ignore all philosophical complications arising from such major crises of the twentieth century as World Wars I and II and the development of the atom bomb. On the surface Varouna would seem to be an especially vulnerable target for criticism,

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[1]Ibid., p. 289.

for there is no patent relationship between it and the events of the day. However, when this criticism is brought against Varouna, it is probably as the result of a superficial and cursory reading, for the novel undoubtedly reflects Green's particular view of the world and his conception of an acceptable way to cope with it.

Varouna is divided into three parts. The first, written in a singsong manner rather like a fairy tale, tells the story of Hoël, a Welshman who must have lived, although no specific time is cited by Green, in the seventh century when England was being Christianized. As a boy Hoël was instructed by his parents to run along the jagged sea coast with a lantern in his hand, thus causing ships to believe they had spied a landing area when in actuality they were being directed to their ruin. It is on one of these missions that Hoël, innocent of the evil machinations of his parents, finds a black chain. It is not beautiful but has a fascination of its own because of its intricately wrought links and the effect of movement it conveys. One day while Hoël has the chain around his neck he falls asleep and dreams of the people before him who have possessed the chain: a cardinal, a cithern player, a money-changer, a woman. He feels that he is one with these people. Hoël cannot keep the secret of his wonderful chain to himself and he shows it to a hermit who speaks a strange language and has a cross set up at the entrance to his hut. Far from laughing

at him as Hoël feared he might, Marcion tells Hoël solemnly that the chain belongs to the men of the sea and that it must be returned. Hoël surrenders the chain to the sea though a voice warns him that if he keeps it he will be happy, rich, and loved by a beautiful woman. Soon after this episode in his young life the misdeeds of Hoël's parents are uncovered and they are hanged. Hoël is merely beaten for three weeks and then chased from the village. He is an extremely handsome and personable boy and is never without bread or clothes as he wanders from town to town. Accordingly, he spends his youth and his middle-age years as a wanderer with no particular home and no occupation, relying on his charm and skill in playing the bagpipes to procure food and lodging. He once talks with a trained bear, meets a mysterious knight who can walk on water and make people invisible, and is chased from a Swedish village when missionaries refuse to believe his claim that he has already been baptized by Marcion. When he has lost all semblance of his youthfulness, Hoël realizes that to be happy he must return to Wales. When he has finally reached his native district, he takes refuge for a night in the house of a beautiful spinster, Morgane. That evening Morgane tells him that when she was a child a little man in red told her that to be happy she must build a house and wait in it patiently until the day a man would come who would recognize the object the former gives her. Morgane does not tell Hoël what the object is

and that night Hoël, thinking it is a valuable jewel, sneaks into her room and cuts her throat. Only after he has murdered Morgane does Hoël see the black chain he wore as a boy around Morgane's neck. Hoël is sentenced to be hanged for his crime. However, on the way to the gallows he sees in the crowd a face that belongs to Morgane smiling at him and he knows he is forgiven. When the noose is around his neck he utters the only two Christian words he has ever learned: "Our Father."

It is appropriate to note here that while Hoël's final fate is an untimely and unpleasant death, his life is not sad. He is a man who never loses the innocence and carefree happiness of youth. "Hoël's life is not presented in a highly subjective, tragic fashion. Although in the end he is hanged, he is among the 'elect,' a part of a larger, more beneficent destiny."[1]

The novel's second division is set in Arras during the reign of Henri II. The heroine, Hélène Lombard, is a beautiful girl of fifteen. She is linked with Hoël by the face that a peddler once gave her the same chain Hoël wore as a boy. When she was born, her mother died, and her father, Bertrand, has been in a continuous state of deep mourning ever since. Hélène has been raised by her mother's sister, Marguerite, who was only too eager to usurp the position of mistress in the wealthy Lombard home as she had

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[1]Albrecht, "Psychological Motives in the Fiction of Julian Green," p. 301.

been in love with Bertrand for many years. The central plot revolves around the fact that Bertrand has falled in love with his daughter. Naturally a Christian of the sixteenth century could not face the reality of this. Bertrand deludes himself by imagining that Hélène is really his wife and that it is his daughter who is dead. He turns for help in this scheme to his cousin Eustache Croche, a magician, sorcerer, and necromancer, who after consulting the Cabala states that Hélène is indeed Bertrand's wife. Croche succeeds in hypnotizing Hélène and she is on the point of giving herself to her father as his wife when Bertrand dies. Croche, who still holds her under his powers, orders her to go to sleep and forget everything that has occurred.

The final part of Varouna is again set in Arras but in the early years of the twentieth century. The heroine, Jeanne, is a childless authoress quite unsatisfied with her most recent literary works, but nevertheless she is relatively happy with life as a whole and quite in love with her husband Louis. Jeanne's current work is a reconstruction of the life of a local character, Hélène Lombard. This section of the novel, which is presented as if it were Jeanne's diary, analyzes the motives of the characters and tells of the subsequent trial during which Croche was condemned to be burned at the stake and Hélène's decision to enter a nunnery. The novel ends when Jeanne and Louis take a trip to England and visit the British Museum. While looking

at a display of prehistoric objects Jeanne sees a black chain which appears to be moving and feels instinctively and with absolute certainty that it is hers and that she once wore it around her neck but at such a remote time that she cannot possibly remember when.

Green begins Varouna with an avertissement in which he elucidates many points in his novel which otherwise might have remained unintelligible to the ordinary reader. The chain, the author states, possesses no power in itself and works no spell on those who own it. Rather it is a symbol of two destinies which are bound to coalesce in a whole at some period in time.

> Elle est le signe et pour ainsi dire le témoin de deux destinées qui doivent se cotoyer, puis infailliblement s'unir. Comme le temps est plus long que nous et qu'une vie ne me semble pas souffire à l'accomplissement d'une destinée, j'ai étendu l'action de mon livre sur un espace de mille ans, et j'ai supposé que deux êtres spirituellement unis par une attirance invincible se retrouvent d'époque en époque, se reconnaissent, et s'aiment.[1]

The author goes on to say that he is not necessarily speaking of the phenomenon of transmigration "parce que je ne suis pas sûr qu'il s'agisse de cela."[2] The title of the novel results from his study of oriental religions. In Vedic mythology Varouna is the god who occupies the highest place; he is aware of all the deeds, even the most secret, of all men. "C'est l'Ouranos grec, avec quelque chose de

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[1]Julien Green, Varouna (New York: Editions de la Maison Française, Inc., 1941), pp. I-II.

[2]Ibid., p. II.

plus menaçant et de plus sombre, c'est l'univers attentif à venger le crime de chacun et à veiller sur l'accomplissement de toutes les destinées."[1] Green closes the avertissement with the remark that the chain is symbolic of the incompleteness of life.

> Je crois que ce qui me frappait jadis et me trouble encore, c'est qu'une vie humaine paraît presque toujours incomplète. Elle est comme un fragment isolé dans un long message dont elle ne nous livre qu'une faible partie, souvent indéchiffrable.[2]

Varouna is not the tale of two people reborn at different periods of time; it is instead illustrative of the fact that no man is a unit complete within himself. He is pushed into action by thousands of ancestors. All of humanity is reborn in every individual, and in the twilight of everyone's conscience there can be glimpsed the memory of the primitive existence of the race of man.

> La complexité de chacun de nous va peut-être beaucoup plus loin qu'on n'a tendance à le croire. Vivants et morts, nous payons les uns pour les autres, et si l'égoïsme nous porte à nous retrancher en nous-mêmes, notre vie ne s'éclaire, cependant, qu'unie à celles qui la précèdent et à celles qui la suivent, comme les mots d'une longue phrase dont le sens général n'est connu que de Dieu.[3]

The thematic concentration of Varouna focuses on the continuity of life. Life, as Green perceived it at the time he wrote the novel, is never complete with the birth and death of any single man. In his Journal he states:

> Dans le livre que j'écris en ce moment, je voudrais raconter l'histoire d'une action. Les personnages

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., pp. II-III. [3] Ibid., p. IV.

> n'existent qu'en fonction d'elle. Ils meurent, mais elle n'en continue pas moins d'exister dans toutes les complications imaginables.[1]

Such an idea, conceived when most of the peoples of Europe were either already engaged in or on the point of entering a catastrophic war, was undoubtedly consoling. As a European facing the possible loss of his life and country, the thought that death was not a complete end in itself must have been to Green, if not comforting, at least sobering, and his literary offering to the public of a means of understanding and living with the dilemma.

While Green declares in the avertissement that it is not his design to write on the subject of metempsychosis, there is certainly a great deal of influence emanating from this oriental theory in Varouna. The whole emphasis of the novel is on the idea that death is not final but the beginning of rebirth. If his conscious aim was not to develop the theme of metempsychosis, it was at least to develop the theme of hereditary memory. In 1935 Green attended a lecture given by Jung on hereditary memory. In his Journal he states that: "Il est très probable qu'en écrivant la préface de Varouna, je me suis souvenu de cette théorie sur la mémoire de l'humanité, grande source commune à laquelle nous puisons sans cesse."[2] But whether he considers hereditary memory or the actual process of transmigration as the basis for

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[1]Green, Journal 1935-1939, pp. 168-169.

[2]Julien Green, Journal 1940-1943 (Paris: Plon, 1946), p. 141.

the unity among his characters, or possibly a combination of these, the theme which results is that of the continuation of life.

The unity among the characters first becomes apparent in the novel's second part. When Bertrand sees the chain around Hélène's neck, he is first overcome by emotion, then recognizes himself in the person of Hoël, and finally sees a beautiful girl who bears an extraordinary resemblance to Hélène.

> Quand Bertrand Lombard aperçut la chaine que sa fille portait au cou et que les roses lui avaient cachée, il éprouva un sentiment d'autant plus difficile à définir que la joie et la frayeur s'y mêlaient à parties égales. Il se voyait au bord de la mer, sur un rocher que frappaient les flots, et quand je dis qu'il se voyait ainsi, je dis mal, car il voyait un enfant vêtu de guenilles, mais comment croire que cet enfant n'était autre que lui-même? Bertrand Lombard ne le croyait pas, il en était sûr ... Puis il se vit soudain en haut d'une échelle et la hart au cou; la sueur coulait sur tout son corps comme une pluie, car il était dans l'angoisse de la mort, et comme il abaissait les yeux, il aperçut au milieu de la foule une jeune fille d'une beauté admirable. Elle ressemblait à Hélène d'une façon si singulière que Bertrand Lombard se retrouva tout à coup dans son hôtel, considérant sa fille et cette chaine qu'elle portait au cou, avec un étonnement qui ne saurait se rendre.[1]

In addition to this remarkable passage in which Bertrand clearly sees himself as Hoël and Hélène as Morgane, there are numerous other references throughout the novel to the phenomenon of transmigration of souls. A remark made by Eustache Croche refers to the theory of metempsychosis: "Sachez que le secret de la Nature est que la mort n'existe

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[1]Green, Varouna, pp. 198-199.

pas et que seule une transformation a lieu dont l'essentiel échappe aux regards des hommes."[1] Hélène's mother felt that one of the figures in the bedroom tapestries was a man named Noël, a close approximation of Hoël. And, finally, one of Hélène's favorite daydreams concerns why she is living now instead of during the reign of King Dagobert.

In the novel's third division the theme of continuity between the characters is again present although not in such a dominant fashion as was the case with the second part of Varouna. In one of her dreams Jeanne sees the figure of Hoël:

> Je n'ai eu que le temps d'éteindre et de ramener ma couverture par-dessus mon oreille, car il faisait froid, et déjà je dormais de nouveau, et de nouveau je me trouvais dans le magasin de Mlle Suzanne. Elle agitait les mains dans la dentelle qu'elle avait mise en pièces et riait très fort, d'un gros rire d'homme. Le jour baissait rapidement. De la porte restée ouverte soufflait un courant d'air glacial. Soudain je m'aperçus que toute cette dentelle était en réalité de l'écume sur une vaste étendue d'eau noire et le rire que j'entendais s'amplifiait de seconde en seconde jusqu'à devenir le fracas de l'énorme querelle du vent et de la mer. Un enfant se tenait sur un rocher avec une lanterne au poing; tout autour de lui, des voix appelaient lugubrement de la terre comme du milieu des flots.[2]

As soon as she has awakened from this dream Jeanne falls to sleep again and dreams that while she is opening some old letters sent to her from Louis there falls from one of them a lot of seaweed and shells. In the midst of this she sees something which she first thinks is a serpent but soon sees that it is only a chain. An uncontrollable urge to wear it

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[1] Ibid., p. 204. [2] Ibid., pp. 245-246.

comes over her and she puts it around her neck. A little more than a writer's imagination and empathy intrude in the following statement of Jeanne: "Elle pense par moi, elle est comme ressuscitée en moi et je suis cette petite bonne femme qui vivait au temps du roi Henri II. Oui, c'est moi, Hélène Lombard."[1] At the end of the novel when Jeanne sees the chain at the British Museum, she knows instinctively that it once belonged to her. Louis, too, turns pale when he sees the chain and states that: "Peut-être ai-je rêvé à un objet qui lui ressemblait étrangement, car en la regardant, j'ai eu la certitude que je la connaissais."[2]

In each of Varouna's three sections a man and a woman, fated to meet each other and fall in love, are the principal characters. Hoël and Morgane's love is far from being ready for fulfillment. She does not even show him the chain, and he kills her in an uncharacteristic spurt of greed. Bertrand is in love with his daughter and resorts to desperate schemes to have her changed into a person acceptable for receiving his love. In the end, of course, he cannot believe his own lie and dies from an overburdened conscience. Only Jeanne and Louis have been able to come to terms with the love that binds them to each other.

> Destiny is now a chain of many links which runs its course through various lives in successive eras of time, and in the novel, culminates in the lives of Jeanne and Louis. There love is no longer an abortive, abnormal, annihilating experience as in earlier stories, but a happy union that is somehow inherent eventually in the

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[1] Ibid., p. 260. [2] Ibid., p. 278.

> larger concatenation of events which transcends the seemingly tragic course of other individuals and culminates in ultimate fulfillment.[1]

Green states in the novel's preface that the chain is "le signe et pour ainsi dire le témoin de deux destinées qui doivent se cotoyer, puis infailliblement s'unir,"[2] and carried out this idea through the lives of the three couples. The broadest implications of this theme suggest that rarely is the destiny of an individual fulfilled within the course of a single lifetime. Life is viewed as a continuity from which no individual soul is entirely excluded merely because his body has died.

If the publication date of Varouna were not known, it is a fair guess that few critics would place it in the year 1940. However, if one considers Green's background, the turbulence of World War II and the creation of a novel like Varouna do not seem completely incompatible. The author has lived completely alone in the midst of a noisy and busy century. The various revolutions, dictatorships, and political turmoil of the twentieth century have not seemed to influence him in one way or another. He is neither a communist nor a capitalist. He refuses steadfastly to give any intimation of his innermost political leanings. His preference for writing in French and for maintaining Paris as his home clearly indicates that he is wholly French in

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[1]Albrecht, "Psychological Motives in the Fiction of Julian Green," p. 301.

[2]Green, Varouna, p. I.

his tastes; however, he has never bothered to become a French citizen. To the reader of Varouna Green offers the only consolation he knows: withdrawal from an active life and comfort in the concept that man is only a unit within a larger entity.

Si J'étais vous

The last of Green's novels concerned with the supernatural and the workings of the unconscious mind is the most unusual and fantastic of all. In the avant-propos to Si J'étais vous Green states that the subject of this novel dates from some of his earliest memories of his childhood. As a little boy one of his most frequent daydreams revolved around the question of why he was himself and not someone else. Green admits that the attainment of adulthood has not brought a sufficient answer to this question and offers the rather facile explanation that each person is imprisoned within his own particular personality because the wisdom of God has dicided this is best. However, Green is quick to add that "mais il ne coûte rien de rêver à ce qui aurait pu être."[1] Part of man's sadness, according to Green, stems from the fact that man is always the same. Each morning one is faced with the same problem one faced yesterday: how to survive the day and, ultimately, to a natural death. Si J'étais vous deals with this dilemma in a most striking and novel fashion.

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[1]Julien Green, Si J'étais vous (Paris: Plon, 1947), p. i.

In an unidentified town in northern France around 1920 a young man named Fabien Especel leads the typically dreary life of a Greenien hero. He has a boring job as a clerk, lives alone in a sparsely furnished apartment, and suffers acutely because of his ugliness and his failure to please others. In a series of bizarre encounters, Fabien has made the acquaintance of M. Brittomart. His strange adventures begin when he consents to meet Brittomart shortly after midnight one night. He and Brittomart travel by coach to a destination not revealed to Fabien. The two finally arrive at a house where, in spite of the late hour, many people of all ages and races are gathered. All resemble each other in only one particular: extreme lassitude. When Brittomart and Fabien are alone, the former explains that the people Fabien has just seen have come here searching for youth. In exchange for youth they offer Brittomart their souls. Upon hearing this Fabien cannot refrain from saying: "Vous êtes donc le diable."[1] After laughingly acknowledging this remark by replying that he is only "un simple subalterne"[2] Brittomart explains that Fabien has been singled out to receive a remarkable talent: the ability to change from one person to another . All that Fabien must do to effect a change is to whisper a few words into the other's ear.

The first person Fabien chooses to become is his immediate supervisor, M. Poujars. He is not long in discovering,

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[1] Ibid., p. 57. [2] Ibid.

however, that not only is Poujars quite as unhappy as Fabien but also suffers from the many aches and pains concomitant with old age. He determines then to become someone else as soon as possible and hastily and foolishly chooses a young man, Paul Esménard, who has a marvelously robust body but the brain of an imbecile. While Fabien is in the body of Paul, he strangles Paul's girl. Brittomart himself comes to Fabien's rescue, for the unfortunate Paul's mind is incapable of remembering the words he must whisper to become someone else. Brittomart decides that Fabien will next inhabit the body of Emmanuel Fruges, a scholar who has published several articles on some of the more obscure aspects of church history but who is forced to earn his living as a sales clerk. As Fruges, Fabien is more unhappy than ever. He is desperately frightened by his cowardice and the prospect that he will be too timid ever to effect a change to another personality.

At this point the novel's second part begins. The action is centered around a teen-aged girl Elise who lives with a widower. Oncle Firmin has brought up not only Elise and her sister Stéphanie, the daughters of deceased friends of his, from the time they were small children but also has reared the two sons of his sister, Camille and André. Oncle Firmin's apparent kindness in rearing these children is, unfortunately, only a front, for at heart he is interested only in himself and arranges the children's lives in a fashion that is more advantageous to him than them. He has forced Camille and Stéphanie to marry each other in spite of the fact that neither loved the other and is preparing to withdraw André

from school because of his poor marks even though he begs for another chance.

Fabien joins this family when he finally manages to free himself from Fruges by becoming Camille. But he does not enter wholly and immediately the person of Camille. While he admires his handsome face and body as Camille, Fabien hates Camille's ingratiating behavior. He proceeds to alienate Firmin by calling him a religious hypocrite and then slaps Stéphanie for all her insolence in the past. After this outburst the hero sets out on a frantic search for the body of Fabien. When he finally finds his original body, he quickly whispers the magic words and Fabien once again becomes Fabien. It is only for a short time, however, as that very evening he dies.

In Si J'étais vous the author shows that man is incapable of achieving happiness. Fabien finds that all the people he chooses to become are at least as unhappy as he was and usually more so. Brittomart entices Fabien to accept the magical power to change from one person to another by telling him that man's lot is so boring principally because of the dreary routine that each day brings.

> Vous savez comme moi qu'une des causes majeures de l'ennui est l'étroitesse de notre destinée. Nous nous éveillons chaque matin les mêmes, et c'est en vain que des rêveurs de l'antiquité ont soutenu que jamais la même personne ne passe deux fois par la même porte. La vérité est que chaque homme est condamné à vivre dans le même corps, à voir par les mêmes yeux, à comprendre et à mediter jusqu'à la mort par le secours du même cerveau. L'ingénieux supplice de l'identité crée un enfer beaucoup plus subtil que le lieu torride inventé par

> la superstition. Etre eternellement le même n'est pas supportable aux esprits affinée par la réflexion. Sortir de soi, devenir autre, n'est-ce pas là un des rêves les plus intelligents que l'homme ait portés en lui?[1]

The fallacy in this promise of happiness, Fabien soon discovers, is that when he assumes someone's personality, he also takes on at the same time all that person's memories and feelings. He is, consequently, just as bored with the routine of the person whose body and mind he has assumed as the original person was.

In the avant-propos Green states what the principal subject of Si J'étais vous is:

> Si je voulais résumer d'un seut mot le sujet de ce livre, je dirais peut-être que c'est l'angoisse, la double angoisse de ne pouvoir échapper ni à son destin particulier, ni à la dure nécessité de la mort, et de se trouver seul dans un univers incompréhensible.[2]

Although Fabien can change his person by simply muttering a few words, he is helpless to alter the sadness and monotony inevitable in everyone's life. Whether Fabien sees the face of Fruges, Camille, Poujars, or Esménard in the mirror makes no difference to what he feels in the depths of his heart. He is a man and nothing else: it is beyond his power to change his destiny as a human being. He is fated to lead a meaningless and unhappy life which leads only to death. "L'épigraphe 'Je est un autre', empruntée à Rimbaud, n'y trouve pas sa justification. Fabien demeure lui-même. Ni la chair ni la magie ne le libèrent de son être."[3] While

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[1]Ibid., p. 58. [2]Ibid., p. ii.

[3]Louis Chaigne, Vies et oeuvres d'écrivains, II (Paris: F. Lanore, 1956), 94.

Fabien can leave his material self, he cannot rid himself of his spirit.

In Mont-Cinère, Adrienne Mesurat, and Léviathan cruelty, mental imbalance, and violence rule the lives of the principal characters. These qualities, of course, are only symptomatic, illustrative of man's unhappy and lonely course in life which he must accept if he desires to continue living. For Julien Green the world appears to offer little solace but considerable despair. In his first three novels the characters react violently to the bitter loneliness of life. Their revolt, however, proves futile, as its sole effect is to render life even less bearable.

Green's next five novels are written over a period of sixteen years, from 1932 to 1947. In the first of these, Epaves, the author seems to feel faintly hopeful about man's lot in life. The hero Philippe thinks that perhaps he has a chance for happiness as a result of his success in establishing a communicative relationship between himself and his son. However, the lugubrious tone of Epaves and the fact that only on the novel's last page is a clear glimmer of hope given reveal that Green has not been entirely successful in convincing himself that man stands a chance for happiness. In the third novel, Minuit, only one character out of about twenty is able to come close to a life of meaning. In Varouna again only one character, Jeanne, leads a really happy and satisfying life.

In this middle period Green is considerably more

sophisticated in his art as a novelist. He refuses to allow his characters to show their anger with the world by killing others or committing suicide. He undoubtedly realizes now that the majority of human beings are much more likely to repress their hostilities than to vent them openly. Accordingly, then, Green explores the workings of his characters' minds by delving into the subconscious and some of the more subtle intricacies of psychology. While murder is not absent in the five novels of this period (Hoël's murder of Morgane) and death is seen in Le Visionnaire, Si J'étais vous, and Minuit, these events are not integral elements of the plot or of the psychological make-up of the characters. The heroes and heroines of these five novels are surely not all-American Joes or the French equivalent but neither are they psychotics best suited to spend their lives in asylums.

However, even though Green's characters of this middle period show that they are now able to accept their role in life, that role is essentially the same for them as it was for Emily, Adrienne, and Guéret.

> L'univers moral et psychologique que propose l'oeuvre romanesque de Julien Green relève d'une conception pessimiste, négative de l'existence. Bien que notre monde soit perméable au rêve et qu'il soit parfois atteint par les soudaines irruptions de l'invisible, il reste clos sur lui-même, limité par l'étreinte d'une souffrance qui lui est consubstantielle. L'homme ignore tout de ses origines et des fins auxquelles le sort le destine, il a conscience d'être ici-bas un exilé, un voyageur qui ne peut jamais lui être révélé, il est confiné dans la perception du présent, il se sent étranger aux réalités du monde dans lequel il est engagé malgré lui, il est

> en perpétuel désaccord avec l'univers ambiant. Toute vie humaine est en soi imparfaite, inachevée.[1]

The thematic development in the novels of the middle period that differentiates them from the early novels is that Green now is capable of creating characters who can accept at least courageously and sometimes happily whatever role in life fate has allotted them.

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[1]Marc Eigeldinger, Julien Green et la tentation de l'irréel (Paris: Editions des Portes de France, 1947), pp. 17-18.

CHAPTER IV

THE LAST NOVELS

The publication of Moïra in 1950 marks Julien Green's return to the novel of psychology. His excursion into the realm of the fantastic and the imaginary broadened considerably a dimension in French literature in which it is somewhat deficient, for Green's penchant to explore the nether world is a distinct rarity among French authors. However, his greatest talent lies in his strong, versatile descriptive powers and in his finesse with character creation. His decision to return to probing the hidden recesses of the human mind was fortuitous both for his own reputation and for the French novel.

Moïra

Moïra has received high critical acclaim. It has even been hailed as the best novel to appear since the end of World War II: "Ce roman qui est, sans conteste, le meilleur roman de Julien Green, pourrait bien être aussi le meilleur roman français paru depuis la fin de la guerre."[1] Although many will undoubtedly disagree with this labeling

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[1]Guy Desgranges, "Julien Green: Moïra," French Review, XXV (December, 1951), 125.

there is some justice in it, particularly if one considers Camus' novels to be amplifications of philosophical dialogues and if one discounts the nouveaux romans as members of the novel genre.

Moïra begins with Joseph Day's introduction to his landlady, Mrs. Dare, who runs a rooming house for boys at a large, Southern university in the United States. Mrs. Dare's puzzled and bewildered reaction on meeting Joseph is almost a prediction of the future. She is at once repulsed by his flaming red hair and troubled by his piercing black eyes; however, this reaction still does not prevent her from saying "En tout cas ... il a certainement l'air honnête."[1] For his part, Joseph reveals his puritanical upbringing through his shock in seeing that Mrs. Dare smokes and wears make-up.

The other boys who live in the rooming house naturally talk of girls to the early hours of the morning. This talk disgusts Joseph, and he clogs up his ears to keep from hearing their various boasts. This behavior again shows what a strict, puritanical training has instilled in a boy who prefers simply not to think of the act through which he came into this world.

Joseph is strangely silent in that at first he voices to no one his protests against the painted Mrs. Dare and what he views as the lecherous desires of his dormitory comrades. One reason for his silence is that he feels he was sent to

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[1]Julien Green, Moïra (Paris: Plon, 1950), p. 1.

save them and turn them to the road of salvation.

> Et puis d'une ferveur subite, il se vit arrachant à cette femme des larmes de honte, des promesses, un vrai repentir, peut-être même une confession publique de ses fautes comme cela se faisait jadis. Quelle victoire![1]

Joseph first shows what crimes he is capable of perpetrating when an insulting remark about his red hair is made by a group of boys. Although he did not actually make the remark, Bruce Praileau takes the responsibility for it and arranges for a fight with Joseph. After the first round Joseph has Praileau down and states he could easily break his head if he so desired. Praileau taunts back, however, that Joseph would never do such a thing because he is afraid. Goaded by this remark, Joseph almost chokes Praileau to death. Afterwards, Praileau flatly tells Joseph he is a murderer. "Tu as voulu me tuer toute à l'heure, reprit-il. Tu n'as pas osé; cependant il y a en toi un assassin."[2]

Lacking sufficient trust in his own natural intelligence, Joseph begins to consider himself a stupid country boy who will never be able to master Greek declensions. Such an extreme lack of faith in himself and his learning abilities is also correlated with his lack of genuine spiritual contact with God. This is exemplified in one of Joseph's meetings with his friend David, who is both tutor and spiritual mentor to Joseph. During the conversation Joseph inquires if by reading the Scriptures in Greek he will become any closer to

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[1] Ibid., p. 10. [2] Ibid., p. 31.

God. He is extremely dissatisfied with David's answer that he will be but only intellectually. He further declares: "Moi je veux le voir et le toucher. Je veux me tenir près de lui, comprends-tu? Comme on se tient près d'une personne vivante. Et je veux le voir."[1]

Joseph's extreme horror of the body and sex is revealed in several different ways. He never looks at his own body while undressing. When a friend shows him copies of statues by Phidias and Praxiteles and comments on their beauty, Joseph is horrified to think that anyone could consider a statue, which is naked, beautiful. As a final example, he is both shocked and bored by Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet and cannot comprehend what possible significance this play could ever have in his own life.

Although Joseph has always denied himself any experience with sex, he is continually tormented with thoughts and temptations which he vainly attempts to repress. His biggest threat is his landlady's adopted daughter, Moïra, a brazen, promiscuous girl. Urged by some of Joseph's school acquaintances, she sneaks into Joseph's room one night for a joke. When Joseph returns, he immediately tells her to leave, but she refuses. She writes a letter while he pretends to be reading Othello. Eventually she decides to leave, but just as she is about to depart, Joseph suddenly attacks her and makes love to her. Later, after a short nap, both awaken,

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[1]Ibid., p. 61.

and Moïra complains that she is cold. Joseph obligingly draws up the covers and then smothers her with them. The next day Joseph rejects Praileau's offer of escape and surrenders to the police.

Moïra is by far the most reflective of Green's American background of all his novels. It is one of three novels, the others being Mont-Cinère and Chaque Homme dans sa nuit, whose setting is in the United States, and it is the only novel in which he finds success in giving a convincing portrait of the American South.[1] The southern university Joseph attends resembles distinctly the University of Virginia where Green enrolled as a young man thirty-one years before writing Moïra. This lapse of time does not seem to have dulled Green's memory. "Les descriptions de la Virginie ont gardé la fraîcheur qu'elles avaient pour le visiteur du premier jour."[2] However, Green's vivid recollection of the fall foliage and the heavy winter snows of Virginia is not by any means the most important element in the novel reflecting his American heritage. The principal thematic content and tone of Moïra are both constructed on the basis of a Puritanism that Green would hardly encountered with much frequency in France without the example and tutelage of his mother.

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[1]"Paris and Savannah," The Times Literary Supplement (June 22, 1951), p. 383.

[2]Robert de Saint Jean, Julien Green par lui-même (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967), p. 95.

In all of Green's novels there is a community of mood and background. Each is overcast with an air of gloom and bleakness and in each there is also a conflict between the spirit and the flesh. All of Green's characters, with the exception of Jeanne in Varouna, are degraded in some way by the disease of sex. Eliane becomes petty and malicious; Mme Grosgeorge grows into a sadistic monster; and Guéret, Emily, Angèle, and Adrienne all lose their powers of reasoning.[1] The puritanism instilled in Green by his mother with "its postulates of an absolute human depravity and a purely arbitrary human redemption"[2] helped to establish in the author his dilemma over sex.

In Moïra Joseph is never able to reconcile the conflict of the spirit and the flesh. His puritanical background has managed to confuse forever in his mind the ultimate goodness and purpose of sex with an evil deed not worthy of a true Christian. Joseph's desire to maintain total chastity does not stem from Catholic tenets but solely from puritan beliefs. The flesh is viewed as being sinful and nothing else. The fact that it is also a creation of God is completely forgotten. "C'est une pureté puritaine, qui ne voit que la chair pecheresse, qui oublie jusqu'au désordre que la chair est l'oeuvre de Dieu et qu'elle ressuscitera en beauté au

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[1]Talon, "Julien Green: The American-born French Novelist," p. 34.

[2]William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (New York: Morningside Heights, Columbia University Press, 1938), p. 83.

dernier jour."[1]

Joseph fits perfectly the mold of many of the most traditional attributes assigned the Puritan. One of his most visible Puritan traits is his utter dearth of aesthetic appreciation. Because the Puritan is inclined to value beauty in terms of right and wrong rather than as an ideal in itself, Joseph experiences difficulty in communicating his experiences to others who are not so restricted by puritan ethics.

> The Puritan's utter lack of aesthetic sense, his distrust of all romantic emotion, his unmatchable intolerance of opposition, his unbreakable belief in his own bleak and narrow views, his savage cruelty of attack, his lust for relentless and barbarous persecution--these things have put an almost unbearable burden upon the exchange of ideas in the U.S.[2]

Joseph's reaction upon seeing copies of Phidias' Apollo and Praxiteles' Hermes is one of amazement and scorn. He is repulsed by the statues and completely unable to understand Simon Demuth's admiration for them. He first remarks "Je déteste les idoles"[3] and then in reply to Simon's remark that they are not idols but simply beautiful human beings he states "Beaux ... Ils sont tout nus!"[4] As puzzling to Joseph as the Greek statues is the requirement in his English class that he read Romeo and Juliet.

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[1]Chaigne, Vies et oeuvres d'écrivains, p. 95.

[2]H. L. Mencken, A Book of Prefaces (New York: Knopf, 1917), pp. 201-202.

[3]Green, Moïra, p. 47.

[4]Ibid.

> Des les premiers vers du prologue, son attention chercha à s'évader. Qu'est-ce que pouvait lui faire cette querelle entre deux familles italiennes? Et cette passion d'un homme pour une femme, non, pour une fille de quatorze ans? Ce qui l'intéressait, c'était le salut des âmes et où pouvaient être les âmes de ces gens, s'ils avaient jamais existé? Assurément elles brulaient. Au moment même où il lisait leur histoire, dans cette bibliothèque silencieuse, les deux amants rugissaient comme des bêtes sous l'éternelle morsure de la flamme justicière pour n'avoir songé qu'à l'assouvissement de leurs désirs.[1]

Joseph's failure to see a relationship between the play and his own life takes two tragic turns later on. Simon, who has fallen in love with Joseph, kills himself when he realizes the utter futility of his love. Joseph's inability to recognize and acknowledge the growing physical attraction he feels toward Moïra leads him to kill her out of bewilderment after the consummation of his passion.

Puritanism does not teach that sexual intercourse is evil. However, it intensifies the gloominess of the animalistic side of man's nature and is extremely pessimistic about man's ability to lead the good life in this world.[2] In an extension of this doctrine Puritans tend to debase all of the animal activities of man and to view physical love as unworthy of man's spirit. Joseph is even repulsed at the idea of physical union in marriage and is shocked when he learns that his friend David, who is studying to become a minister, intends to marry. The following dis-

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[1] Ibid., p. 49.

[2] Crane Brinton, Ideas and Men (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), p. 98.

cussion between the two boys illustrates Joseph's adamant attitude.

> --Je dois dire que la photographie ne la flatte pas. Son teint est admirable. C'est un ange, un ange que m'envoie Dieu. Nous nous marierons quand je serai pasteur.
>
> Il eut un grand sourire et dit d'un ton léger, presque badin:
>
> --Je parie que tu es envieux!
>
> A ces mots, Joseph lui saisit les deux bras comme pour l'immobiliser, et le regardant en face, il lui dit avec lenteur:
>
> --Sois bien persuadé que non, David. Le mariage est une tentation dangereuse.
>
> --Que veux-tu dire?
>
> --Tu sais très bien ce que je veux dire, reprit Joseph, les yeux brillants. La chair, le plaisir de la chair et toutes les impuretés que cela suppose.
>
> --Tais-toi! s'écria David en se dégageant.
>
> --Quand tu tiendras cette femme contre toi, penseras-tu à Dieu?[1]

In Joseph's mind the flesh is cursed and has its source in the devil rather than in God. It is Joseph's conscious goal to refrain from engaging in sexual activities and even from thinking about them. However, his obsession to suppress all of his natural instincts is too great for him to bear and he ends up thinking about sex constantly. David recognizes this when following the previous dialogue he states "Pardonne-moi ce que je vais dire, Joseph, mais tu penses trop à la fornication, à ce que tu appelles la fornication. Tu la fuis, je la sais, mais tu y penses."[2] Joseph replies to this by saying he thinks of it only as something he detests. He fails to recognize that even though he thinks of the flesh

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[1]Green, Moïra, p. 168.

[2]Ibid., p. 169.

only with horror, he is in reality incapable of stopping himself from thinking about it.

The danger of the temptation of sex is certainly one of the strongest and best presented themes in Moïra. By portraying virtually all the characters as affected by this temptation in one way or another, Green succeeds in putting across the idea that Joseph is not the only person tormented by his puritan legacy.

Joseph encounters temptation in two people: Moïra and Praileau. Moïra actually plays a very small role in the novel; it is the idea of her presence that takes possession of Joseph. His room at Mrs. Day's boarding house was formerly occupied by Moïra, her adopted daughter. Joseph first finds her cigarette holder and then learns about her reputation of promiscuity from the talk around the boarding house.

Although Moïra does not actually make an appearance in the novel until the latter third of the book, Joseph is bewitched by her almost throughout the novel. The seductive powers she possesses completely take hold of him from the first time he even hears about her.

While Moïra is a blatant representation of the power of temptation, Bruce Praileau demonstrates that temptation may also be subtle. Joseph does not understand that the true reason Praileau bothers him so much is that the actual basis of their relationship is a mutual physical appeal. Joseph's first meal at the boarding house is the occasion of

his initial encounter with Praileau. He is immediately embarrassed that he is with Simon, a fawning, obviously homosexual boy. "Joseph éprouvait le désir de faire comprendre à l'inconnu que lui et Simon n'étaient pas liés, qu'il n'y avait aucun secret entre eux, comme les chuchotements de Simon pouvaient le laisser croire, et qu'ils se connaissaient à peine."[1] Later that evening Joseph ponders whether or not to write his mother about Praileau. He does not see what possible interest she could have in him but eventually decides to describe him to her. Like a girl writing the name of her boyfriend over and over, he delights in seeing the letters on paper. "Il trouva plaisant d'écrire ce nom à consonance étrangère dans le dernier paragraphe de sa lettre."[2]

Praileau plays a rather small role in Moïra after his initial fight with Joseph. However, whenever he does make an appearance, there is always some sign to indicate "Joseph's growing awareness that somehow it is wrong to be so concerned with Praileau."[3]

One evening when Joseph returns to discover Simon looking at his notebook, he becomes furious and delivers a scathing lecture to the intimidated Simon. He later decides he has been too harsh with Simon and determines to apologize. From Simon to Praileau is a shorter step than Joseph consciously admits, and he soon ceases the mental framing of his

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[1] Ibid., p. 12. [2] Ibid., p. 13.

[3] Stokes, Julian Green and the Thorn of Puritanism, p. 103.

apology and lapses into a daydream about Praileau.

> Pendant quelques minutes, il s'abandonna à une rêverie où les pensées les plus vagues s'enchaînaient par un lien qu'il ne saisissait pas. Plusieurs fois il se revit sous les arbres, la nuit, devant Praileau qui lui jetait à la face des paroles de mépris, et c'était en vain qu'il chassait de sa mémoire cette image honteuse, car d'une manière ou d'une autre tout semblait l'y ramener.[1]

When Joseph hears a boy state that "Praileau est mieux bâti"[2] while comparing him with Praileau, he shudders. He is uneasy even when he and Praileau are in the same classroom. In his Journal Green states that the temptation embodied in Praileau is the novel's principal subject.[3] The very title of the novel, Moïra, which means fate in Greek, implies that Green is at last beginning to acknowledge the needs of the flesh and the inevitability that these needs will be fulfilled in one way or another. Green says "et comment le corps dirait-il autre chose que oui? C'est son langage. Il est dans son rôle."[4] Joseph is able to satisfy, at least temporarily, his need for Praileau by fighting him. He satisfies his need for Moïra by intercourse. But because the idea that intercourse is evil has been drilled into him from his childhood he cannot accept what he has done and hoping to negate the act he kills Moïra.

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[1]Green, Moïra, p. 74.

[2]Ibid., p. 118.

[3]Julien Green, Journal 1946-1950 (Paris: Plon, 1951), p. 352.

[4]Ibid., p. 18.

Guy Desgranges has written of Moïra: "Satire du puritanisme? Non pas, mais la tragédie du puritanisme, peut-être."[1] The particular type of American puritanism that has been instilled in Joseph Day has not only contributed to the murder of Moïra but by demanding that Joseph repress all his natural instincts has made him a victim at least in part, of schizophrenia.

In the late eighteenth century mental illness was beginning to be dealt with scientifically. The first technical name given schizophrenia was that of dementia praecox. Dementia praecox was differentiated from other mental illness by its tendency to progress from a rather slow start to complete mental degeneration. In 1911 the Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler originated the term schizophrenia. He chose this term because of the disease's characteristic "splitting of the mental functions,"[2] and he was also the first to outline the most common symptoms of schizophrenia: "disturbances of affect (feeling tone), of association (the connection of thought patterns), of ambivalence (the coexistence of contradictory thoughts and emotions), and of autism (a form of feeling and thinking wherein the patient reacts more in terms of his own inner reality and his accumulated life experiences, than of the demands of a conventionally accepted outer reality.)"[3] For example, a person

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[1]Desgranges, "Julien Green: Moïra," p. 126.

[2]Deutsch and Fishman, Mental Health, p. 1784.

[3]Ibid., p. 1783.

might appear on the surface to be extremely bored with life but inwardly he might be striving for success with all his might.

Day's schizophrenia probably began with late adolescence and early adulthood as is usually the case and is characterized by his false ideas of reality, suspiciousness, and delusions. Contradictory thoughts and impulses rule his life. He is compelled to remain chaste because of his puritanical upbringing and at the same time he is compelled because of his age and his sex to seek sexual satisfaction.

One of the first symptoms indicating schizophrenia is the tendency of a person to lose interest in everything in the outside world. The person then usually becomes detached, withdrawn, and overly interested in himself. He may later resort to typically adolescent philosophizing about life and death. Often the person's powers of concentration are seriously impaired. Of course, in the case of Day it would be quite natural for him as an adolescent to be concerned with various metaphysical questions. There is a distinction in degree, however. The typical adolescent's moods vary almost every day whereas the schizophrenic's ideas remain fairly static.[1] Joseph is clearly interested only in himself. School and learning have never interested him and he sought David's help with Greek only because he was embarrassed in class when he was unable to recite correctly. In

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[1]Ibid., pp. 1791-1792.

his desire for Moïra and Praileau there is not an iota of evidence that he has any love whatsoever for them or values them for the particular qualities they possess as human beings. He wants them only in order to satisfy his own biological impulses.

Day displays the autistic response characteristic of a schizophrenic in that he has an individual concept of reality which varies greatly from that accepted by society as a whole. When he resorts to murder in order to relieve his inner turmoil and anguish, only his past experiences are dictating his actions to him; the outer world and reality do not exist for him at that time.

Joseph is unable to take the path of the rationalizer who reasons that since he wants to commit fornication, God must want it as God wills all things. The rationalizer then proceeds to the idea that if he resists his impulse to fornication he will be resisting the will of God. Finally, the rationalizer feels that if he is saved in the long run, it will be solely by God and that his own actions are incapable of either hindering or bolstering his chances. Joseph is completely free from the facile moral nihilism that sometimes attracts the dull believers in absolute determinism. Joseph does not commit the sin of pride by placing himself as God's equal but his twisted personality causes him to take himself too seriously, to view himself as the center of the universe. If he were capable of seeing himself in

perspective, he would undoubtedly be better able to adjust to the world.

In spite of Joseph's severely distorted personality and the negative impact of puritanism upon its staunchest adherents depicted in the novel, Moïra does not have an unhappy ending. The closing pages of the novel are among the most masterful that Green has written and illustrate forcefully his skill in revealing theme through tone and choice of setting. Green spends very little time on description in this novel and his style appears to the reader to flow effortlessly. However, the settings the author does choose to delineate are done with a subtlety and cleverness that add measurably to the total thematic impact of the novel.

> Dans Moïra, l'histoire est racontée avec moins d'insistance que dans les romans de Mauriac: nous n'y retrouvons point les paysages brulants ni l'atmosphère desséchée des Landes, mais l'automne humide et chaude de ce campus virginien n'en constitue pas moins une cage de résonance parfaitement adaptée aux sentiments évoqués. L'éclairage presque tout en demi-teinte de ce drame poignant, la retenue générale du récit donnent, je crois, à Moïra une intensité plus réelle, et, en fin du compte, plus intense, que celle que l'on trouve dans les romans de Mauriac, dont l'éclairage au néon, l'allure dramatique apparaissent souvent forcés. Avec Mauriac nous sommes en présence d'un art du souligné; avec Green, d'un art du suggéré.[1]

The murder of Moïra occurs at night, as do virtually all of Green's murders and violent scenes. The darkness, the moon, the shadows all give a theatrical tone to the scene. Joseph's red hair has served as a leitmotiv throughout the novel; his taunters know that he is vulnerable when a joke

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[1]Desgranges, "Julien Green: Moïra," p. 126.

is made about it and that this is an easy way to anger him. When the murder takes place, the effect is particularly striking. The red haired protagonist is similar in his situation to a set where the chorus is attired in black and white and the comedienne in a brilliant red.[1]

Immediately after the murder Joseph buries Moïra while snow is beginning to fall. When he wakes up in the morning it is still snowing. At this point in the novel Green makes one of his few mistakes by failing to adapt the ternary division he utilized in Minuit, Le Visionnaire, Adrienne Mesurat, and Epaves. If he had done so, the reader would realize more quickly that the falling snow which blotted out Joseph's footprints after he buried Moïra is symbolic of his "integration into the common world of men."[2] Joseph has sinned now and is able to feel kinship with his fellow men.

That morning, for undoubtedly the first time in his life, Joseph takes an interest in other people that has nothing whatsoever to do with himself.

> Les pieds dans la boue, il attendit le tramway rouge. En face de lui, de l'autre côté de la rue, il remarqua deux petits magasins, l'un vert amande, l'autre noir. Le vert était une teinturerie dont le propriétaire s'appelait Ward, alors que le noir portait, au-dessus de l'entrée, un nom chinois suivi du mot "blanchisseur". Quelque chose en lui s'intéressait à ces détails, essayant d'imaginer la vie de ces inconnus, leurs visages,

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[1]M. G. Rose, "Julien Green, Novelist as Playwright," Modern Drama, VI (1963), 197.

[2]Talon, "Julien Green," p. 40.

les rapports qui existaient entre eux.[1]

The majority of Green's heroes live in a hell on earth. They make desperate attempts to escape their hell but once they have begun their flight from life they usually find that they are unable to stop running. Praileau sets up a sure means of escape for Joseph, and at first Joseph decides to flee. However, after a short time Joseph finds that his mind is flooded with memories of his childhood. Suddenly he stops and begins walking in the opposite direction.

> Soudain il fit un effort pour s'arracher à l'arbre qui le soutenait et il se remit en marche, mais cette fois dans la direction opposée. Il n'avait qu'à placer les pieds dans les traces de ses pas, et ces trous dans la neige le guidaient, lui facilitaient ses mouvements; on eut dit qu'ils le tiraient en avant, et il allait, dormant presque.[2]

Although Joseph himself does not understand exactly the meaning of his act it is clear to the reader.

> Le symbolisme de cette marche, sur ses propres traces est immédiat. Joseph Day accepte tout ce qu'il a fait, tout ce qu'il est, tout son destin.
>
> Joseph Day ne fuit donc pas, il assume son destin. Même s'il est criminel, il n'est pas un damné. Il sait, lui, parce que la foi ne l'a jamais quitté, que le ciel n'est pas trop fortement barricadé et c'est de ce côté-là qu'il se sauve. Or, du côté de la Grace, la seule fuite possible n'est pas la fuite, mais l'acceptation.
>
> Là est le salut, il faut accepter la chaine et la croix. Sur le chemin qui mène à Dieu, la course est dure et haletante aussi, mais c'est une course vers la joie et la réalité supremes, ce n'est pas une fuite vers le tourment et le néant.[3]

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[1]Green, Moïra, p. 234.

[2]Ibid., p. 246.

[3]Fongaro, "Le Thème de la fuite," p. 400.

Joseph refuses to become a man constantly on the run like Guéret. He does not, however, immediately surrender to the authorities but goes instead to his friend David. The following dialogue ensues.

> David, toi et moi nous croyons les mêmes choses. Te souviens-tu que Christ a défendu de juger?
> Je ne te juge pas, je ne t'ai jamais jugé, fit David avec un élan et une sorte de précipitation. J'ai toujours cru que tu valais mieux que moi, Je le crois encore. Moi, je ne serai jamais qu'un petit pasteur. Mais toi ...[1]

This discussion shows Green's Jansenistic leanings which will later be portrayed more strikingly in Chaque Homme dans sa nuit. David knows that he must strive to be among the elect but that Joseph's election has never been in doubt. After his talk with David Joseph goes to the police. The novel does not end with a note of finality, though, but rather with hope. Joseph has at last accepted himself for what he is. He realizes that he is a sinner, even if he is among the elect, and that it is not his role to judge others. Because he accepts himself, he accepts man's condition in general. He will consequently now be able to live in the world with some degree of understanding and of compassion both for his own actions and emotions and for those of his fellow human beings as well.

The principal theme in Moïra concerns the effects that a strict puritanism may have upon its believers. The novel's protagonist, Joseph, believes that in order to be

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[1]Green, Moïra, p. 250.

spiritually pure he must also be physically pure. He not only considers the act of sex evil but even the thought of sex. With these beliefs serving as his basic philosophy of life, he can naturally not fit into the easygoing life of his comrades at Mrs. Dare's boarding house. He feels he is sinning even when he accidentally overhears a conversation on the subject of sex. In addition to Joseph's obsession to remain chaste, he also feels compelled to convert others to his way of thinking and is continually plotting ways of helping Mrs. Dare and her boarders to the road to salvation. It is hardly surprising that an adolescent, who is so preoccupied with suppressing all thought of sex and with plans for the conversion of virtually all his acquaintances, displays marked signs of schizophrenia. When the reader first encounters Joseph, he appears only to be an overly zealous puritan, but by the use of carefully edited conversations and the depiction of a few incidents in the boy's life, Green shows that Joseph is not only a bit absurd in his religious intolerance but also seriously ill mentally. It is only through the act of intercourse with Moïra, which is considered by Joseph, of course, as a mortal sin, that he is able to regain some of his sanity. Joseph's realization that he, too, is capable of sinning enables him to re-enter the world of his fellow men.

Le Malfaiteur

Julien Green began writing Le Malfaiteur in the summer

of 1937 but completed only about 100 pages at that time. He resumed writing and finished the novel in 1955. In the introduction he explains that he completed Le Malfaiteur not merely because of an author's natural desire to finish a book to which he has already devoted considerable time and effort but also because he felt that its principal subject was too important for him to allow to remain collecting dust in a drawer.

> Sans aucun doute, je regrettais de ne pas avoir mené mon oeuvre jusqu'au bout, alors qu'une grande partie en était écrite, mais il y avait une raison plus forte et celle-là déterminante: c'était de porter à l'attention de lecteurs sérieux un des aspects les plus tragiques de la vie charnelle dans notre monde moderne, tragique parce qu'il engage d'une façon parfois violente toute la vie affective et qu'il touche gravement à la vie spirituelle.[1]

The tragedy Green refers to is the life of a homosexual in twentieth-century France. In Le Malfaiteur he creates in the Vasseur household a miniature tableau of society's reaction when it discovers that one of its members is a homosexual.

The first scene of the novel which precedes the first chapter, is of exceptional importance to Le Malfaiteur's development, for only at that time does Green choose to portray directly the miserable plight of a homosexual. Jean, a middle-aged scholar currently researching the life of Saint Sebastian, is meditating in his room before a blank piece of paper. He remembers the happiness he enjoyed in his childhood and ima-

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[1]Julien Green, Le Malfaiteur (Paris: Plon, 1955), p. II.

gines his dead mother standing before him. Waking from his daydream he wants to confess his homosexuality to his mother but after a moment decides that it is indeed futile to wish she were with him, for she would undoubtedly be the last person in whom he would ever confide. He reasons that there is no need to tell the world what it has resolved to ignore. He then indulges in a reverie on what his family thinks of him. His cousin, Mme Vasseur, with whom he lives, sees in him nothing more than a scholar and is persuaded to give him free room and board principally because she likes his gracious ways of thanking her for her hospitality. Her sister, Mme Pauque, holds approximately the same opinion of him. Ulrique, Mme Vasseur's haughty daughter, only bothers to visit Jean when she is bored; she no doubt considers him a fool for electing to live in such a bare and incommodious room. The only person in the household with whom Jean feels any affinity is Hedwige, an orphaned cousin of Mme Vasseur. Her candor and gay nature appeal to him. Monsieur Vasseur is an honest, trusting man who never sees anything evil in the world. Raoul, Ulrique's husband, has a brain receptive only to the simplest concepts and no doubt considers Jean a parasite.

After Jean has completed the tally on his relatives' opinion of him, he realizes that if he is to survive at all he must join their ranks.

Dans le silence de cette aube frileuse, il semble à Jean qu'il voit défiler devant lui ces personnages

> familiers avec leurs soucis, leurs tics et leurs ridicules. Il se promet de faire un effort pour aller au-devant de ces hommes et de ces femmes et pour les mieux comprendre, qui sait même? pour les aimer. Alors, à coup sur, ils lui rendront cet élan fraternel. ... A eux seuls, ne sont-ils pas l'humanité? Qu'on multiplie leur nombre à l'infini, on ne les changera pas. Jean va plus loin; c'est lui-même qu'il veut reconnaître en eux, car tout à coup l'horreur lui vient de cette solitude morale où il vit; il voudrait se mêler à l'innombrable famille qui s'appelle les autres, et disparaître en elle. Pour cela il faudrait à la fois du courage et de la lâcheté, renoncer à soi et prononcer les voeux qu'exige la multitude: "Tu mangeras comme nous, tu penseras comme nous, et comme nous aussi, tu aimeras. Ressemble-nous ou nous t'étouffons."[1]

The story that follows this brief prologue describes the conditions that lead to and follow Jean's defeat in life, for he is unable to force himself to become the person that society wishes him to be.

Jean's tragedy is twofold. He must face up to society's scorn and the fact that all homosexuals are viewed both legally and morally as inveterate malfaiteurs who are a scourge on the general populace. The indifference he encounters in his own family, however, is a graver blow to Jean than society's dicta on the worth of a homosexual. Not one of the Vasseur even suspects that he is a homosexual. Therefore, Jean is doomed to an estrangement from his own relatives and an utter lack of meaningful communication with anyone.

In the first chapter of Le Malfaiteur the Vasseur are seen through the eyes of their poverty-stricken, spinster seamstress, Félicie. Félicie leads a sour life. She is

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[1]Ibid., pp. 10-11.

slightly feeble-minded but not so much that she is not embittered when she feels compelled to say "Madame est trop bonne! Madame est vraiment trop bonne,"[1] whenever she is given an obviously well-worn article of clothing. The plot begins to develop when Ulrique decides to hold a costume ball for her cousin Hedwige who is now of marriageable age. After Félicie has dutifully made all the costumes, Ulrique changes her mind about such an elaborate affair and decides simply to host a reception. At that affair, Hedwige, who has always been a cheerful, happy girl, sees a young man, Gaston Dolange, with whom she instantly falls in love. Ulrique promises to set up a rendezvous for Hedwige with him but in a few days returns with the news that Gaston has moved to La Rochelle. Hedwige is immediately plunged into the depths of despair. That evening she has a dream in which a man appears and asks her for all of her material possessions. She gives him everything that was ever of value to her and finds she is exceedingly happy.

> Mais à peine avait-elle le temps de reconnaître un jouet, une boite de couleurs ou des perles de verre, que déjà on les lui enlevait, et chaque fois elle éprouvait la même surprise. Elle ne souffrait pas, cependant; au contraire, elle connaissait depuis quelque minutes un étrange désir de donner plus encore, sans rien garder pour elle. Pour la première fois de sa vie, elle était vraiment heureuse; un poids énorme glissait de ses épaules et elle hésitait sur ses pieds comme un enfant qui n'a pas encore appris à se tenir debout tout seul.[2]

For a moment Hedwige delights in the pure joy of freedom. She tells the man that now there is nothing left for her to give

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[1] Ibid., p. 13. [2] Ibid., p. 75.

him. He replies, however, that Gaston has not yet been surrendered and that if Hedwige really wants complete freedom, she must give him up also. Hedwige has barely uttered no when she wakes up.

Green writes in Le Malfaiteur's introduction that he considers this scene the most important in the novel.

> Sans doute le passage le plus significatif est-il celui où l'héroïne voit en rêve un homme qui essaie de la faire renoncer d'abord à tous ses biens terrestres, puis à un amour voué à l'échec; or cet homme est le Christ, mais elle ne le sait pas.[1]

When Hedwige chooses Gaston over Christ she is condemning herself to hell.

The following days are miserable for Hedwige. She meets only with discouragement in her attempts to see Gaston. One night after a harrowing experience during which he is almost caught by the police, Jean comes to Hedwige's room. He is desperately in need of communicating with someone and has chosen to talk with Hedwige who he feels will listen, sympathetically, although without comprehending, to his problems. Before he leaves Jean tells Hedwige that she must give up Gaston. When she asks why, he replies that he cannot tell her and adds that he suffers just as she. Hedwige, however is not deterred by this lecture in her attempts to seek out Gaston. But her incredible naïveté keeps her from learning the truth about her beloved. Ulrique's friend Arlette tells her Dolange is "pas pour nous,"[2] and then she adds "C'est

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[1] Ibid., p. II.

[2] Ibid., p. 164.

exactement comme s'il ne pouvait pas."[1] Hedwige gathers from this that Gaston is impotent and begins to love him even more ardently, feeling he is unjustly degraded by others for something he cannot help. A letter from Jean, who went to Naples the morning after his talk with Hedwige, warns her even more explicitly about Gaston. Félicie even tells her the bitter truth that Gaston is Jean's friend.

Hedwige disregards all these warnings and even writes Jean a letter begging him to urge Gaston to visit her. After the letter has been mailed, she learns that Jean is dead. Finally she succeeds in setting up a rendezvous with Gaston at Arlette's, although naturally she is unable to change him simply by speaking with him for a few moments. When she returns home that evening, she finally learns the truth about Gaston from Félicie. Gaston is a male prostitute, and Jean was only one of his many unfortunate clients. Hedwige now realizes that Gaston will never be able to love her. At the novel's close she goes to Raoul's room and kills herself with his revolver.

The thematic content the author planned for Le Malfaiteur is certainly not difficult to delineate. Green clearly states in the introduction that he wrote the novel to depict an everyday tragedy in modern life, and in the novel's first pages Jean's ruminations leave no doubt in the reader's mind that the tragedy to which Green alludes in the introduction

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[1] Ibid., p. 165.

is the life of a contemporary homosexual. However, because a novel's theme comes readily to the surface is certainly no guarantee that the impact of the theme is conveyed clearly and forcefully.

In Le Malfaiteur Green lessens the theme's impact by concentrating on the other characters at the expense of Jean's fullest development. Hedwige and Félicie both probably earn more sympathy from the average reader than does Jean.

By keeping Jean consistently out of the limelight, Green partially defeats the purpose he had in writing the novel as stated in the introduction. In the process of doing this, however, he has actually broadened the thematic scope of Le Malfaiteur. He has not shown merely the unhappy condition of one human being. Rather, the author has created in the Vasseur family a whole world in miniature with all of its inhabitants suffering from the same flaw: an inability to accept things as they are.

Hedwige cannot accept the fact that she has fallen in love with a homosexual who will never be able to return her love. She persists in believing in spite of what everyone has told her that Gaston will love her once he knows her well enough. At first, Hedwige appears to be a rather obtuse girl of incredible naïveté to a twentieth-century reader. However, as the novel progresses, it becomes clear that her credulity has not resulted from stupidity but from her desire

to keep from acknowledging the truth. When Félicie tells her about Gaston so plainly that she can no longer deny the truth, she realizes that she has known all along the true nature of Gaston.

> L'affreux discours de la couturière ne lui avait rien appris. Au fond d'elle-même, elle avait toujours eu le sentiment de cette vérité qui lui faisait peur et qu'elle croyait pouvoir anéantir rien qu'en fermant les yeux. Est-ce qu'Ulrique un jour, ne lui avait pas parlé de ces choses?[1]

The self is a prison to Hedwige. She is as deeply in need of communicating with someone else as is Jean.[2] Hedwige's life is utterly empty, and existence is consequently a veritable nightmare for her. She is incapable of gaining insight into the personality of another or of giving any sympathy or understanding. She believes that Ulrique has everything she could possibly want even though Ulrique has left home because of her hatred of her mother. Jean's protests that he suffers lead Hedwige to think he is exaggerating. She does not read, does not go to church, does not have any friends. Her one attempt to enter the world of others comes when she falls in love with Gaston. When she realizes that this endeavor has failed, she knows that nothing is now left for her except death.

Mme Pauque is a minor character but is illustrative of the many people who accept unquestioningly society's

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[1] Ibid., p. 257.

[2] John H. Meyer, "Familiar Territory," Renascence, X (Spring, 1958), 153.

multiple regulations on the propriety of behavior. She desires above all to help keep the Vasseur name from being stained by scandal. She has no regard for any individual human life. Once she overhears accidentally a conversation between the house servants and the baker and his son. One of them says "pour la vingtième fois, il est en voyage."[1] Mme Pauque instinctively senses that this scene contains the germ of a scandal. What interest could a baker and his son possibly have in a scholarly, reserved man like Jean. After the noise has ceased, Mme Pauque looks out the window and sees nothing. She then decides that nothing has happened.

> On pouvait croire que rien ne s'y était passé et Mme Pauque espérait que jamais personne ne lui parlerait de cette scène inexplicable, car elle était de celles qui préfèrent de ne pas savoir.[2]

Significantly, the idea of trying to help Jean out of his predicament does not even occur to her.

Mme Vasseur is equally as insensitive to the misfortunes of others as her sister. She thinks of Félicie as a mouse living in the wall and finds it difficult to believe that such a self-effacing woman actually has worries, pays taxes, suffers tooth aches, or goes to the theater. Mme Vasseur's most considerable worry is her genealogy. Her son-in-law Raoul comes from a very prominent family, and she is consequently quite fearful that he looks down upon her lineage.

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[1] Green, Le Malfaiteur, p. 139.

[2] Ibid., p. 140.

When Jean goes to Naples, she gives him the money. She does so, not to aid him is escaping the police, however, but so that he can draw up a chart of her Italian ancestors, among whom she hopes to find a nobleman.

While Mme Vasseur and Mme Pauque refuse to acknowledge that they are living with a homosexual, Félicie refuses to accept the fact that she has dared to rebel against her lowly status in the Vasseur home. In one memorable scene when Félicie encounters Ulrique on the stairs, she slaps her in the face. Ulrique is so stunned that she does not comprehend what has happened.

> D'une part, elle ressentait quelque chose à la joue, de l'autre il y avait cette absurde Félicie qui la regardait d'un air d'épouvante, mais entre ces deux faits, quel rapport? Elle hésita une seconde, effleura ses sourcils du bout des doigts, et sans dire un mot continua sa route.[1]

In the minds of both Ulrique and Félicie what has just occurred is impossible. An abject servant such as Félicie simply never slaps an arrogant and capricious mistress such as Ulrique. Consequently, both reason that since the slap could not have happened, it therefore did not happen.[2]

Jean alone of the characters in Le Malfaiteur accepts himself completely as he is. He is, of course, constrained by society to keep his secrets to himself. And this constraint helps to precipitate his downfall. Jean

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[1] Ibid., pp. 120-121.

[2] Meyer, "Familiar Territory," p. 153.

is obviously an honest man. He wants everyone to know about him, and in the novel's initial scene he is tempted to write a letter exposing himself. He tears up the letter, though, as he has already done with twenty others. This first scene illustrates that Jean realizes his inevitable total estrangement from the world of others if he continues as a homosexual. When he is almost apprehended by the police, he is forced to flee the country. His estrangement is now enforced not only by his family but also by the law. He is unable to live completely alone and elects suicide. The malefactor of the novel's title can certainly not refer to Jean, for he can only be labeled a victim.

Le Malfaiteur succeeds in depicting the plight of a man, basically far better and more honest than his judges, who is compelled to kill himself because society will not accept his decision to be a homosexual. However, this is only one of the two major thematic components in the novel. The other concerns the society which has condemned Jean. The members of that society, personnified by M. and Mme Vasseur, Mme Pauque, Ulrique, Raoul, Félicie, and Hedwige, are just as surely victims of the society they have constructed as is Jean. They are forced to lead sterile lives in order to maintain their particular status in society. Any impulse to help another in danger must be modified in accordance with what is acceptable to society. The malfaiteur is surely that rigid society which accepts no variance in human behavior

and which prevents people from responding to one another as naturally and impulsively as possible.

Many of the same minor themes presented in Green's earlier works are also found in abundance in this novel. Ineffectual revolt, inability to communicate with others, and the horror of everyday existence all play a part in Le Malfaiteur.

> The reader of Green's previous novels finds himself in familiar territory. There is the usual gray provincial setting, the uniformly oppressive and sinister atmosphere, the chorus of blighted and malevolent secondary personages, the boring and joyless solitude, the boundless and dreary selva oscura from which the only apparent means of escape are insanity or suicide, the desperate protagonists whose struggles to free themselves serve merely to sink them hopelessly deeper and deeper. In this world of the irredeemable, liberation from the detested prison of the self is at no time possible; effective communication or contact with someone or something outside and beyond that self is never more than a mirage. The sole reality, existence, is hideous, nightmarish; the only outcome, despair.[1]

However, even though the thematic material is not entirely new in this novel, its application to a homosexual and the society which has created his dilemma makes the book a considerable achievement for Green.

Chaque Homme dans sa nuit

The critical reaction to Green's most recent novel, Chaque Homme dans sa nuit (1961), has run the gamut. Marilyn G. Rose lauds it profusely: "This novel may be The Brothers Karamazov of Green's career. It is not only his most complex and allusive novel but also a refinement . . . of forme

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[1] Ibid., p. 153.

and fonds."[1] Henri Peyre labels it "one of the most gifted religious novels to have been written in France since Bernanos."[2] Thomas P. McDonnell, however, views it in negative terms. He considers the characterizations grossly deficient in verisimilitude and that "the real achievement of Each in his Darkness is graphic and kinetic--that is to say, it is a stylistic achievement."[3]

Chaque Homme dans sa nuit is not a novel which lends itself to ready interpretations. Religious themes, especially those concerning Jansenism, are quite evident in the book, but the author offers no answers to the questions it raises. Green is not in essence a religious writer of the same nature as Bernanos. He always puts religious doctrines to a test in his novels rather than affirming or denying them.[4] Consequently, the final decision on their validity is left to the reader.

Chaque Homme dans sa nuit commences with the introduction of the twenty-four-year-old protagonist, Wilfred Ingram. Wilfred has been summoned by his family to attend his dying uncle Horace who lives on a small country estate, probably located in the southern part of the United States. The estate,

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[1]Marilyn Gaddis Rose, "Chaque Homme dans sa nuit," French Review, XXXIV (January, 1961), 305.

[2]Henri Peyre, "Temptation of Wilfred," New York Times Book Review (December 10, 1961), 5.

[3]Thomas P. McDonnell, "More Darkness," Commonweal, LXXV (February 2, 1962), 499.

[4]Rose, "Chaque Homme dans sa nuit," p. 305.

Wormsloe, resembles both in its physical nature and gloomy aura the Mont-Cinère mansion.[1] Upon arriving at Wormsloe, Wilfred is ushered up to his tiny garret room, selected for him by his aunt. Wilfred is not particularly happy about this situation, but he is too timid to protest. An insight into Wilfred's character and the Jansenistic overtones of the book are seen at the very beginning. Much to Wilfred's annoyance, while eating his supper alone the night of his arrival, the Negro butler begins a conversation with him. In speaking of uncle Horace the Negro intimates that he is lost. Wilfred then inquires about his own chances for salvation.

> --Quand vous parlez aux gens, commença-t-il, vous avez quelquefois l'impression qu'ils sont sauvés ou perdus?
> Une question aussi absurde, il n'aurait jamais osé la formuler devant un homme de race blanche, mais à ses yeux, tous les nègres étaient un peu sorciers, sorciers chrétiens. Dans cette longue salle mal éclairée où les ombres basculaient sur les murs, on pouvait dire certaines choses.
> --Quand ils sont sauvés, cela se devine quelquefois, fit le noir.
> Leurs regards se croisèrent. Wilfred n'osa poser une question que lui brûlait les lèvres.
> --Je sais bien à quoi vous pensez, fit le domestique en souriant. N'ayez pas peur. Vous, vous n'ayez rien à craindre.[2]

This passage reveals effectively that Wilfred is saved, that he has been chosen to be among the elite, a Jansenistic theme which runs throughout the novel. That evening Wilfred becomes very melancholy as a result of the butler's verdict on his

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[1] Ibid., p. 306.

[2] Julien Green, Chaque Homme dans sa nuit (Paris: Plon, 1960), p. 29.

salvation, for Wilfred is quite aware of the affairs he has had with many different girls for whom he had no real feeling, and he does not wish to be considered pure.

When Uncle Horace is at death's door, he finally calls Wilfred in and gives him several negotiable stocks and bonds and then asks Wilfred to pray for him. Embarrassed, Wilfred takes a drink first and then mutters a few meaningless phrases.

Upon returning to the city and the shabby little room where he lives, Wilfred is too timid to negotiate his inheritance. Instead he continues his work selling men's shirts.

The novel then recounts several of his adventures with his various acquaintances: Phoebé, Angus, Freddie, Tommy, and Max. Phoebé Knight, the most important of his friends in Wilfred's mind, is the young, innocent wife of his cousin James whom he met at Uncle Horace's. Wilfred falls in love with Phoebé and sends her love letters. When James finds out Wilfred's desires, he does not become angry but instead assumes the role of judge and God. Wilfred's love for Phoebé is never consummated, but he does succeed in awakening her sensuality, which, of course, makes her dissatisfied with her husband who is approaching old age and also suffers from a serious illness.

Wilfred's cousin Angus is a homosexual. Unwittingly, Wilfred almost encourages him at first. He realizes the truth about Angus only after he has read a letter from his

cousin and suddenly realizes that this is the first love letter he has ever received.

When Freddie, an acquaintance of Wilfred at the store, tells him he has been amorous with a girl for the first time, Wilfred cautions him about syphilis. Freddie is so frightened he attempts to commit suicide and dies later in a hospital after Wilfred has baptized him.

Another friend, Tommy, led a quiet, model Catholic life until Wilfred teased him one night, telling him of the many pleasures he was missing. Tommy took this advise to heart and began to lead a life of complete dissipation.

Still another friend, Max, is on the verge of insanity. Once when Wilfred was in a hurry because he had a dinner engagement with Phoebé and James, he brushed off Max rather brusquely. Later he came to apologize, but Max would not accept the apology. He instead told Wilfred of his former stays in a mental institution and how he had once contemplated killing Wilfred. Wilfred tries to reason with Max, but Max forces him to leave his room. Wilfred is then afraid to leave the mysterious house where Max lives and wanders up and down the stairs seeking a place to hide. As he is finally getting ready to leave, Max shoots him. He is immediately repentant and implores Wilfred to forgive him. Before Wilfred lapses into unconsciousness, he forgives him. When he dies shortly afterwards, there is a special radiance in his face, showing that the spirit has finally entered his body.

The thematic content of Chaque Homme dans sa nuit revolves around a subject already broached in one way or another in most of Green's other novels: the conflict between the flesh and the spirit. Unlike Moïra's Joseph Day, whose body is a hindrance to his faith, Wilfred Ingram's faith is a hindrance to his body. Wilfred is unable to dislodge his firm convictions in Catholicism and simultaneously incapable of ceasing to "faire le mal" as he words it. More than any of Green's characters, he is pulled with equal force by both the flesh and the spirit. Wilfred cannot imagine a sin comparable with that of missing mass on Sunday; however, when he is supposedly praying at mass, he cannot keep himself from assessing the women seated near him. Wilfred's nature expends love copiously on humanity in general. He avows to Max: "Je n'ai jamais eu d'ennemi de ma vie."[1] But while Wilfred's spirit acts on principles of love, his body acts from sheer physical desires and is completely untouched by the love within his spirit. He has, for example, decided never to see a girl more than twice in order to avoid complications. Wilfred is also capable of pretending to be genuinely interested in a girl when in reality his only purpose is to seduce her. When Wilfred first realizes that he is desirous of Phoebé, he knows that he has committed the sin of adultery merely by consciously wanting her according to Catholic dogma. His muddled thinking occa-

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[1] Ibid., p. 389.

sioned by his attraction to both flesh and spirit is illustrated in the following passage:

> Est-ce qu'on ne pouvait pas s'empêcher d'être catholique? Comment s'y prenait-on pour se débarrasser de la foi? Ses deux poings se portèrent à ses yeux. Il aurait crié d'horreur. Avait-il tort de croire que cette passion pour une femme mariée lui venait du diable? On lui avait appris que l'amour venait de Dieu. Or il se serait tué pour Phoebé, pour lui sauver la vie, par exemple. Alors? Etait-ce sa faute s'il l'avait rencontrée? Lui avait-il demandé de lui baiser la joue?[1]

Wilfred is both puzzled and angered by his situation. He cannot rid himself of his firm belief in Christianity and as if to taunt him God seems intent upon placing temptations before him.

Moïra shows the influence of Green's interest in Jansenism to a certain extent, but Chaque Homme dans sa nuit is by far the novel most clearly marked by a distinctively Jansenistic character. In this work Green has illustrated through symbolism certain Jansenist beliefs such as the depravity of man, unconditional election, and the perseverance of saints.[2] Wilfred illustrates the depravity of mankind because of his licentious nature and the fact that he is too weak-willed to cease having affairs with girls although that is precisely what he basically wishes to do. He also illustrates the unconditional election of certain people. Wilfred has faith, and he is also predestined to be saved. Throughout the novel the tenacity of his faith supports the old Negro's

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[1] Ibid., p. 219.

[2] M. G. Rose, "The Debate once more," Renascence, XIII (Summer, 1961), 220.

suggestion that Wilfred is predestined to be saved. He may also save those who put their trust in him, as is the case with the unfortunate Freddie. "Ce qui compte, c'est ce qu'il est, non ce qu'il fait. Parce qu'il croit, il est sauvé, parce qu'il croit, il peut sauver ceux qui ont confiance en lui."[1] Joseph Day also had genuine faith, but, as Praileau guessed, he was lost, he was a murderer. Joseph condemned the body and life. The most evil thing to him was to be born. He believed in God but did not love him.

The most salient Jansenist feature of Chaque Homme dans sa nuit is the reiteration of the theme of unconditional election. Wilfred is never dubious at any time of his election to heaven. He goes to confession and is truly sorry for his sins; however, he is never able to keep his resolutions to refrain from further sin. "Wilfred n'éprouvait aucun repentir de ses fautes. Bien au contraire il était sûr qu'il en commettrait d'autres du même genre, beaucoup d'autres. Cela n'avait rien à faire avec la foi."[2] The novel's other characters are equally convinced of his election. Max is attracted to Wilfred when he notices that he is the only member of the congregation who does not receive communion one Sunday. He recognizes that this display of humility is surely an indication of deep and genuine faith.

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[1]Philippe Sénart, "Julien Green," Table Ronde, No. 214 (1965), 52.

[2]Green, Chaque Homme dans sa nuit, pp. 141-142.

Max says: "Je vois là une marque de respect, un effacement, enfin quelque chose de plus religieux que certains gestes que nous faisons sans y croire."[1] James Knight also acknowledges, although not directly, that Wilfred is one of the elect. He states to Wilfred: "Si jamais vous perdiez la foi, vous vous feriez sauter la cervelle."[2] Later he says: "Vous et moi, nous sommes de la même espèce. Nous ne pouvons pas nous passer de la foi. Sans elle, rien n'a de sens. Sans elle, il n'y a qu'un grand trou noir au bout de la vie."[3] Freddie does not verbalize his belief in Wilfred's election as such, but when Wilfred asks him if he believes in Christ's divinity, his reply that "Je le crois, je crois tout ce que tu crois"[4] shows that he is intuitively attracted to Wilfred because he is one of the elect. Angus is simply astonished that Wilfred's faith has triumphed over his carnal nature.

> J'ai l'habitude des visages d'hommes, surtout des hommes de ton âge. Tu es dévoré de passions, mais tu as malgré tout gardé la foi. C'est cela qui m'étonne et que je t'envie. En toi, la foi est plus forte que le reste.[5]

The novel's title accurately describes Wilfred's state while he is alive. He knows that he is destined to be saved, but this knowledge does not in itself prevent his terrestrial life from being a veritable hell. His body turns his life into a nightmare, and he experiences no joy in simply

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[1] Ibid., p. 145. [2] Ibid., p. 237. [3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 276. [5] Ibid., p. 304.

living. He is aloof and detached from the world in which he lives and is never able to establish with any of his numerous acquaintances a meaningful, truly empathetic relationship.

Only in the novel's last pages does a theme connected with Victor Hugo's complete verse, "Chaque homme dans sa nuit s'en va vers sa lumière,"emerge. Immediately after receiving the sacrament of extreme unction, the priest in attendance noticed a special radiance. After some persuasion he succeeds in getting Knight to view the body. Knight confesses to Angus at the funeral:

> Eh bien, mon ami, je ne suis pas homme à ceder trop vite à ses émotions. Je me méfie des émotions. Quand je me suis retrouvé dans cette petite chambre, j'ai saisi des deux mains le barreau du lit pour être sûr de me tenir droit. J'ai vécu de longues années. Je n'ai pas encore vu sur le visage d'un être humain une expression de bonheur comparable à celle qui éclairait les traits de Wilfred. Appliqué à lui, le mot de mort n'avait aucun sens. Il vivait, il vivait! ... Je ne pouvais détacher les yeux de Wilfred. On aurait dit qu'il souriait de ma surprise et qu'il connaissait des choses secrètes qu'il gardait pour lui. C'était comme s'il nous avait joué un tour en s'en allant, un tour de jeune garçon, et malgré ses paupières closes, il semblait nous observer de loin, comme d'une région de lumière.[1]

Only after his death does Wilfred's spirit succeed in manifesting itself over his body.

The special radiance that Wilfred's body attains after his death is never fully or concretely explained. The possible explanation that it arose as a result of the sacrament of extreme unction is surely much too simplistic. One critic has advanced the theory that Wilfred acts as a divine

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[1] Ibid., pp. 403-404.

agent.

> Are we to assume that Wilfred is a divine agent, providing each character a Purgatory? Horace and James do have their faith revitalized. Angus, a superior man, is humbled. Freddie asks Wilfred to baptise him. Tommy's open sobbing at the funeral may indicate repentance. His death puts Phoebé into a state of shock. And Max, incoherent, will not accept life.[1]

Perhaps the radiance is a natural result of the shedding of this "divine agent's" corporeal nature. Another possible explanation is that because Wilfred was capable of forgiving Max for shooting him, he finally gained peace in both his spirit and his body. His cousin James once said that the real scandal of Christianity resulted when Judas failed to request Christ's forgiveness and to console him when he was dying on the cross. It is, therefore, significant that after Wilfred has been shot, he still manages to be magnanimous enough to forgive his murderer.[2] Wilfred's essentially good nature is demonstrated by this act of forgiveness.

The impact of any novel's theme is of necessity either heightened or lessened to some degree by the stylistic finesse of the author. In Chaque Homme dans sa nuit Green has created the best minor characters of his career. Angus, Knight, Freddie, Tommy, Phoebé, and Max are all depicted in a realistic and exacting manner. Since this novel is confined to the point of view of third person protagonist subject until Wilfred's death, none of these minor characters is portrayed in a direct light

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[1]Rose, "The Debate once more," p. 221.

[2]Rose, "The Production of Julien Green," p. 305.

except in the very last pages of the novel. The result of this technique is that the minor characters, all of whom are extraordinary personages who perform or have performed unusual exploits, never diminish in the slightest the reader's interest and identification with the hero. Homosexuality, suicide, and insanity are usually portrayed with such emphasis that they become the main events of a novel, but Green has subordinated them and made them not only interesting side events but also relevant to Wilfred's role as one of God's elect.

But while the author's successful subordination of numerous minor characters reflects the work of an experienced and mature artist, the novel nevertheless has one major stylistic fault: lack of credibility. Wilfred attracts people in droves because of his charm, but what this charm consists of is never adequately explained. The closest Green comes to analyzing the cause of this mysterious charm is by saying that it cannot be explained. One day a woman says to Wilfred: "Tu es irrésistible et on se demande pourquoi."[1] One certainly does wonder why Wilfred is so irresistible as he is gruff, reserved, and concerned only with himself. A typical incident Green uses to illustrate this enigmatic charm concerns a country boy who has come to the city in order to buy some shirts for his wedding. When Wilfred helps him with his order, he is immediately overcome by the haberdasher's

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[1]Green, Chaque Homme dans sa nuit, p. 164.

charm and wants to know if he can write to him. A few months later Wilfred receives a letter informing him that the bumpkin has named his new son after him.

Credibility is further strained by the constant use of religious dialogue. It seems that Wilfred's charm serves to attract only those who are intensely interested in religion. It is unlikely that such "repetitive use of the term croyant has any relevance to a conversation that we are likely to hear in the United States."[1]

The novel's final impact is ambiguous. It is difficult to discern whether Green is taking the side of the Jansenists or not. Wilfred's body turns his life into a nightmare. His spirit is evidenced only after his death, and he experiences no joy in simply living. The fact that the spirit rejects the body completely indicates a criticism of God's plan.[2]

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[1]McDonnell, "More Darkness," p. 499.

[2]Rose, "Chaque Homme dans sa nuit," p. 305.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

A preliminary reading of any of Julien Green's novels generally gives the reader the impression that the author's strong and versatile descriptive powers represent his greatest talent. Since the author also tends to focus his works on unusually macabre or bizarre bases, such as murder, schizoidism, and insanity, the majority of his readers come unfortunately to the hasty conclusion that Green is only a good storyteller. Even usually astute critics seem frequently to be so absorbed by the author's fascinating plots that they fail to extract the substance underneath the dross. Time and again articles in supposedly scholarly journals comment on his consummate skill in character and plot creation, add a few words on the brooding, pessimistic atmosphere that seems to pervade his novels, but say nothing about the ideas which populate Green's fiction.

Green's talent lies predominantly in two areas: plot construction and a rare understanding of the hidden recesses of the human mind. Because he possesses the ability to understand the mechanism that makes some men murderers and others

saints, his fiction is replete with ideas well worth considerable attention and study.

In his first three novels, so aptly referred to as the trilogy of horror, the author has elected to develop their thematic content principally through the depiction of the motivations and emotions of the central characters. For example, in Adrienne Mesurat the idea that stultifying provincialism can destroy an individual's mental balance is presented in the personage of the heroine. There is, of course, nothing innovative in this as a method of presenting theme. Furthermore, in these first novels Green makes a serious mistake in attempting to convey the main theme through the presentation of a single emotion in only one or two characters at the most. Emily and her mother are dominated by avarice in Mont-Cinère, while in Léviathan Guéret is ruled by lust; and Adrienne's progress on the road to dementia is the only aspect of her personality depicted. Sémolué states: "La psychologie chez lui, complexe plus que nuancée, fait-elle souvent songer à un univers plus pictural que littéraire. Ses personnages sont des corps et des passions plus que des caractères."[1] Because Green emphasizes to such an extent one particular emotion or passion in the protagonists in each of these initial novels, the characters inevitably appear out of proportion and consequently slightly unrealistic. And since the characters do not appear realistic, the passions

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[1]Jean Sémolué, "Les Constantes de Julien Green," Esprit, No. 10 (1963), 438.

they embody and the thematic content they convey also fail to give the impression of plausibility.

The underlying theme in Mont-Cinère, Adrienne Mesurat, and Léviathan is that of man's estrangement. In none of the works does a human being communicate effectively with another. As Green suggests no curative measures, one is left with the impression that the Greenien world is a hopeless morass of despair and violence with the possibility of effective revolt utterly absent.

Green's first three novels are all marked by a rather unrefined psychology, an unpolished style, and a paucity of suggestion and symbolism. They reveal that the author was young and wrote the novels hurriedly. Through the actions of the characters the writer demonstrates his thesis that the revolt against the bitter loneliness of life is futile. In general, the thoughts and ideas of the protagonists pertain only to mundane matters of no real relevance to the novels' thematic development. While Emily's thoughts on such relatively inconsequential matters as her reasons for marrying Frank are carefully detailed, her two acts that actually demonstrate a central theme in the novel, the attempt to kill Frank's baby and the burning of Mont-Cinère, are left totally unexplained. The author leaves no doubt, of course, that her emotional imbalance is severe, but since she is articulate in regard to all her other actions it is difficult to imagine that she would suddenly commit such

acts without thinking about them at all.

Green's next five novels, Epaves, Le Visionnaire, Minuit, Varouna, and Si J'étais vous, reveal that the author is beginning to learn the rudiments of polishing both his style and his ideas. He does not delineate theme solely through the characters' actions but through both their actions and their ideas.

The protagonists of this group of novels do not resort to the expedients of murder or suicide to express their disappointment in the world. If Le Visionnaire had been written at an earlier stage in his career, the author would probably have shown Manuel committing suicide as an expression of his frustrated love and his boredom with everyday life. However, Green's skill in Le Visionnaire has progressed to the point where he realizes that the action of suicide per se says little about the human condition. The imaginary world Manuel constructs is a much more realistic view of the manner in which most persons accept the frustrations of life and consequently much more effective than suicide or murder would have been as a means of conveying theme to the reader. By portraying Manuel's reaction to continued frustrations and including some of his ideas on love and death rather than bringing his life to an abrupt end as was the case in Mont-Cinère, Green shows that he is becoming a mature artist.

The most notable difference in thematic content be-

tween his initial trilogy and the novels of his middle period is that the latter reflect a dim hope, if not for man's happiness, at least for an acceptance of his role in life. One character, Jeanne in Varouna, is completely happy, and Philippe realizes at the end of Epaves that he has a fair chance of achieving happiness. Manuel is able to accept his role in life with tranquillity and while Elisabeth and Serge in Minuit are killed, their suicide is instigated, not in despair, but in the hope of escaping to a better way of life. Only Fabien in Si J'étais vous submits to death voluntarily as a means of escaping life's monotony.

The last three novels of Green's literary career appear on the surface to indicate that he is returning to his old standbys of blood and gore. It is certainly true that Moïra, Chaque Homme dans sa nuit, and Le Malfaiteur all include either murder or suicide and that each novel hosts a motley assortment of severely mentally disturbed, probably psychotic, characters. In his final three novels, however, the author does not rely on the portrayal of murder or violence in order to communicate to the reader the nature of the characters' mental stability. These three novels develop theme through the careful psychological delineation of the central characters' personalities, and their actions serve only as evidence that the novelist has been correct in his assessment of his characters.

Le Malfaiteur is by far the most purposefully didactic

of Green's works. The novel was written in a direct attempt to illustrate the condition of the homosexual. It is probably indicative of Green's compassion for humanity in general that Le Malfaiteur is more successful in inducing the reader to pity the masses rather than the homosexual. While consciously wishing to portray the unhappiness of the homosexual Green has, no doubt unconsciously, shown that the one who truly deserves pity is the common man who, because of his stupidity, leads a life filled with customs and rituals which he performs solely because society tells him he must. Le Malfaiteur's two characters who meet a tragic end are at least capable of choosing the type of life they themselves wish to live. Violence is only a backdrop in this novel; the themes are shown through the careful psychological delineation of the numerous members of the Vasseur family.

Green's technique in thematic development reaches its peak in Moïra. Only in this novel is he able to effect a harmonizing synthesis of symbolism, suggestion, action, and character development as elements contributing to thematic growth. This work centers on the ancient debate between the flesh and the spirit with the repressive influence of puritanism playing a major role. But the fact that the author does not limit himself to one particular emotional or intellectual segment of the debate is a mark of the novelist's maturity. By the subtle interplay of the changing seasons, the careful selection of conversations and trivial

incidents, and the portrayal of Joseph's growth in his ability to reason, Green succeeds in writing a novel that represents an artistic whole in its thematic emphasis.

Chaque Homme dans sa nuit is also focused on the debate between the flesh and the spirit. Wilfred is constantly torn between good and evil. However, this novel lacks the forceful impact contained in Moïra. By emphasizing Jansenist tenets to such an extent in Chaque Homme dans sa nuit, Green loses touch with the majority of his readers. The failure to explain why the protagonist exerts such a charismatic effect on the people he comes into contact with, the continual insertion of references to Jansenism, and the basic ambiguity of meaning make this novel inferior in its effect and thematic technique to Moïra.

Because Julien Green has chosen to present his themes through the psychological development of an array of gloomy and morbid characters with severe mental disturbances, he has made an important contribution to the novel of psychology. His greatest achievement as an artist has been in showing that the problems of mentally ill persons are not beyond the pale of comprehension but significant and vitally important to the average man.

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