

Graham

Greene

The
Lawless
Roads



PENGUIN BOOKS

THE LAWLESS ROADS

Graham Greene was born in 1904 and educated at Berkhamsted School, where his father was the headmaster. On coming down from Balliol College, Oxford, where he published a book of verse, he worked for three years as a sub-editor on *The Times*. He established his reputation with his fourth novel, *Stamboul Train*. In 1935 he made a journey across Liberia, described in *Journey Without Maps*, and on his return was appointed film critic of the *Spectator*. In 1926 he had been received into the Roman Catholic Church and was commissioned to visit Mexico in 1938, and report on the religious persecution there. As a result he wrote *The Lawless Roads* and, later, *The Power and the Glory*.

Brighton Rock was published in 1938, and in 1940 he became literary editor of the *Spectator*. The next year he undertook work for the Foreign Office and was sent out to Sierra Leone in 1941-3. One of his major post-war novels, *The Heart of the Matter*, is set in West Africa and is considered by many to be his finest book. This was followed by *The End of the Affair*, *The Quiet American*, a story set in Vietnam, *Our Man in Havana*, and *A Burnt-Out Case*. *The Comedians* and twelve other novels have been filmed, plus two of his short stories, and *The Third Man* was written as a film treatment. Among his most recent publications are *Travels With My Aunt*, his long awaited autobiography *A Sort of Life*, *The Pleasure Dome*, *Collected Stories* and *The Honorary Consul* (1973).

In all, Graham Greene has written some thirty novels, many of which have been published in Penguins, 'entertainments', plays, children's books, travel books, and collections of essays and short stories. He was made a Companion of Honour in 1966.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

THIS is the personal impression of a small part of Mexico at a particular time, the spring of 1938. Time proved the author wrong in at least one of his conclusions – the religious apathy in Tabasco was more apparent than real. A month after the author left Villahermosa, the capital, peasants tried to put up an altar in a ruined church. Bloodshed and an appeal to the Federal Government followed, with the result that the Bishop of Tabasco was allowed to return to his diocese, the first resident bishop for fourteen years. There remains Chiapas . . .

NOTE TO THIRD EDITION

ELEVEN years have passed since this book was written, and it may seem now that the author dwells too much on a religious situation liable to change at the expense of more permanent sides of Mexican life. My excuse must be that I was commissioned to write a book on the religious situation, not on folklore or architecture or the paintings of Rivera.

Those interested may find on page 106 and the succeeding pages the source of my story, *The Power and the Glory*.

1950

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Acknowledgements are due to Messrs Longmans
Green & Co. for the use of the map.

What made the change? The hills and towers
Stand otherwise than they should stand,
And without fear the lawless roads
Ran wrong through all the land.

Edwin Muir

Man's like the earth, his hair like grasse is grown,
His veins the rivers are, his heart the stone.

Wit's Recreations (1640)

To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various history, the many races of man, their starts, their fortunes, their mutual alienation, their conflicts; and then their ways, habits, governments, forms of worship; their enterprise, their aimless courses, their random achievements and requirements, the impotent conclusion of long-standing facts, the tokens, so faint and broken, of a superintending design, the blind evolution of what turn out to be great powers or truth, the progress of things, as if from unreasoning elements, not towards final causes, the greatness and littleness of man, his far-reaching aims, his short duration, the curtain hung over his futurity, the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions, the dreary hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race, so fearfully yet exactly described in the Apostle's words, 'having no hope, and without God in the world' – all this is a vision to dizzy and appal; and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution.

What shall be said to this heart-piercing, reason-bewildering fact? I can only answer, that either there is no Creator, or this living society of men is in a true sense discarded from His presence . . . *if* there be a God, *since* there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity.

Cardinal Newman

MEXICO



Villa

Oaxaca



Tuxtla

P
A
C
I
F
I
C
O
C
H





Frntera

CHIAPAS

Hermosa

Salto de Agua

Palenque

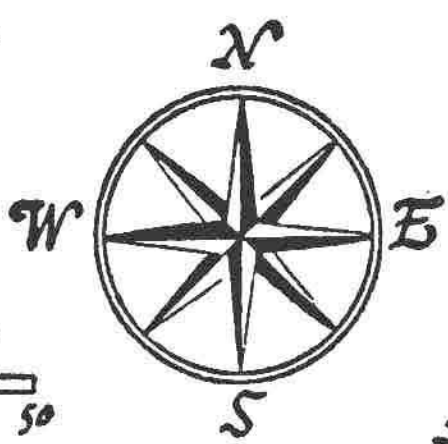
Yajalon

Cancuc

Las Casas

GUATEMALA

CHIAPAS



English Miles

0 10 20 30 40 50

ALIA

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PROLOGUE

I

The Anarchists

I WAS, I suppose, thirteen years old. Otherwise why should I have been there – in secret – on the dark croquet lawn? I could hear the rabbit moving behind me, munching the grass in his hutch; an immense building with small windows, rather like Keble College, bounded the lawn. It was the school; from somewhere behind it, from across the quad, came a faint sound of music: Saturday night, the school orchestra was playing Mendelssohn. I was alone in mournful happiness in the dark.

Two countries just here lay side by side. From the croquet lawn, from the raspberry canes, from the greenhouse and the tennis lawn you could always see – dominatingly – the great square Victorian buildings of garish brick: they looked down like skyscrapers on a small green countryside where the fruit trees grew and the rabbits munched. You had to step carefully: the border was close beside your gravel path. From my mother's bedroom window – where she had borne the youngest of us to the sound of school chatter and the disciplinary bell – you looked straight down into the quad, where the hall and the chapel and the classrooms stood. If you pushed open a green baize door in a passage by my father's study, you entered another passage deceptively similar, but none the less you were on alien ground. There would be a slight smell of iodine from the matron's room, of damp towels from the changing rooms, of ink everywhere. Shut the door behind you again, and the world smelt differently: books and fruit and eau-de-Cologne.

One was an inhabitant of both countries: on Saturday and Sunday afternoons of one side of the baize door, the rest of the week of the other. How can life on a border be other than restless? You are pulled by different ties of hate and love. For

hate is quite as powerful a tie: it demands allegiance. In the land of the skyscrapers, of stone stairs and cracked bells ringing early, one was aware of fear and hate, a kind of lawlessness – appalling cruelties could be practised without a second thought; one met for the first time characters, adult and adolescent, who bore about them the genuine quality of evil. There was Collifax, who practised torments with dividers; Mr Cranden with three grim chins, a dusty gown, a kind of demoniac sensuality; from these heights evil declined towards Parlow, whose desk was filled with minute photographs – advertisements of art photos. Hell lay about them in their infancy.

There lay the horror and the fascination. One escaped surreptitiously for an hour at a time: unknown to frontier guards, one stood on the wrong side of the border looking back – one should have been listening to Mendelssohn, but instead one heard the rabbit restlessly cropping near the croquet hoops. It was an hour of release – and also an hour of prayer. One became aware of God with an intensity – time hung suspended – music lay on the air; anything might happen before it became necessary to join the crowd across the border. There was no inevitability anywhere . . . faith was almost great enough to move mountains . . . the great buildings rocked in the darkness.

And so faith came to one – shapelessly, without dogma, a presence above a croquet lawn, something associated with violence, cruelty, evil across the way. One began to believe in heaven because one believed in hell, but for a long while it was only hell one could picture with a certain intimacy – the pitchpine partitions of dormitories where everybody was never quiet at the same time; lavatories without locks: ‘There, by reason of the great number of the damned, the prisoners are heaped together in their awful prison . . .’; walks in pairs up the suburban roads; no solitude anywhere, at any time. The Anglican Church could not supply the same intimate symbols for heaven; only a big brass eagle, an organ voluntary, ‘Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing’, the quiet croquet lawn where one had no business, the rabbit, and the distant music.

Those were primary symbols; life later altered them; in a midland city, riding on trams in winter past the Gothic hotel, the super-cinema, the sooty newspaper office where one worked at night, passing the single professional prostitute trying to keep the circulation going under the blue and powdered skin, one began slowly, painfully, reluctantly, to populate heaven. The Mother of God took the place of the brass eagle: one began to have a dim conception of the appalling mysteries of love moving through a ravaged world – the Curé d’Ars admitting to his mind all the impurity of a province, Péguy challenging God in the cause of the damned. It remained something one associated with misery, violence, evil, ‘all the torments and agonies’, Rilke wrote, ‘wrought on scaffolds, in torture chambers, mad-houses, operating theatres, underneath vaults of bridges in late autumn . . .’

Vaults of bridges: I think of a great metal bridge by the railway station of my old home, a sense of grit and the long reverberation of plates as the trains went by overhead and the nursemaids pushed their charges on past the ruined castle, the watercress beds, towards the common, past the shuttered private entrance which the local lord had not used for a generation. It was a place without law – I felt that even then, obscurely: no one really was responsible for anyone else. Only a few walls were left of the castle Chaucer had helped to build; the lord’s house had been sold to politicians. I remember the small sunk almshouses by the canal and a man running furiously into one of them – I was with my nurse – he looked angry about something: he was going to cut his throat with a knife if he could get away from his neighbours, ‘having no hope, and without God in the world.’

I returned to the little town a while ago – it was Sunday evening and the bells were jangling; small groups of youths hovered round the traffic lights, while the Irish servant girls crept out of back doors in the early dark. They were ‘Romans’, but they were impertinent to the priest if he met them in the high street away from the small, too new Catholic church in one of the red-brick villaed streets above the valley. They couldn’t be kept in at night. They would return with the milk in a stranger’s car. The youths with smarmed and scented

hair and bitten cigarettes greeted them by the traffic lights with careless roughness. There were so many fish in the sea ... sexual experience had come to them too early and too easily.

A boy of twenty and a girl of fifteen had been found headless on the railway line. They had lain down together with their necks on the rails. She was expecting a child – her second. Her first had been born when she was thirteen, and, though that wasn't mentioned at the inquest, her parents had been unable to fix responsibility among fourteen youths. The coroner suggested there was nothing to justify a verdict of 'unsound mind'. That was warranted only where pain and distress had been intense, but here – 'The only suggestion here,' he said, 'is that the girl might have been going to have a baby. It appears to be a case where that stage was reached through sheer lack of courage.'

A juror asked. 'Did the father and mother of the girl make any disturbance at the thought that there was going to be another baby?'

The father, 'No, we spoke to her calmly.'

A juror, 'It had no effect on her?'

The father, 'Yes, she dropped her head and started crying.'

I walked down towards my old home, down the dim drab high street, between the estate agents', the two cinemas, the cafés; there existed still faint signs of the old market town – there was a crusader's helmet in the church. People are made by places, I thought; I called this 'home', and sentiment moved in the winter evening, but it had no real hold. Smoke waved in the sky behind the Tudor Café and showed the 8.52 was in. You couldn't live in a place like this – it was somewhere to which you returned for sleep and rissoles by the 6.50 or the 7.25; people had lived here once and died with their feet crossed to show they had returned from a crusade, but now.... Yellowing faces peered out of the photographer's window, through the diamonded Elizabethan pane – a genuine pane, but you couldn't believe it because of the Tudor Café across the street. I saw a face I knew in a wedding group, but it had been taken ten years before – there was something *démodé* about the waistcoat. With a train every hour to town there wasn't much reason to be photographed here – except,