

A Study of Graham Greene

The Pinkies (II)

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IV

This section is a continuation of "The Pinkies(I)."¹⁾ The point of this chapter is to examine the behaviour and motives of Pinkie and Peter Pan and to demonstrate the meaning behind and similarities between these two characters. Greene explained, "The Pinkies are the real Peter Pans."²⁾ Certainly there are many superficial differences between Pinkie and Peter Pan: the former is a young rogue running a mob in Brighton, England, and the latter is an adventurous boy in the imaginary island, Neverland. So the similarities lie in their figuration and can be clarified by examining components of their personalities.

One of the similarities between Pinkie and Peter Pan is a sense of alienation, the feeling of being excluded from their parents and abandoned to their forlorn field. They have the same feelings of loneliness, hate, and disgust for the world around them, especially for grown-ups. This disgust originates in a childhood trauma, and as Greene has told: "With Raven and Pinkie the wound never heals."³⁾ Because their minds are too young to comprehend grown-ups and the reality of the world, they draw lopsided, incomplete conclusions peculiar to youth.

Although Peter Pan runs away because he overhears his parents talking about what he was to be when he became a man,⁴⁾ he nevertheless cherishes resentment against his mother who "abandoned" him to his lonely depression, closing the windows on him who came back after playing about at his will. Yet he still longs to be loved and accepted. His ambivalent feeling to grown-ups, especially to mothers explains his flights to the nursery windows. In fact, Peter's wish to take an acting mother, Wendy, to Neverland is a main motive moving him under through the whole story of

adventures.

Like Peter Pan, Pinkie felt loneliness and disgust against grown-ups, which derived from his feeling of being abandoned by his parents during their love making. Greene described Pinkie as a boy who had no dreams and whose sleep was functional.⁵⁾ But Greene employed a dream sequence once, after Pinkie's marriage to Rose, to emphasize that he has never gotten over the painful memory of his parents, sexual exclusivity, and that Pinkie's sense of freedom from his obsession with sex and grown-up men was temporary and false. He was never to understand what love and sex mean and was never to believe that love can bring peace and be eternal. The following is the last part of his dream, watching his parents' Saturday night ritual of sex.

He was filled with hatred, disgust, loneliness: he was completely abandoned: he had no share in their thoughts - for the space of a few minutes he was dead, he was like a soul in purgatory watching the shameless act of a beloved person.⁶⁾

This dream shows the mould of Pinkie, a young boy who was given only hatred, disgust, loneliness by his parents. He was deprived of energies to grow up and was to feel only repugnance against love between man and woman. He feels nothing but disgust about love, which resulted in his "horrifying ignorance"⁷⁾ and his repulsion against sex; "The word 'fun' shook the Boy like malaria."⁸⁾ This is the same ignorance as Peter Pan, who doesn't know what kiss means.⁹⁾

The memory of his painful experience indicates that his family life was not a simple, happy, and peaceful one consisting of ordinary, everyday life. His obsession with "watching the shameless act of a beloved person" especially echoes Peter Pan's deep ambivalence to mothers. When Peter Pan had to give up taking Wendy to Neverland again, he cries "with a frightful sneer at the law of nature," "we don't want any silly mothers."¹⁰⁾ In fact, he sneers

at natural human life in general. That is, he rejects not only a family life of parents and children but also the ordinary lives of good citizens being born, growing up, getting old and dying with the course of time. When Wendy became a grown woman who had forgotten how to fly, Peter is drawn as "the tragic boy" who "gave a cry of pain"¹¹⁾ to see a tall beautiful married woman. Peter has "no sense of time."¹²⁾ In this meaning Peter Pan deviates from ordinary life of everyman into the dehumanized field of eternal youth.

Pinkie also appears as an outlaw living apart from an ordinary citizen life or an ordinary family life. "As a pitiable lost boy"¹³⁾ he strayed and deviated into the underworld of rogues, into the protection of the mob leader, Kite, his acting father. After Kite's death Pinkie assumes the leadership of a mob, a role which magnifies his heartlessness. In fact, he is described as a boy whose eyes have "an effect of heartlessness like an old man's in which human feeling has died."¹⁴⁾ "He couldn't see through other people's eyes, or feel with their nerves."¹⁵⁾ His heartlessness, especially manifests itself in the cruel murder of Spicer, one of his men. "The word murder conveyed no more to him than the word 'box', 'collar', 'giraff'."¹⁶⁾ Pinkie doesn't recognize what murder means, what death really is to human beings. Therefore, he can be cruel and callous enough to induce his good wife, Rose, to a false double suicide pact, and to carry it out, searching only for his selfish security.

Heartlessness is one of the links between Pinkie and Peter Pan. Originally heartlessness is one of the conditions that qualify children who can fly to Neverland with Peter Pan.¹⁷⁾ And Peter Pan typifies it when he thins out the lost children growing up against the rules in Neverland and also when he breathes vindictively and intentionally quick to kill grown-ups because of his wrath against them.¹⁸⁾ Like Pinkie, Peter is never sure of what death means and what its dreadfulness brings. To him "to die will be an awfully big adventure."¹⁹⁾

Now what makes callous Pinkie waver and tremble is music.

This uneasiness towards music reveals Pinkie's fears and longings hidden behind his calm poise. Music is a "painful reminder of his primary season of peace, especially when he was a choirboy"²⁰⁾ and therefore it makes him uneasy: he feels "the catgut vibrating in the heart."²¹⁾ Also music threatens him into the knowledge of the old age and death which await him.

It was he this time who was being warned; life held the vitriol bottle and warned him: I'll spoil your looks. It spoke to him in the music, and when he protested that he for one would never get mixed up, the music had its own retort at hand: 'You can't always help it. It sort of comes that way.'²²⁾

So to him music "was like a voice prophesying sorrow at the moment of victory,"²³⁾ and he has come to know he will never escape from life.

For Pinkie, Rose is the symbol of life that he despises and wants to avoid facing. When he made up his mind to marry Rose in order to stop her from standing in a witness box, he foresees listening to the radio throughout his long course of life, during which he has to pretend to love Rose.

It waield up the stairs past the telephone and into the room : somebody's band from somebody's hotel, the end of a day's programme. It switched her thoughts away and he wondered for how long it would be necessary for him to sidetrack her mind with the romantic gesture or the loving act : how many weeks and months - his mind wouldn't admit the possibility of years. Some day he would be free again.²⁴⁾

Pinkie's reaction to music effectively expresses his wish to escape from Rose, namely life, and his longings for peace. After his wedding, Pinkie took Rose to a movie. In the movie the actor sang love song,

... and suddenly, inexplicably, the Boy began to weep. He shut his eyes to hold in his tears, but the music went on - it was like a vision of release to an imprisoned man. He felt constriction and saw - hopelessly out of reach - a limitless freedom: no fear, no hatred, no envy.²⁵⁾

“A limitless freedom: no fear, no hatred, no envy” has been his long cherished hope and is what he can never get a hold of. But his hope for freedom inevitably drives him to eliminate Rose, who would fasten him to what is called home. He prays not “to get mixed up again with that drab dynamited plot of ground they both called home”²⁶⁾ because to him Rose is “the cheapest, youngest, least experienced skirt in all Brighton”²⁷⁾ and he detests the idea that she could have him “in her power.”²⁸⁾ Pinkie hates such a Rose, from whom he knows “only death could ever set him free.”²⁹⁾ However, he has to marry Rose and to be a grown-up man like his father and to be everyman.

‘An’ you got a girl,’ Dallow said with hollow cheeriness. ‘You’re growing up, Pinkie - like your father.’

Like my father.... The Boy was shaken again with his nocturnal Saturday disgust. He couldn’t blame his father now ... it was what you came to ... you got mixed up, and then, he supposed, the habit grew ... you gave yourself away weakly. You couldn’t even blame the girl. It was life getting at you³⁰⁾

There are two reasons he hates and repels Rose. One is the distrust of Rose’s love for Pinkie. He tells Dallow that they would be safer from the police if they didn’t have anything to do with her³¹⁾ because he couldn’t believe in her fidelity: “love was not an eternal thing like hatred and disgust.”³²⁾ The other one is that he doesn’t want to grow up to be like his father. To be like his father means to be mixed up in life with Rose. He has to be someone quite

free from being mixed up, because some day he will be a Colleoni who monopolizes all of Brighton, something every person wishes to do in this world.

The denial of accepting his father's life, or growing up is, also one of the peculiarities of Peter Pan. The reason Peter ran away from home was to avoid growing up. He wants always to be a little boy and to have fun. He cries to Wendy's mother, "Keep back, lady, no one is going to catch me and make me a man."³³⁾ The denial of growing up shows not only that Peter Pan and Pinkie deviate from ordinary life of everyman but also that they are the boys who don't admit any advantages in getting old like their father. They have dismissed their father. They only believe and depend on their own superior ability and power, a result of their ignorance and inexperience. Their excessive self-esteem and self-justification are the same qualities found in children and also in Narcissus.

Then narcissism is another characteristic found in both Pinkie and Peter Pan. In the case of Pinkie, the word "pride" exemplifies his tendency towards narcissism. Greene describes him:

A boy of about seventeen watched him from the door - a shabby smart suit, the cloth too thin for much wear, a face of starved intensity, a kind of hideous and unnatural pride.³⁴⁾

He is shabby to look at, with the face of a hunter who watches his game before the kill.³⁵⁾ He is "of smooth, never shaven cheek, soft hair, old eyes. . . . He had too much pride to worry about appearances."³⁶⁾ But his hideous and unnatural pride cause his deeds to be extravagant beyond his ability and power. For example, after the interview with the inspector at the police station, he despised the police who couldn't detect his crime.

There was poison in his veins, though he grinned and bore it. He had been insulted. He was going to show the world. They thought

because he was only seventeen ... he jerked his narrow shoulders back at the memory that he'd killed his man, and these bogies who thought they were clever weren't clever enough to discover that. He trailed the clouds of his own glory after him: hell lay about him in his infancy. He was ready for more deaths.³⁷⁾

He is secretly proud of his clever murder of Hale, and his confounding the police. Revelling in his power of doing evil, he dreams he is "going to be where Colleoni now was and higher...", not being deceived, not giving himself to marriage and the birth of children.³⁸⁾ One day he would be "a young dictator" and "give a statue"³⁹⁾ of himself to Brighton.

Moreover, his religious knowledge of evil demonstrates to himself that he is capable of corruption, which proves his power to confront Almighty God. On his wedding day on the way to the registry, Pinkie recognizes how both he and Rose were corrupted as Roman Catholics and he understands "the murders of Hale and Spicer were trivial acts, a boy's game. ... Murder had only led up to this - this corruption. He was filled with awe at his own powers."⁴⁰⁾ Pinkie has perceived the great significance of his deeds. He is proud of his unfathomable ability to choose evil. It is important that his "awe at his own powers" connotes a latent image of a fallen angel asserting equal glory to God. Analysis of Pinkie as a fallen angel comes in due course in the next chapter.

Through marriage he "had graduated in the last human shame" and "would never be scared again."⁴¹⁾ He felt that there was nothing to fear ever again and he was satisfied with his ability to recognize his state of existence. He knew that "this was hell then."⁴²⁾ And this vision, or knowledge also links him with the image of an impertinent fallen angel. He "wanted to crow at his own cleverness"⁴³⁾ gloating on the mended banister which had been the tool which caused Spicer's murder. However when he began to suspect Rose's fidelity to him, "his restless cocky pride"⁴⁴⁾ sways his mind from belief in Rose to disgust for Rose and ultimately

causes him to contrive a plot to induce her to love suicide. The expression of his pride: "crow at" and "cocky" indicate that Pinkie is full of self-conceit, content with what he conceived and what he did.

Like Pinkie, Peter Pan is also described as a boy who, when asleep, is "such a personification of cockiness."⁴⁵⁾ Peter, like Pinkie, crows whenever he is satisfied with himself: "I can't help crowing, Wendy, when I'm pleased with myself."⁴⁶⁾ His constant awareness only of himself leads him to do only what he likes. For example, when he saved Michael from dropping like a stone into the sea on the way to Neverland, Peter waited till the last moment to show how lovely he could catch Michael: "... it was his cleverness that interested him and not the saving of human life."⁴⁷⁾ Thus Peter repeats "How clever I'm,"⁴⁸⁾ "Am I not a wonder, oh, I am a wonder!"⁴⁹⁾ He is like Narcissus praising his own beautiful exploits.

As mentioned above, a sense of alienation and narcissism can be specified as the main similarities found in the figures of Pinkie and Peter Pan. These characteristics underlie the superficial deviations of Pinkie and Peter Pan. Pinkie's sense of alienation and narcissism especially need to be examined and be expounded in the next chapter in light of the image of a fallen angel.

Notes:

1. *Studies in English Literature, No. 25*(The English Literary Society of Baiko Jo Gakuin College, 1989)
2. *Ways of Escape* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1980), p. 75
3. *ibid.*
4. J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan* (Puffin Books, Penguin Books Ltd., 1986), pp. 42-43
5. *Brighton Rock*(William Heinemann & The Bodley Head, London, 1970), p. 72
6. *ibid.*, p. 232
7. *ibid.*, p. 112
8. *ibid.*, p. 204
9. *Peter Pan*, p. 46
10. *ibid.*, p. 200
11. *ibid.*, p. 215
12. *ibid.*, p. 207
13. Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan, *Graham Greene's Childless Fathers*(THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD, 1988), p. 21
14. *Brighton Rock*, p. 5
15. *ibid.*, p. 52
16. *ibid.*
17. *Peter Pan*, p. 212
18. *ibid.*, p. 141
19. *ibid.*, p. 121
20. Georg M. A. Gaston, *The Pursuit of Salvation* (The Whitston Publishing Company, Troy, New York, 1984), p. 24
21. *Brighton Rock*, p. 52
22. *ibid.*, p. 59
23. *ibid.*, p. 157
24. *ibid.*, p. 173
25. *ibid.*, p. 223
26. *ibid.*, p. 110
27. *ibid.*, p. 138
28. *ibid.*

29. *ibid.*, p. 233
30. *ibid.*, p. 274
31. *ibid.*
32. *ibid.*, p. 233
33. *Peter Pan*, p. 206
34. *Brighton Rock*, p. 4
35. *ibid.*
36. *ibid.*, p. 73
37. *ibid.*, p. 81
38. *ibid.*, p. 112
39. *ibid.*, p. 133
40. *ibid.*, p. 207
41. *ibid.*, p. 226
42. *ibid.*
43. *ibid.*
44. *ibid.*, pp. 254-255
45. *Peter Pan*, p. 159
46. *ibid.*, p. 41
47. *ibid.*, p. 56
48. *ibid.*, p. 41
49. *ibid.*, p. 112