O SAY THAT G. K. CHESTERTON STRONGLY INFLUENCED THE SUBSEQUENT GENERATION OF BRITISH CATHOLIC INTELLECTUALS IS A COMMONPLACE. EVELYN WAUGH, FOR EXAMPLE, RECOMMENDED THE EVERLASTING MAN IN LETTERS TO FRIENDS AND EVEN CONSIDERED REWRITING IT, BEING MUCH INFLUENCED BY THE ANALYSIS BUT DISLIKING THE STYLE. Graham Greene, too, was greatly impressed by Chesterton, even before he became a Roman Catholic. In fact, Greene relates in his autobiography that the only autograph he sought as a youngster was “when I ran, in my school cap after G. K. Chesterton, as he labored like a lepanto galleon down Shaftsbury Avenue.” Yet, despite knowledge of this early affinity, it is still bracing to read in Greene’s essay on Chesterton, “Orthodoxy, The Thing, and The Everlasting Man are among the great books of the age.”

The Thing? What are we to make of this text which is largely ignored, even by the best Chesterton analysts, and why would it have so impressed Greene? For Greene, at least this time, was not being eccentric; rather he points to an unjustly neglected book deserving far greater attention from Chesterton admirers and scholars. While further evidence of any direct influence on him is elusive, it is reasonable to suggest why Greene would have been so stirred by it, for in this text Chesterton strikes many chords that were the keynotes of Greene’s life and literary career. In particular, Chesterton emphasizes the interconnection between compassion and equality, the intellectual appeal of Catholicism, especially to a convert, and the consequent validity of a Catholic literature, issues that were prominent in Greene’s mind and prevalent in his work. Given that intellectual connections between Chesterton and Greene are virtually ignored by scholars, examining these resonances in and affinities between their thought, as displayed in The Thing and in Greene’s writings, will provide a richer understanding of both authors by seeing them as kindred spirits confronting the deepening...
cultural crisis of late modernity.

Published in 1929, *The Thing: Why I Am a Catholic* is a collection of 35 essays on topics ranging from “Obstinate Orthodoxy” to “Logic - and Lawn Tennis.” Holding together these disparate discussions is the catholic - in every sense of that term - vision of Chesterton, his belief that Catholicism is the most holistic, realistic, and rational (as opposed to rationalistic) world-view. More specifically, two major themes pervade these articles: initially, Chesterton contends that numerous virtues praised by many modern Protestants and secularists are actually Catholic in origin and, flowing from this view, he argues that it is modernity, not Catholicism, that is intellectually impoverished.

To begin with, Chesterton maintains that secular beatitudes such as egalitarianism and compassion, both concerns of Greene, are founded on Catholic dogma. Arguing that equality was losing its privileged place in political orthodoxy under the pressure of Social Darwinism, Chesterton argues that “while it has evaporated as a mood, [it] still exists as a creed ... for the Catholic it is a fundamental dogma of the Faith that all human beings, without any exceptions whatever, were specially made, were shaped and pointed like shining arrows, for the hitting of the mark of Beatitude.” Similarly he claims that “this compassion for men is also tainted with its historical connection with Christian charity.” Chesterton acknowledges that the corrosive effects of Nietzschean philosophy may prove fatal to these principles but “so long as [such ideas] lived they were Christian.”

While, at least in this essay, Chesterton uses the terms “pity” and “compassion” interchangeably, Greene drew a sharp contrast between these concepts. Yet it is a distinction that Chesterton would probably have approved of, and gave signs of having done so in other works, given his emphasis on the importance of equality in human relationships. For to Greene, as expressed most clearly in *The Ministry of Fear* and *The Heart of the Matter*, compassion arises from egalitarian empathy, a sense of shared suffering that can exist only between equals. Pity, on the other hand, is the proud corruption of this virtue, the belief that one knows what is best for another and hence can make even ultimate decisions about another’s destiny. In *The Ministry of Fear*, Arthur Rowe murders his terminally ill wife out of such a sense of superiority. Unwilling or unable to share her suffering compassionately, he instead moves selfishly to relieve his own pain, but always sincerely believing that he is acting out of the tenderest regard for her welfare. Later in the novel, through his contact with the Fascist agent Hilfe, Rowe comes to realize that “it was her endurance and her patience which he had found most unbearable. He was trying to escape his own pain, not hers.” As Suden elucidates, “Behind pity for another lies self-pity, and behind self-pity lies cruelty.”

Another case of cruelty emanating from the kindest, yet proudest, intentions is *The Heart of the Matter’s Scobie*. He ultimately brings about his own downfall due to what Greene calls his “monstrous pride.” In seeking to imitate Christ by taking on the sins of his world, Scobie ends up violating Christ’s commands and causing pain to all around him as he lies, commits adultery, acquiesces in murder, receives Communion in a state of unrepentant mortal sin and, in the ultimate perversion of his messianism, prepares to kill himself that others might live and live more abundantly. He even ends up pitying God, a fact which ironically prevents his damnation but also shows the extent to which his sins need purgation.

For Greene, as for Chesterton, true compassion has its roots in Christian teaching. As he wrote to Waugh, Scobie is “intended to show how muddled a man full of goodwill could become once ‘off the rails’.” The only thing that can keep one “on the rails” is orthodoxy, for it provides the most holistic and realistic view of human nature and human relations with others and God. People will not play god as long as they worship God and do not usurp His rights over His creatures. The longer Scobie avoids Mass, the worse his crimes become and when he commits the ultimate heterodox act, communicating in a state of mortal sin, both his pride and his agony grow to the point where he begins contemplating the ultimate sin of suicide as the way of saving God and his loved ones from himself.

An integral component of this orthodox view of
compassion is the recognition of the essential equality of all people noted by Chesterton and affirmed by Greene. They believed that because we are all marked for beatitude by God, none of us can seek to manipulate another’s fate. Since only God can do what fallen humans are incapable of, “really understand another ... and arrange another’s happiness,” we are bound to treat others as equal, eternal ends in themselves. For Chesterton, this theological tenet that he shared with Chesterton was effected in his concern for the most vulnerable members of the human family. He sought to give voices to those he thought rendered mute by impersonal modern states and bureaucracies, be they the persecuted Catholics of Mexico’s Lawless Roads, the victims of The Quiet American’s war in Vietnam, The Comedians trapped in Papa Doc’s carnival of Haitian horrors, or the loyal traitor who betrays country to honor family out of respect for The Human Factor. To this end, Greene formulated his principle of “the virtue of disloyalty”:

Isn’t it possibly the storyteller’s task to act as the devil’s advocate, to elicit sympathy and a measure of understanding for those outside State Sympathy? ... it has always been in the interest of the state to poison the psychological wells, to restrict human sympathy, to encourage catcalls ... Loyalty confines us to accepted opinions: Loyalty forbids us to comprehend sympathetically our dissident fellows; but disloyalty encourages us to roam experimentally through any human mind, it gives to the novelist the extra dimension of sympathy.

Yet Greene recognizes the temptation to extend that sympathy too widely, as Scobie does when he boldly proclaims that “Any victim demands allegiance.” Greene sees the proud folly in such a boast and consequently limits his finite energies to championing small endangered countries and, above all, individuals. He reserves a special affection and respect for those who struggle for human rights and freedom against horrific dictatorships.... a politics of the personal life, an implied plea for the concerns of human experience to be kept free from the influence of kingdoms, thrones, and powers ... a profound distrust of power in any of its forms.... It shows him guarding jealously the important privacies of human life from the incursions of a power which is often cruel and always irresponsible.

While usually less explicitly partisan than Greene, Chesterton’s distributism is but one testament to his political belief in the essential equality of all people, especially those most victimized by industrialism and other aspects of modernity. For both men, then, their social criticisms remained deeply rooted in their religious affirmations. While admitting that a modern person might respond to injustice in ways similar to theirs, Greene and Chesterton suggest that he or she would be moved by mere prejudice or convention whereas Catholics act on clearly defined principles. This distinction between the ethical and religious mindsets undergirds Greene’s central division of humanity, expressed most clearly in Brighton Rock, into those who believe in Right and Wrong and those who believe in Good and Evil. Chesterton posits a similar differentiation in The Thing, arguing that in the process of making judgments “there is a very close kinship between sentiment and sense. But the fact remains that all the people in his [the modernist’s] position can only go on being sensible. It is left for us to be also reasonable.”

The reasonableness of Catholicism forms the second key theme of The Thing. Chesterton maintains that far from liberating the mind, modernity has imposed the shackles of shallowness, ignorance, and surrender to pabulum. He believes that the modern mind is enslaved because it is not exposed to fundamentally alternative world views and is locked within the prison of Progress. The hegemony of opinion leaders has “fixed not only the ends, but the means. They have imposed not only the doctrines, but the words. They are bound not merely in religion, which is avowedly binding, but in everything else as well.” In the name of Free Thought individual reason is abandoned “in favor of press stunts and suggestions and mass psychology and mass production.” In contrast, Chesterton believes that the balance inherent in Thomistic Catholicism prevents such confusion of absolutes and probables by firmly fixing the boundary between eternal and ephemeral: “Catholics know the two or three transcendent truths on which they do agree; and take rather a pleasure in disagreeing on everything else.”

Both these agreements and disagreements, though, are firmly grounded in reason, a point Chesterton desparately wishes to clarify to secular skeptics: “We have got
to make them see that conversion is the beginning of an active fruitful, progressive, and even adventurous life of the intellect.”

Such a defense of Catholicism’s reasonability would likely have impressed Greene, whose autobiographical writings about his own conversion portray it as being a highly rational process of intellectual discovery.

Greene, in terms very similar to Newman’s, describes his conversion as an intellectual battle against atheism:

My primary difficulty was to believe in a God at all ... I didn’t disbelieve in Christ - I disbelieved in God. If I were ever to be convinced in even the remote possibility of a supreme, omnipotent, and omniscient power I realized that nothing afterwards could seem impossible. It was on the ground of dogmatic atheism that I fought and fought hard ... in January 1926 I became convinced of the probable existence of something we call God.

He claims that it was not until he witnessed the religious persecutions in Mexico more than a decade after his reception, so movingly described in The Lawless Roads, that he gained an emotional component to his faith. And while many critics rightly point out that Greene’s temperament and fiction often reveal the more emotional sides of conversion and belief, the intellectual element was essential to him. What he wrote of Waugh’s conversion was equally true of his own: “he needed to cling to something solid, strong, and unchanging.”

Only in the arms of the Scarlet Woman could he find such comfort, for like Chesterton, “Catholicism fascinated Greene because it was a long tradition offering order and community through shared beliefs. In a world heading toward chaos, Catholicism provided a sometimes smug alternative to the seeming futility of contemporary existence.”

Moreover, despite the dissolution of his marriage and his disagreement with some Church teachings on personal morality, its social doctrines in defense of individual integrity, dignity, and equality retained his support and may well have kept him within the household of faith, for “faith intrigued him and long after his marriage broke up he continued to support the Church while being vigilant about its practice. The Church was, he said, the defender of the individual in a heartless world.”

Yet as clear and reasonable as these doctrines affirming human dignity may have seemed to him, Greene shared Chesterton’s frustration at the stereotype of Catholicism as anti-intellectual. Greene defended the credibility of Catholicism as an intellectual position, even if his confirmation name of Thomas was for the doubting apostle rather than the Angelic Doctor. In his novels, but even more so in his literary criticism, Greene asserts that it is only through a highly developed religious sense that an artist can have the creative vision needed to produce lasting literature: “his final justification for the substantiality of the real world in fiction is based on its spiritual value rather than its documentary surface.”

This view is most thoroughly developed in Greene’s essay on François Mauriac. Greene maintains, in Ruskinian fashion, that the quality of art is determined by the ethos of its culture. Until the early twentieth century, Greene argues, English writers like Dickens, and even a materialist like Trollope, were able to create significant art because they “were aware of another world against which the actions of the characters are thrown into relief ... unimportance in the world of the senses is only matched by his [a character’s] enormous importance in another world.”

Yet with the death of Henry James, Greene maintains, “the religious sense was lost to the English novel, and with the religious sense went the sense of the importance of the human act. It was as if the world of fiction had lost a dimension...” He considers this development to be a “disaster,” for it resulted in a generation of technically talented, but finally insubstantial writers like Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster whose characters “wandered like cardboard symbols through a world that was paper-thin,” since, for such secular authors, “the visible world for [them] ceased to exist as completely as the spiritual,” due to the denial of the divine dimension. In this sense, particularly through the character of Pinkie in Brighton Rock, who chooses the vitalism of a life of unrepentant sin as preferable to the boredom of bourgeois rationalism, Greene shares the sentiment of T. S. Eliot (whose own criticism strongly influenced Greene), who maintained that even the possibility of damnation is so immense a relief in a world of electoral reform, plebiscites, sex reform and dress reform, that damnation itself is an immediate form of salvation - of salvation from the ennui of modern life, because it at last gives some significance to living... It is true to say that the glory of man is his capacity for salvation; it is also true to say that his glory is his capacity for damnation. The worst that can be said of most of our malefactors, from statesmen to thieves, is that they are not men enough to be damned.
In praising and recommending his fellow Catholic Mauriac as “a writer for whom the visible world has not ceased to exist, whose characters have the solidity and importance of men with souls to save or lose, .. .” Greene suggests, as did Eliot, that even and perhaps especially in a post-Christian society, Catholicism, far from being inimical to great art and thought, may in fact be essential for it. Both writers maintained that Catholics have retained the vital religious sense by resisting the secularizing trends, such as the absolutizing of probables like mass production, plebiscites, and myriad reforms, to which British culture generally, and liberal Protestantism in particular, have succumbed. As Christopher Dawson put it:

[Liberal] Protestantism succeeded in accommodating itself to the modern environment by the abandonment of metaphysics and dogma and a concentration on ethical ideals. But Catholicism could not live in an atmosphere of subjective idealism and moral pragmatism. It was forced to go into the desert.... Catholicism is not compromised by the bankruptcy of nineteenth-century idealism. It has never denied - as sectarian Christianity tends to deny - the existence and the good of the natural order, but it recognizes that spiritual order is only attainable in the light of absolute spiritual principles.

Two more recent historians have confirmed Dawson’s judgment, maintaining that “British Catholicism generally has stood firm against the temptation to compromise with the emerging post-Christian culture,” and it was “because Catholicism was swimming against the stream in an age of materialism, deepening doubt, and moral chaos, that it made an increasing appeal in a predominantly Protestant country. Its unyielding fidelity to the fullness of the Christian tradition proved alluring to minds that had seen Protestant orthodoxy capitulate to the blandishments of liberalism.” Chesterton voiced a similar opinion in The Thing when he argued “that the modern world with its modern movements, is living off its Catholic capital” without the salutary benefits of Catholic doctrine, for:

Psycho-analysis is the Confessional without the safeguards of the Confessional; Communism is the Franciscan movement without the moderating balance of the Church; and American sects having howled for three centuries at the Popish theatricality and mere appeals to the senses, now “brighten” their services by super-theatrical films and rays of rose-red light falling on the head of the minister.

Thus Greene, Eliot, and Chesterton all claimed that the religious sense was essential for establishing the proper perspective in all aspects of life, and they further believed that Catholic orthodoxy was the main, and perhaps only, vessel of this vision in a post-Christian world. For Greene, the Catholic outlook creates another “universe,” one that secularists cannot enter.

Yet ignorance of that universe did not (and does not) prevent critics from seeking to diminish Greene’s achievement by using his religious imagination as an instrument of marginalization. Greene grew so exasperated with being called a “Catholic writer” with the patronizingly sinister overtones of propaganda such a phrase contains that he eventually called himself “a writer who happens to be a Catholic.” Chesterton deals forthrightly with this issue in the chapter of The Thing, “On the Novel With a Purpose,” in which he defends the idea of Catholic fiction. He argues that “A Catholic putting Catholicism into a novel or story of a sonnet or anything else, is not being a propagandist; he is simply being a Catholic ... even when it is not in the least propagandist, it will probably be full of the implications of my own religion; because that is what is meant by having a religion.” Yet while “everybody understands this about every other enthusiasm in the world,” Chesterton argues that a double standard exists for Catholics. If a modern writer pens a tome infused with Progress and reason, it is considered licit art. However, cries of “propaganda!” go up at the first sign of the Cross. Chesterton thought that such prejudice resulted from a circumscribed popular conception of Catholicism. Because secular critics assume it to be a narrow viewpoint, they further assume that it cannot serve as the holistic vision requisite for
great literature. Consequently, Chesterton advocates a series of apologetics designed to lay the groundwork for Catholic fictionists by showing how universal, how catholic, the Faith is:

What is wanted is a popular outline of the way in which ordinary affairs are affected by our view of life, and how it is also a view of death, a view of sex, and a view of the social decencies and so on. When people understand the light that shines for us upon all these facts, they would no longer be surprised to find it shining in our fictions.42

Certainly the brilliance of the likes of Greene and Waugh owes much to the trail blazed by Chesterton's defenses of the faith.

Yet it is crucial to note that both Chesterton and Greene maintained the distinction between apologetics and fiction. Whereas the advocate lays out a brief for his Church, the imaginative artist paints a world in Catholic colors. All points on the spectrum are present, though, given the holistic nature of both Catholicism and literature. Both take up all aspects of human nature and life, describing temptation and sin as well as repentance and redemption. To exclude any of these hues is to produce both bad Catholicism and bad literature. In a more temperate moment, Greene recognized these differences and reconsidered the notion of a Catholic writer, affirming it in terms strikingly similar to Chesterton's: “The apologist writes for a certain type of reader; the novelist addresses all.... If one is a Catholic, he doesn't have to try to be ‘Catholic’. Everything that he says or writes inevitably breathes Catholicism.”43 While the Catholic vision infuses both enterprises, then, it does so in ways unique to each genre. Maintaining and honoring this division of labor has salutary effects for both literature and faith for, “with Waugh and Greene, however, the gilding is absent and Catholicism is treated as if it were natural and even inevitable. Greene’s lack of propaganda is, indeed, the best kind of propaganda and he and Waugh have gained a wide circle of non-Catholic readers.”44

Beyond these specific themes there is a more general affinity between Chesterton’s and Greene’s world views arising from the cultural contexts in which they wrote. In Chesterton’s time the position of Catholics and the reasonableness of Catholicism were intensely controversial issues in British culture. 1929 was but the centenary of Catholic Emancipation, and the hierarchy had only been restored for less than eighty years. This tenu-

ous legal status combined with agitation amongst Irish workers at home and Irish nationalists abroad to make Catholics still highly suspect subjects in many English eyes. Moreover, Chesterton faced a culture near capitulation to irrationalism, as “the Victorian compromise, ‘a balance of whims’ having begun to lose its confidence and energy, its always latent irrationalism began to feed on increasingly sinister sources,” such as the aforementioned influences of Social Darwinism and Nietzscheanism.45 Chesterton worked through his prolific writing to combat these deadly doctrines, with their inegalitarian and cruel consequences, and to suggest the means of cultural revival. However, despite his best efforts and those of like-minded thinkers, the trends he identified in 1929 had only grown worse by the time Greene wrote his essay on Chesterton during World War II (1944).

Seeing the full effects of the crisis Chesterton identified in the conflagration of war and the crimes of Fascism, Greene inaccurately deprecated Chesterton’s political outlook as simple, yet correctly praised his religious vision on common grounds: “For the same reason that he failed as a political writer he succeeded as a religious one, for religion is simple, dogma is simple.” Such simplicity was just what a world tortured by Dachau and (soon) Hiroshima needed, for it saw clearly what “was most lacking in our age,” “a cosmic optimism, the passionately held belief that ‘it is good to be here’.”46

While such a statement may sound odd at first coming from Greene, understanding it helps correct a major misinterpretation of his thought. Although deeply moved by the seedy side of a fallen world and an eloquent advocate of the tragic view of life, Greene never committed the suicide’s sin: he never despaired.47 Rather he always retained the penultimate Christian virtue, hope, “the flame of the Christian religion,” affirming that despite death, violence, separation, and injustice, fundamentally, “it is good to be here.”48 If Chesterton marveled at the fact of creation, Greene was taken with that of ultimate redemption, that a whiskey priest or “a bitch and a fake” could be a saint.49 Yet both gave glory to the same One, who is simultaneously Creator and Redeemer, for both authors shared what Garry Wills calls “Chesterton’s one important gift - the ability to imagine his own being against a backdrop of nothingness, an act that became his homeopathic cure for despair.”50 For both of them “Catholicism presented itself as the cure for the illness of the times. It became for them not a means of retreat from the modern world, but of ordering, in fiction and
in life, a specifically contemporary reality.” It was this vision that enabled them to see in a dark time. They had seen the truth like fire and were warmed and enlightened by it.

It is clear that Greene’s enthusiasm for The Thing was not misplaced. While these themes are found throughout Chesterton’s work, his ability to weave them through such diverse material without getting tangled is perhaps the best testament to the truth of the contentions he and Greene shared. In showing the Catholic unconscious of modern virtues like equality and compassion, they demonstrate that the way forward is the way back. In showing the reasonableness of Catholicism, they provide a needed counterpoint to modern neo-Gnosticism. In showing the validity of Catholic literature, they point to some of the most beautiful flowering of Catholic Britain’s Second Spring. The Thing, as shown by its resonance with much of Greene’s thought, then, is a text of great value to Chestertonians and all those who believe that it is possible to be a Catholic without losing one’s mind, of all those who believe that it is good to be here.

NOTES


2 Graham Greene, A Sort of Life (Simon and Schuster, 1971), 61.


4 For example, Garry Wills makes no mention of it in his otherwise definitive study, Chesterton: Man and Mask (Sheed and Ward, 1961). Nor does Hugh Kenner in Paradox in Chesterton (Sheed and Ward, 1947). Masie Ward quotes from it in her exhaustive Gilbert Keith Chesterton (Sheed and Ward, 1943), but does not comment on it individually. While beyond the purview of John Coates’ masterful Chesterton and the Edwardian Cultural Crisis (Hull Univ. Press, 1984), he does briefly refer to it, implicitly suggesting that it is not among Chesterton’s best works due to its uncommon “astringency. . . hardening of attitude and a fear of the future,” finding it “curious” that Belloc would have warmly praised this “atypical polemic” (Coates, 18). Margaret Canovan makes only a passing, albeit favorable, reference to it in G. K Chesterton: Radical Populist (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1977). Alzina Stone Dale does accurately exegete some of its points and suggests a possible influence on Dorothy Sayers but remains vague about its overall significance in The Outline of Sanity: A Biography of G. K Chesterton (William B. Eerdm, 1982). Moreover Dale makes the curious comment that, in The Thing, Chesterton’s “Catholicism is as usual, very Chestertonian,” seemingly implying that his unique style symbolized a unique understanding of the faith rather than the dogmatic orthodoxy Chesterton clearly championed (Dale, 274). Chesterton’s most recent biographers, Michael Ffinch and Michael Coren, catalogue it but do not analyze its significance in, respectively, G. K Chesterton (Harper and Row, 1986) and Gilbert: The Man Who Was G. K. Chesterton (Jonathan Cape, 1989).

5 Despite the thematic similarities developed here, as well as others, Chesterton and Greene are rarely seen as part of the same community of discourse, being studied and written about in isolation from each other. Perhaps this is due to Chesterton’s being a generation older than Greene or the rigidities of academic specialization. Waugh was one of the few to sense commonalities in their thought, as evidenced by his selecting them, along with Ronald Knox, as the subjects for his 1949 lecture tour of the United States. See Martin Stannard, Evelyn Waugh: The Later Years (W. W. Norton and Co., 1992), 235-6.

6 All subsequent references to this text will be from the edition appearing in The Collected Works of G. K Chesterton, Vol. III (Ignatius Press, 1990), 133-335.

7 The Thing: Why I Am a Catholic, 149-50.

8 Ibid., 154.
9 “We may call the Lord of Compassion a Lord of Charity, though it seems to us a very pessimist sort of pity.” The Everlasting Man (1925). The Collected Works of G. K Chesterton, Vol. II (Ignatius Press, 1986), 372. Also, he concludes in his study of Shaw, that Shaw “pities humanity more than he loves it. It was his great glory that he pitted animals like men; it was his defect that he pitted men almost too much like animals... He had more benevolence but almost as much disdain.” Quoted in Masie Ward, 230. Furthermore, in his Autobiography (1936), Chesterton argues that Robert Blatchford’s “pity for the weak and the unfortunate; which was, at the worst, a slightly lopsided exaggeration of Christian charity” ultimately led him into the heresy of Determinism, with its denial of human agency and freedom (The Collected Works of G. K Chesterton, Vol. XVI [Ignatius, 1988], 174-5). Finally, in his study of Dickens, Chesterton maintains that, “Now, the practical weakness of the vast mass of modern pity for the poor and the oppressed is precisely that it is merely pity; the pity is pitiful, but not respectful. Men feel that the cruelty to the poor is a kind of cruelty to animals. They never feel that it is injustice to equals;...” in Charles Dickens, The Last of the Great Men (The Readers Club, 1942), 197.

12Graham Greene, Ways of Escape (Simon and Schuster, 1980), 125.
13Quoted in Humphrey Carpenter, The Brideshead Generation (Houghton Mifflin, 1990), 401.
16The Heart of the Matter, 206.
18While Greene remarked that Chesterton was “too good a man for politics,” he did praise his predecessor’s commitments to individual liberty and local patriotism. His evaluation of post-Chesterton distributism was far less favorable, though, as he sensed “an art and crafty air about it.” Collected Essays, 106.
19The Thing, 281.
20Ibid., 266.
21Ibid., 262.
22Ibid., 265.
23Ibid., 299.
24 “I came to the conclusion that there was no medium, in true philosophy, between Atheism and Catholicity, and that a perfectly consistent mind, under those circumstances in which it finds itself here below, must embrace either the one or the other. And I hold this still. I am a Catholic by virtue of my believing in God;...” John Henry Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua, (1864), ed. A. Dwight Culler (Houghton Mifflin, 1956), 193.
28Quoted in Carpenter, 220. See also Greene’s letter to his Catholic fiancee of Nov. 2, 1925: “I do all the same feel I want to be a Catholic now, even apart from you. One does want fearfully hard, something fine and hard and certain, however uncomfortable, to catch hold of in the general flux.” Quoted in Sherry, 256.
29Judith Adamson, Graham Greene: The Dangerous Edge (Macmillan, 1990), 36.
30Ibid., 189.
31 A Sort of Life, 169.
32Smith, 202.
34E. Eliot, “Baudelaire,” *Selected Essays* (Harcourt, Brace, World, Inc., 1960), 378-9, 380. Chesterton voiced a similar sentiment in his introduction to Dickens’ *Old Curiosity Shop*: “Nothing is important except the fate of the soul; and literature is only redeemed from an utter triviality, surpassing that of naughts and crosses, by the fact that it describes not the world around us or the things on the retina of the eye or the enormous irrelevancy of encyclopedias, but some condition to which the human spirit can come. All good writers express the state of their souls, even (as occurs in some cases of very good writers) if it is a state of damnation.” *Collected Works of G. K Chesterton*, Vol. XV (Ignatius Press, 1989), 271. For Eliot’s influence on Greene, see Stratford, 132.

35 “François Mauriac,” 92. Eliot concluded that Baudelaire’s greatness as a writer came from his violent dissent from Catholic Christianity, his inability to ignore it: “His business was not to practice Christianity, but - what was much more important for his time - to assert its necessity.” “Baudelaire,” 374.


38 The Thing, 147, 187.

39 “As for unbelievers, they aren’t scandalized, but are almost totally unable to understand, even the most intelligent critics. They are so far from any Christian view that they cannot enter my universe.” Quoted in Pere Jouve and Marcel More, “Table Talk With Graham Greene,” in Donaghy, 18.

40Ways of Escape, 77.

41The Thing, 225.

42Ibid., 229.

43Quoted in Jouve and More, in Donaghy, 26.

44Davies, 261.

45Coates, 29.

46Collected Essays, 106. The full context of the quotation Greene cites comes from a letter from Chesterton to his fiancee as cited in Masie Ward’s book, which Greene was reviewing in his essay: “I am so glad to hear you say ... that in your own words ‘it is good to be here’ - where you are at present. The same remark, if I remember right, was made on the mountain of the Transfiguration. It has always been one of my unclerical sermons to myself, that that remark which Peter made on seeing the vision of a single hour, ought to be made by us all, in contemplating every panoramic change in the long Vision we call life - other things superficially, but this always in our depths. ‘It is good for us to be here - it is good for us to be here’, repeating itself eternally.” Masie Ward, 1.10.

47A parallel has been suggested between Greene’s interest in seediness and Chesterton’s emphasis on the “grotesque” in some of his books. For a fine treatment of this aspect of Chesterton’s thought, see Coates, 169-90.


51Johnstone, 5.