Les alienes de Julian Green

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LES ALIÉNÉES DE JULIAN GREEN

by

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PREFACE

It should not be surprising to any reader of Green that I consider his women as "des aliénées." Through my study and analysis of the female protagonists in his works, I have become convinced that this is the only way to describe creatures who are estranged to such a horrifying degree. The terms "êtres de feu" (L'Ennemi) and "bêtes féroces" (Le Visionnaire) are too narrow to embrace all the women portrayed. I have attempted in this thesis to justify the title Les aliénées by pointing out all the factors which are involved in this tragic estrangement.

I am deeply indebted to Mr. Julian Green for being so kind as to spare some of his time for talks with me during July, 1960. I have tried not to misinterpret the statements that Mr. Green made at that time. I should like to thank also all of those who through their constant encouragement helped me to complete this work.
CHAPTER I

JULIAN GREEN, THE MAN AND AUTHOR

"Dans le monde actuel, où donc est ma place? Je n'en sais rien." Thus the contemporary French writer, Julian Green speaks of his place in today's society. The same phrase might also be uttered by almost all of the characters who populate his novels; Mr. Green himself has said that many of his heroes and heroines represent aspects of his own personality.

Throughout his novels and in his Journal Green seems to put a heavy emphasis on the impact of the years between one and twelve on the grown man's life. He thinks, like Graham Greene, and like Freud, that it is extremely hard in later life to cure the wounds received in childhood. Green's childhood was the time when the groundwork for his later career was laid. "Tout ce que j'écris procède en droite ligne de mon enfance," and "L'enfant dicte et l'homme écrit."

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2 Julian Green was generous enough to spare some of his time during the month of July 1960 for the purpose of talks with me.
3 See Brighton Rock and The Ministry of Fear.
4 Journal I, p. 70.
5 Ibid., p. 224.
says Green. What was this childhood like, then that inspired him to write so many tales of horror and despair?

Green was born in Paris in 1900 into the family of an American Southern Oil Cotton Company representative. He was the seventh child and the only boy among the five living sisters (Charles, the oldest boy, died). The Green household was deeply religious; Mrs. Green read the Bible every day to her children. Julian's childhood seems to have passed without any major injury to his developing personality. From his book *Memories of Happy Days*, in which he recounts his early years, he seems to want to leave the impression that his was a happy childhood. The observant reader cannot overlook, however, the idealization of all those around him, and in particular of his mother, in this book. Given the fact that although Green was surrounded by women in his childhood, he has since had only limited experience of the opposite sex (his *Journal* indicates almost no friendship at all with women), it is only natural that the women in his novels are somewhat inhuman and distorted.

As a child Julian was endowed with a particularly active and fertile imagination. He relates very vividly in *Memories of Happy Days* how he impersonated heroes such as the Cid. But Julian's early years were also a period of terrors; he speaks of this time in his life as "mon enfance et les terreurs de cette époque de ma vie." To frighten

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7(New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942).

8*Journal I*, p. 55.
himself and to frighten others was one of his main "delights." Many of his female characters are tormented by a strong feeling of peur, which in so many leads to madness, and which, one might say, is merely an outgrowth of young Julian's fear. In 1914 when Mrs. Green, Julian's model of a mother, died, he must have undergone a terrible shock. He calls this event "la grande catastrophe de ma vie ... qui m'a assombri pendant des années." In his fifteenth year he received another wound, which he casually notes in his Journal, but to which one should attach importance since Green voices here his opinion about the mistreating of children, an event which so frequently occurs in Greenian novels:

Je me souviens vers cette époque, mon beau-frère me regarda un jour très gravement et me dit d'un trait: "Je crois bien n'avoir jamais vu un visage plus laid que le tien." Il était Anglais et pensait me guérir ainsi de toute pensée vaniteuse, mais je le crus et j'en souffris. Savoir parler à un enfant est le don rarissime entre tous. Ce qu'on fait quelques fois "pour leur bien" est tout simplement atroce. On ne leur enfoncerait pas un couteau dans la jambe ou le bras, mais on leur poignarde l'âme avec d'autant plus de zèle que cette espèce d'assassinat se commet au nom de la vertu! (Italics mine).

The death of his mother and these wounds inflicted upon him, in view of his melancholic nature, no doubt left an indelible sore in the mind of the future writer.

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9 Memories of Happy Days, p. 5.


In 1916 Green abjured Protestantism and became a Roman Catholic. At this time he took religion so seriously that he considered entering a monastery. \( ^{12} \) He received his baccalauréat at the Lycée Janson de Sailly in 1917, and in 1919 he came for the first time to the United States, the country that his mother had so carefully described to her children in terms of the Civil War Period. During his studies at the University of Virginia, Green discovered to his surprise that the land of his ancestors was no longer the site of the struggle between the States of the Union. He was not very happy in this country, and even when exiled in the United States during World War II, he constantly dreamed about his return to France. He is at present living in Paris with his sister Anne, and becomes more of a recluse as time goes on.

Julian Green, like so many of his heroines, at one time or another in his life, has relied on escape as a solution to the torments of our world. When he was unable to go back to Paris during World War I, he said that "he could at least escape from his surroundings by living in a world of his own, serious though this world might have been."\(^{13}\) Since he likes to engage in day-dreaming, he ardently dislikes bright, sunny Southern countries; he is attracted by the foggy, mysterious Northern countries:

\[ \ldots \text{Moi j'entends sans cesse l'appel du Nord. C'est plus qu'un désir, c'est la "Sehnsucht" allemande, le "longing" anglais, une sorte de langueur perpétuelle au fond du cœur. Ainsi la vie d'une} \]


\(^{13}\) Memories of Happy Days, p. 207.
mer aux eaux laiteuses ou d'un bois de bouleaux agit sur moi avec une force extraordinaire.\textsuperscript{14}

It is only in these romantic Northern countries that Green can find happiness in the "lumière douce qui excite la joie."\textsuperscript{15}

Many times Green is distressed by bright daylight, while at night his inner calm returns. During an analysis on why sunshine makes him unhappy he says:

Je me suis souvent demandé pourquoi le soleil me rendait si triste. Ce n'est pas l'effet qu'il a d'ordinaire sur les hommes. Il y a des jours où de grandes tâches de lumière sur un mur me remplissent d'une mélancolie épouvantable! Sans doute crierait-on au blasphème si je disais que je sens presque toujours plus heureux quand le soleil disparaît du ciel et que l'heure où les lampes s'allument dans les villes est pour moi d'un charme particulier. Midi, roi des étés, me donne mal à la tête. Je ne sors le matin que si je ne puis faire autrement. Toute tragédie se passe, dans mon esprit, en plein soleil. "La nuit est transparente autour de moi." Que de fois cette phrase des Psaumes m'est revenue à la mémoire. Le matin est un peu ma patrie. J'ai remarqué que dans mes livres quand un événement fâcheux se prépare, il fait presque toujours beau.\textsuperscript{16}

The outer and inner loneliness which can be so often detected in the Greenian women is a phase of the author's personal life. Again and again Green has portrayed the inability of man to communicate with, and to be understood by, his fellow men. Because Green has personally suffered from isolation and solitude, he has dedicated his works to those who are alone: "Je voudrais écrire pour celui qui est seul."\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{15}Journal V, p. 179.


\textsuperscript{17}Journal II (Paris: Plon, 1939), p. 186.
In his solitude Green is subject to fits of depression and fits of happiness: "Ces passages brusques de la mélancholie et de la joie sont parmi les traits de mon caractère..." In the typical Greenian woman we find similar capricious traits. When the author is in one of his better moods, he calls death "le plus beau de tous les paysages lointains." Death has the opposite effect on him at other times; then it becomes a nightmare which induces sadness and embitters life:

D'où vient cette tristesse? Je ne le sais pas. C'est la tristesse d'être au monde et de sentir la menace qui pèse sur tout ce que l'on aime. Je ne puis être tout à fait heureux dans un monde où la mort a toujours le dernier mot et où elle peut intervenir à tout moment.

Often the women in Green's novels are petrified in front of death, yet shortly later they might seek it as a refuge.

Julian Green appears to be extremely worried by the condition of the world today. The moral standards of the majority of men appal him, and he believes that the fate of the world lies in the hands of a very few good people. The numerous notations in the Journal about evil lead one to conclude that Green is somewhat obsessed by evil. He even once went so far as to see in the word monde the anagram of démon.

At the present time he sees in faith the only salvation for our world. Again and again he emphasizes in his Journal the importance of belief.

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18 Ibid., p. 16.
19 Journal I, p. 205.
20 Journal V, p. 317.
21 Personal interview with the writer, July 1960.
22 Le Bel Aujourd'hui, p. 245.
In 1955 he said about this problem:

Or il faut croire. Dans un monde athée, nous avons reçu ce don exceptionnel. Dans le vent et la nuit, si le sol se dérobe sous nos pas comme de l'eau et qui n'a éprouvé cela à un moment ou l'autre? — il faut malgré tout aller de l'avant et saisir la main qui nous est tendue.\(^{23}\)

In a later chapter it will be illustrated how the life of most Greenian heroines is darkened and becomes meaningless through lack of faith.

If Green sees the need of faith in our society, he also perceives the handicaps that true belief brings with it. The man who lives according to his faith today is isolated; he is in discord with his century; he is alone, and many times he appears like a fool. And in this Green sees one of the strangest aspects of the great drama of conscience that is happening in Europe today.\(^ {24}\) In spite of all these hardships, Green insists that man and woman can only achieve freedom and independence if they submit their life to God.

The Greenian heroine feels herself in fetters throughout all her life, and she tries desperately to escape from this prison which is either her environment or her own nature. \"Mes livres sont des livres de prisonnier qui rêve de liberté.\"\(^ {25}\) But how complex and contradictory is human nature! As much as these women dream of freedom they nevertheless enjoy the suffering that their lack of freedom inflicts upon them.

Mrs. Ellis, one of the women in Green's unfinished novel Les Pays lointains, illustrates par excellence the masochistic tendency of

\(^ {23}\) Journal V, p. 30.

\(^ {24}\) Ibid., p. 106.

\(^ {25}\) Ibid., p. 319.
Green's world: "... et cette femme qui se séparait chaque jour un peu plus d'un monde qu'elle n'aimait pas, s'enferma dans sa souffrance comme dans une sorte de palais."

Green's notions on sex are quite puritanical; one is amazed to encounter almost no normal love relationships between men and women in his works. This probably is the result of the stress and tension that exist in the author's mind on this particular subject. Some time ago Green was provoked into saying: "Je hais l'instinct sexuel." Further on, he said that he recognized the importance of instinct, but that he wished that it were different. Mr. Green, who has never been married, seems to forget that many marriages are, among other things, based upon physical love. - And yet, as much as he hates this instinct, he is constantly writing about it in his Journal. He is greatly attracted towards analysis of the different types of disaster that the sexual desire leads to in man. Green believes that there are two types of human beings, the mystic and the debauched, and strangely enough, the man of debauchery is most interesting to him: "... mais des deux (du mystique et du débauché) le débauché me paraît le plus mystérieux, qui ne se lasse jamais du plat unique que lui sert éternellement sa faim et dont il se repaît comme si c'était chaque fois la première."

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26 Journal I, p. 288.
28 Ibid.
Green opposes pleasure on the grounds that it kills something within man, and that it leads to nothing. The sexual instinct, according to Green, puts an element of insanity into human life.

One might ask now why Green, who has called himself "une sorte de Don Quichotte dont les romans de chevalerie sont les écrits des mystiques," has such a tragic conception of human life, why he so often insists on describing the limitations of the human condition, and why so many killings and horrible tortures occur in his novels? Green's first answer to these questions would be that he wishes not only to achieve a catharsis in his readers, but also to purify himself from the evil thoughts that plague him: "Si je ne mettais pas cette folie dans mes livres, qui sait si elle ne s'installerait pas dans ma vie." His second answer would concern the utility of Art. At different times Green has expressed almost contradictory opinions on this subject. In 1955, for instance, he commented in his Journal on how useful even a sinful novel can be: "Un roman est fait de péché comme une table est faite de bois. Rien de pur ne sort d'entre nos mains, mais c'est un péché qui peut être utile." And yet one year later he explained that a novel's purpose is not to instruct, but merely to express an individual's conception of life: "... un roman n'est pas un manuel de morale, c'est un miroir dans lequel nous voyons

31 Ibid., p. 111
33 Journal II, p. 122.
34 Journal I, p. 136.
35 Le Bel Aujourd'hui, p. 111.
la vie et si ce que je vois est tragique, l'histoire de l'humanité ne l'est-elle pas à toutes ses pages, et le journal quotidien de même?\(^{36}\)

Reading Green, one often feels that one is wading through Dante's *Inferno*. Certainly all the sins of the old master's imaginary hell are present in Green's world. Maybe this is so because Green thinks that his mission as a writer is similar to that of an "éclaireur" who sounds the obscure depths of the human soul and comes back to tell of his findings.\(^{37}\)

Lately Green has equated the mission of a novelist more and more with religious convictions. He believes that there is no novel without sin,\(^{38}\) and that the true novelist becomes a sinner as he describes his heroes since they are a part of himself. He finally hopes, however, that even the writer whose works deal with sin may be pleasing God.

Or, le vrai romancier ne domine pas son roman, il devient son roman, il s'y plonge. Entre lui et ses personnages, la complicité est plus profonde même qu'il ne le croit et s'ils pèchent, il pèche aussi de quelque manière. Il est tout ce qu'est son livre, s'il y croit, s'il se laisse prendre et s'il ne se laisse pas prendre, s'il ne subit pas lui-même l'envoûtement de cette chose monstrueuse qui sort de son cerveau - car le roman est un monstre - il n'écrit plus de romans, il en fabrique ... Jamais un chrétien timoré ne fera un grand roman. Dans la crainte d'offenser Dieu, il écrira de prudentes platitudes, et qui sait si Dieu ne veut pas le risque? Qui sait si ce n'est pas la le moyen de lui plaire et d'accomplir sa vocation?\(^{39}\)

\(^{36}\)Ibid., p. 203.

\(^{37}\)Journal V, p. 160.

\(^{38}\)Ibid., p. 147.

\(^{39}\)Journal IV, pp. 192–93.
Jeanne, the porte-parole of the author in Varouna, says that a certain grain of madness is necessary to write a good novel. But in spite of this, in spite of his solitude and isolation, Green considers himself nevertheless quite a fortunate man, for like no other human being, he is able to discover that which lies behind appearances, and his gift enables him to live not only his own life, but also that of his heroes. Furthermore, he is able to communicate to his fellowmen that which the ordinary conditions of experience condemn them to graze only.

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41 Ibid., p. 230.
CHAPTER II

THE FORCES OF HEREDITY

Julian Green is a firm believer in the influences of heredity; he calls himself "l'aboutissement de tous ces instincts" (meaning those of his forefathers). Since all his women are outgrowths of his personality, what he says in his Journal on the subject of heredity also applies to them.

Man and woman, according to Green, inherit not only from their immediate predecessors, but from all of humanity that went before them. "Nous héritons tant de choses de nos parents et de nos arrières-grands-parents. Pourquoi cet héritage ne remonterait-il pas très haut jusqu'aux origines de l'humanité?" Although this heritage may put a heavy burden upon the human being, Green nevertheless considers it a thing that God in his goodness and glory willed and foresaw, and he thinks that it is futile for man to rebel against it. In other words, heredity with Julian Green becomes something like the fatality in Jansenistic teachings. He states this clearly in the following passage: "Mais j'ai compris soudain que les circonstances et en particulier celles créées par l'hérité sont comme le champ-clos choisi par Dieu et où s'exerce notre liberté dans une mesure comme de lui seul."

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1 Journal V, p. 353.
2 Journal I, p. 221.
3 Journal V, p. 158.
In the Old Testament it was said that God would punish the sins of the fathers up to the seventh generation. Racine, who was deeply influenced by Jansenism, displays this wrathful quality of God in many of his plays. The children in Green's books, like some Racinian protagonists, have to pay for the sins committed by their ancestors. In "The Apprentice Psychiatrist," Green's first published work, no major woman appears, but a precedent is set for the treatment of the principles of heredity which appear in later books. In this tale the effeminate and young Pierre-Marie de Fronsac shows the "degenerescence" transmitted to him from his forefathers in his wilted and withered hands. The inhuman and brutal preceptor, Casimir Jovite, cannot help but exclaim at this sight: "The father's, the grand-father's, the great grand-father's sins. A heavy debt."

The unjust yoke of heredity rests equally heavily on Emily Fletcher in Mont-Cinère. From her mother the young girl has inherited part of her personality. It is true that throughout the book Emily is driven to her rash actions, partly through circumstances. However, an attentive reader must ask whether Emily's obsession, like that of her mother, is not the result of the excessive watering of a seed present in Emily's personality at birth, and which eventually came to its full flowering. The daughter is as cruel and hard hearted as the mother.

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5 Ibid., p. 339.
The mother wishes death upon the grand-mother, and the daughter cannot wait to see the mother dead. Mrs. Elliot, Emily's grand-mother, speaks the truth when she accuses Emily: "Tu n'as pas d'âme, mon enfant, tu es comme elle." (meaning Mrs. Fletcher). As in her mother, so also in Emily, avarice and the love of domination grow, and these two excessive passions, the only things that could sweeten her life, destroy her in the end.

As far as Emily's ugly physique is concerned, there is no doubt that she received it from her father. Green mentions this at the beginning of the book:

Il existait entre eux un certain air de ressemblance que les années accentuaient. Comme son père, elle se tenait le dos un peu voûté mais sa tête droite et jetée en avant dans l'attitude de quelqu'un qui écoute. Comme lui encore, elle avait les yeux noirs, extrêmement mobiles, les pommettes hautes et décharnées, une physionomie inquiète jusqu'à paraître chagrine et mélanchole.

Emily's resemblance to her father is almost a curse to her. Mrs. Fletcher, who never had much affection for her deceased husband and who has even less for her child, through Emily's looks is constantly reminded of the man whom she despised. Could this cruel woman have felt any affection for her daughter, one glance at the girl's face would have been enough to harden her again.

Man's most important characteristic, his temperament, is, in Emily, very similar to that of her father. Stephen Fletcher during the last years of his life wandered around the park, quickly turning and

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7Ibid., p. 121.
8Ibid., pp. 26-27.
fleeing whenever he met somebody. He talked to himself, and penetrated
deeper and deeper into his personal melancholic dream-world. Emily
also suffers from neurotic fits of depression. She goes around talk-
ing to herself and engages in long hours of day-dreaming. Even when she
is given a chance to escape from her prison-like environment, and to
occupy her mind with different activities, she refuses, and again takes
refuge within herself. She is unable to throw off the terrible net in
which heredity has trapped her. At the end of the book, when she paces
through the house like "un animal méfiant et craintif," she resembles
her lunatic, unstable and unhappy father so much that one could mistake
her for the ghost of the dead Stephen Fletcher.

Adrienne Mesurat, the heroine of Green's second novel, also is
mostly the product of an unfortunate heritage. "... (elle) était une
vraie Mesurat, et malgré son extrême jeunesse (elle n'avait pas plus de
dix-huit ans) son visage annonçait déjà cette sorte de passion de l'auto-
rité dont on voyait l'épanouissement dans les traits d'Antoinette
Mesurat, sa grand-mère." This inherited passion for domination no
doubt made Adrienne get rid of her father and of her sister later in the
book. But within this young girl agitates the "âme distraite" which
was one of the characteristics of the Serres et Lecuyers, the other
branches of the family. The people who had become the victims of the

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9 Ibid., p. 241.
11 Ibid., p. 8.
12 Ibid., p. 6.
strong Mesurats make themselves felt in Adrienne with an unforeseen vengeence. At first her dreamy nature, which she inherited from the Serres et Lecuyers, appears rather harmless. However, as the story advances, the young girl's brooding takes on a more monstrous proportion, and it finally culminates in the loss of her mind.

Green indicates only one victim of heredity in Léviathan, and this is Madame Grosgeorge, a violent and cruel creature. Some foreign blood flows in Madame Grosgeorge's veins, and Green sees in this a partial explanation for her brutal behavior, when he says: "... il avait fallu pour créer une femme aussi secrète et aussi violente autre chose que l'insouciance, autre chose que la mesure et la raison française." ³⁴

Young Marie-Thérèse in Le Visionnaire inherited her beauty from her mother, but this is not an asset, since it embitters her life. Indeed, her mother, Madame Plasse, becomes enraged when she notices her daughter's beauty, and in order to make the young girl suffer, she constantly accuses her of being ugly and retarded. The aging Madame Plasse torments her daughter in this cruel manner apparently because she is subconsciously jealous of Marie-Thérèse, seeing in her a rival for the favor of her nephew Manuel.

From her father, Marie-Thérèse apparently received her "gros bon sens." But, like her mother, she felt a secret inner satisfaction

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³⁴Ibid., p. 144.
in the presence of sick people. She was attracted by the "chétil" and the sickly in her fellowmen. Just as Madame Plasse seems to rejuvenate while nursing the weak Manuel, so also the young girl likes to be in the company of dying people. The two women seem to enjoy these situations because they give them a chance to display their obscure desire to dominate.

The melancholic, dreamy and uneasy nature of young Elisabeth in Minuit must be paralleled with the timid nature of her mother, Blanche. The girl's desires and attempts to flee from her present situation likewise remind the reader of the sad Blanche, who so tragically ended her life when Monsieur Edmé denied her the possibility of leaving the dreariness of her dull life. It would, of course, be absurd to say that the disposition to suicide can be inherited from mother to child, but one wonders if it was only by coincidence that Green let both mother and daughter come to a tragic suicidal end!

In Varoune and in L'Ombre two young girls are portrayed who so closely resemble their dead mothers that they seem to be a living punishment for the two fathers in question. Both these men were more or less responsible for the deaths of their wives, and it appears that a wrathful Jehovah, by endowing their children with the physical traits of the dead spouses, uses them as an instrument of punishment. Lucille Anderson (L'Ombre), not only looks exactly like her dead mother but also displays

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the same childish temperament: at one point in the play, the frightened father indeed mistakes the daughter for his dead wife, and shortly afterwards throws himself from a cliff. The other young girl, Hélène Lombard (Varoune), is an exact copy of the deceased Hélène, and as a result, her presence endlessly torments her father. Whenever he sees his child he is torn by remorse because he had let his wife become pregnant, although a doctor had predicted that this would kill her.

Again in Le Malefiteur, Green introduces the theme of the presence of foreign blood in a woman. As in Léviathan this accounts for the violent temper and actions of Madame Vasseur. Her Italian heritage, "(son) sang roturier," gives her a dual nature. Although she can be good, she is nevertheless also bloodthirsty and cruel. She explains the exaltation that she experiences during her violent fits of anger in terms of this foreign heritage: "C'est notre sang italien ..."; Green continues:

Elle comptait, en effet, parmi ses ascendants maternels, un Napolitain dont la profession demeurait dans une obscurité impénétrable. Il n'empêchait que Madame Vasseur était double et qu'au fond d'elle-même languissait une mère de famille débonnaire qui aurait bien voulu vieillir en paix entre ses pelotes de laine et son infusion, mais ce personnage sortit cédait la place à une tigresse qui n'était pas toujours sûre de ses rugissements.

Varoune is Julian Green's masterpiece as far as showing the impact of heredity is concerned. In this novel, the author states most clearly his views on the subject. In the three parts of the book, he

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21 Ibid., p. 123.
22 Ibid., p. 41.
23 Ibid.
demonstrates the workings of heredity between the year one thousand and the twentieth century. The women of Varouna rediscover within themselves the actions, thoughts, and physical features of women who lived almost five hundred years before them. In the preface to the book, Green states his belief that all of humanity is contained in each man or woman in this way: "... lorsque un enfant naît sur la terre, ce n'est pas un seul être, mais des milliers d'êtres qui renaissent en lui avec leurs espoirs inapaisés, leurs convoitises, leurs inquiétudes, et l'éternel brûlure de l'amour." It becomes clear, then, that the Greenian heroine, through inheritance is already condemned the moment she is conceived in her mother's womb. Her actions are not hers alone; Green says of the individual: "Des milliers d'ancêtres le poussent à agir; il est à lui seul l'humanité entière qui renaît perpétuellement et marche à tâtons vers un but mal déterminé." Since they are thus the product of all who have gone before them, Green's women also have to pay for the sins of their ancestors. "Vivants et morts, nous payons les uns pour les autres." In portraying, in the second part of Varouna, Hélène Lombard, who has a fate similar to that of Morgane, a woman who lived almost half a century before her, the author wants to make his reader aware of how the wheels of heredity grind, subconsciously as well as consciously, transmitting actions and states of mind from one individual to another.

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24 Varouna, pp. iii-iv.
25 Ibid., p. iii.
26 Ibid., p. iv.
Of course, Hélène, standing on the road waiting for her lover, does not know that Morgane likewise waited on a road for the man she expected to marry: the young girl believes that an "enchantment" has overcome her. But even so she performed similar acts:

Et tout à coup, l'idée singulière lui vint de ce qu'elle faisait une première fois de la vie qu'elle se tenait sur une route obscure, à guetter un jeune homme dont elle ne connaissait pas seulement le nom, ni les traits? ...

Cependant, une voix qui venait du fond d'elle-même lui criaït:

"Ce n'est pas la première fois que tu souffres ainsi, que tu te tiens debout dans la nuit silencieuse et qu'à la solitude de la route répond la solitude de ton coeur. Si jeune que tu sois, tu plies sous le faix des jours anciens et tu sais déjà ce que c'est que la langueur d'attendre pendant toute la vie. La brise au-dessus de la tête reconnaît ta présence et la poussière qui vole se souvient de toi."

Jeanne, the protagonist of the third part of the novel, is a twentieth century novelist, and she is gifted with the peculiar insight and sensitivity of people of that profession. She perceives very clearly the burden of Hélène, the girl who lives within her, when she remarks that Helene was the victim of too heavy a heredity. And here lies the revelation of not only Helene's problem, but also that of all Greenian women. Their heritage is a tragic force for which they are not responsible, but which, combined with other factors, will contribute to their destruction.

Jeanne, even though she can so well analyze Hélène Lombard's situation, nevertheless is helpless in the struggle against her own tragic

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27Ibid., pp. 160-61.

28Ibid., p. 262.
heredity. This develops into a very poignant and dramatic conflict within her, because she is consciously aware that she carries many of Hélène's traits. When she visits, for instance, the house of the "brodeuse" she feels that she has already lived and suffered among these walls once before. She notes in her diary: "... la pensée bouleversante m'est venue qu'entre ces murs j'avais passé ma vie, que j'étais quelqu'un qui avait souffert dans cette maison, pendant des années..."\(^{29}\)

Hélène had many times wondered in her childish way about what man is, and how it happens that he thinks certain things, and not others. Jeanne is similarly tormented. She, however, finds an answer to the question, because she believes that each man incarnates in himself all the human beings that lived before him. She writes in her diary: "L'humanité tient à l'aïse dans le cerveau d'un seul être, parce que chacun de nous est à lui seul l'humanité entière."\(^{30}\)

In Varoune, Green makes use of two further, rather mechanical devices to underline the importance of heredity. The first of these devices is dreams. In Hélène's dreams, Morgane, the spinning woman, appears to her and explains the meaning and significance of the chain. In Jeanne's dreams in turn the smallest details about the destiny of the people from whom she inherited her thoughts are revealed to her. Unfortunately, human beings are too weak to understand the meaning of

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\(^{29}\text{Ibid.}, p. 259.\)

\(^{30}\text{Ibid.}\)
these dreams, and that which was designed to enlighten them has just the opposite effect. Green's definition of dreams is interesting not only as far as heredity is concerned, but also for its revelation of his undeniable mystic tendencies:

Nos songes, en effet ne sont que les fragments d'un long message qui ne nous parviennent jamais tout entier, et le plus souvent l'incertitude de notre mémoire ou je ne sais quelle intention secrète de la nature, font que ces fragments eux-mêmes se rompent à leur tour en fragments plus petits qu'il n'est presque plus possible d'assembler.\(^{31}\)

The second device that Green uses to symbolize heredity in Varouna is the ancient chain of dark metal which so fascinatingly seems to come alive and move like a snake around the neck of the women who wear it. This chain, which is the symbol of two destinies fated to unite themselves, falls only by chance into the hands of certain persons.\(^{32}\) This chain is, indeed, not only a symbol for humanity but also for the heredity transmitted from man to man. It has no beginning and no end; its rings, like the lives and destinies of men, are attached to each other as though they were forged together: "Elle n'a ni commencement ni fin, comme la destinée humaine."\(^{33}\)

At the end of Varouna, Hélène visits Jeanne in a dream and attaches a cross to the chain that the sleeping woman is wearing. Here Green says explicitly that we are linked to one another like the links of the magic chain and that we must as a result accept the cross of miseries and burdens connected with the human condition. Very few of the writer's women

\(^{31}\)Ibid., p. 155.

\(^{32}\)Ibid., p. i.

\(^{33}\)Ibid., p. 200.
do accept this cross; they are so in revolt against their unhappy destiny that they can only concentrate upon their egotistic selves, forgetting the responsibility that human existence brings with it.

Summing up, we can say then that the women portrayed in Green's work are suffering from the heritage that they received either from their immediate ancestors or from all of humanity.
CHAPTER III

THE FORCES OF ENVIRONMENT

Before embarking upon a study of the impact that environment exerts on the women in Julian Green's work, one must first consider the kind of environment in which the female characters are presented. With few exceptions they come from the higher bourgeoisie. If they are orphans, they nevertheless are living in a social milieu where worries about money are absent. In other words, it is unnecessary for them to work for their daily bread. In order to illustrate this point, let us then consider the many examples of idle women.

Adrienne Mesurat and her sister have nothing to do all day long. Their father receives a pension which provides adequately for everyone in the household. Emily Fletcher's mother in Mont-Cinère hoards in the bank a considerable fortune, left to her by her husband, on which she and her daughter could live very comfortably were it not for the inhuman avarice of the older woman. Madame Grosgeorge (Léviathan) married her wealthy husband because she did not want to be plagued by financial difficulties, although she had a chance to marry a poorer man whom she loved. After her marriage, all the household duties are done by servants, and the poor woman is condemned to boredom and unhappiness. Ulrique, Hedwige, and Madame Pauque (Le Malfaiteur) are supported by their father and husband, and the only occupation left to them is to sit around the house all day long and tyrannize each other. Countess Elisabeth, in the play L'Ennemi,1 dies of boredom and loneliness in her

luxurious castle. Angélina and Régine (Sud)² similarly sit around the plantation day after day and spin thrilling imaginary adventures in their empty and tired minds. Not once does it occur to these girls to engage in any sort of work, be it intellectual or physical. Stéphanie and Elise, the main female characters of Si L'Etais Vous,³ wander endlessly and aimlessly through their uncle's house, never concerned with their future and what unpleasantness it might bring with it. The last pages of Le Visionnaire do not present a very attractive picture either; the two lonely women, the broken Madame Plasse and her melancholic and neurotic daughter are able, because of a considerable income, to go on living side by side, and they will continue to torment each other until death delivers them. Eliane and Henriette (Epaves)⁴ have no financial worries; the huge fortune that Philippe inherited will indefinitely provide for all of them. Henriette hates this wealth because it destroys her life and more or less forces her to seek refuge in debauchery. Green himself believes that a life devoid of work is useless. As early as 1929 he says in his Journal: "... car lorsque je ne travaille pas, j'ai l'impression que ma vie est inutile."⁵

The only two women who are working because of monetary needs are Angèle, the prostitute in Léviathan, and Jeanne, the novelist in Varouma.

⁵Journal I, p. 19.
We notice upon closer analysis, however, that these two women have the same problems, and that they are tormented by the same miseries as those women who sit around their houses all day and enjoy leisure. It becomes apparent then, that work cannot draw the Greenian women out of their abyss of loneliness. Behind the apparent forces of environment, in the case of both the working and the idle Greenian female characters, lies a deeper and more basic force, a force common to all men. Something within them determines what imprints are stamped upon them by their environment. This basic force might be none other than the tragic character of the human being.

However, if we consider that money generally conditions the environment of Green's characters, we must also consider Green's negative attitude towards this factor. Wealth, whether in small or large amounts, seems dangerous to the author, and therefore it frightens him. In his Journal he says: "Je ne voudrais pas vivre dans une maison qui eût des apparences de richesse. C'est qu'à mes yeux la richesse est maudite et pour cette raison elle me fait peur. Je n'ai aucun mérite à ne l'avoir jamais désirée." Green not only condemns wealth itself; he also treats with disdain those who possess it. He sees for instance in the charity of rich people a form of condescension, an easy way for them to get rid of the poor. If the writer thus condemns the means enabling his people to live in the bourgeois setting he makes them live in, by logical deduction we may assume that the environment is also damned, and that

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6 Le Bel Aujourd'hui, p. 61.
7 Ibid., pp. 119-120.
consequently those who are bound to this environment must suffer in the evil circle built around them by their wealth.

In a larger context Green treats man's relationship to his environment, and seems to feel that nature has a vengeful attitude towards man for having seized upon that which belongs to it. Green has once expressed the thought that nature, tamed or untamed, is always the enemy of man. "Le voyageur" that man is only offending nature, and she is anxious to reclaim from him what he has taken from her. In this respect the author says: "La nature assoupie est peut-être plus inquiétante que dans sa colère. Jamais elle n'est complice de l'homme dont elle n'aime pas la présence et qu'elle voudrait voir périr à la surface de la terre." If nature, then, has such a vengeful wrath towards this invader, how can man feel happy and safe in the environment he has erected with materials captured from nature? Green's novels leave no doubt in one's mind that this hostile environment has a tragic impact upon the lives of his female protagonists.

The immediate environment, her apartment, house, room, tends to make the Greenian woman feel that she is a prisoner, that she is almost buried alive within her décor. All through her life, she desperately attempts to flee this place which impinges upon her liberty. Green once said that man "se croit prisonnier dans une geôle étroite," and

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10. In a later chapter we shall analyze this desire for liberty more closely, to see whether it is true liberty which these people are long- ing for, or whether they wish to flee from themselves.
"comme il aime cette geôle." This indeed applies to many of the women. As hateful as their environment or prison may seem to them, it nevertheless has its own charms. They attempt to flee from it, but they always return to it. Some sort of complicity establishes itself between these unfortunate women and the living place which they so ardently detest. To underline this Green made the house of the prostitute Madame Legras in Adrienne Mesurat resemble its owner. The expensive vulgarity of its proprietor is a beautiful reflection of the immorality of its proprietor. Karl August Horst concludes rightly: "Die Helden gehen mit dem Ort an den sie gebannt sind, eine unsaulösliche Verbindung ein."^12

Now let us review the different dwellings which provoke such violent protests within the Greenian women. The first one to consider is Mont-Cinère, where life is dreary, melancholic and demonic. The term prison fits this horrible place excellently. Green calls it so himself: "Les chênes et les sapins le cachent à moitié, mais entre les troncs noirs vous en apercevez les parois grises et les petites fenêtres carrees: Vous pensez voir une prison."^13 Such an ugly environment would have influenced even a girl with a normal heredity; it is therefore not surprising that a young woman like Emily Fletcher, cursed with inherited neurotic tendencies, goes out of her mind at the end of the book, and burns herself up alive with the house that imprisoned her.

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11Journal II, p. 162.

12"The heroes enter into an insolubile connection with the place to which they are bound." Karl August Horst, "Das Absolute in Julien Greens Tagebüchern," Merkur, Stuttgart, Heft 4, April, 1954, p. 397.

13Mont-Cinère, p. 17.
The case of Adrienne Mesurat is not much different. Her father's house, the "Villa des Charmes," gives the unhappy girl and her sister the feeling that they are contained in a "bagne." Adrienne hates her room, and, like her sister, she tries to escape the home, which becomes even more of a prison when the tyrannical father Mesurat locks the gate and reduces his daughter's activities to staring out of the window and longing for her freedom which seems so hard to attain. In this case, a crime also results from this unnatural imprisonment; Adrienne thinks that she is freeing herself when she kills her prison guard, her father.

One glance at Madame Grosgeorge (Léviathan) assures the reader that he has to do here with a trapped human being. This woman feels so confined and unhappy in her "Villa Mon Idée" that even in the coldest weather she marches around the countryside. When this heavy-set, middle-aged woman paces around her drawing room, now and then approaching the window to look out, she curiously resembles a trapped panther or tiger, furiously pacing its cage. Here again the environment is a factor in the tragic end of the woman in question.

In Epeves, the same décor is the background for the story. The luxurious apartment of the XVI Arondissement is furnished with every comfort except the one that makes the occupants feel at ease and live a normal life. It seems that when Philippe's father amassed his huge fortune, and bought the house, he condemned his son and family in advance by forcing them to lead a meaningless life. The need and desire in

\[14\] Adrienne Mesurat.
Henriette to leave this hostile place, where her sister Eliane walks around at night listening at the doors to find out if Philippe sleeps with her sister, can only be explained in terms of the oppressive impact that this rich bourgeois milieu has on her. One should also note that Henriette sees in death some sort of salvation from her earthly torments, and that twice she is rescued by chance when on the verge of suicide.

Through Green's work we find again and again a cry of hatred expressed by the women concerning their present environment. Régine's cry *(Sud)*: "Je hais la plantation"[^15] can be heard like an echo from all other women. The uneasy silence of their enviornment, like the silence that surrounds the seamstress Félicie in her little "mansarde" in *Le Malfaiteur*, frightens them. They cannot feel at ease or relax. The "Hotel" of the Vasseurs in this book, really a historic monstrosity, is a typical Greenian background. Green calls it "cette maison aux grandes croisées méprisantes"[^16] and even refers to it as "l'ennemi."[^17] Everywhere in this house reigns emptiness, and the novelist no doubt arranged it so as to point out the emptiness, the inner vacuum, of the people living here. In this novel the terms "refuge" and "prison" are both attached to Hedwige's room; the environment can serve as a refuge as well as a prison to the captive and afflicted Greenian woman.

[^15]: P. 21.
[^16]: *Le Malfaiteur*, p. 35.
Another example of an isolated dwelling is furnished by the Abbaye de Fontfroid in Minuit. This old building, ready to crumble any minute, is kept intact by the presence of the shadow of a cross on the wall. In fact some of its rooms have already collapsed into the abyss below. Fontfroid, besides reflecting the isolation and solitude of the people living in it, also might symbolize the psychological and moral degeneracy which is part of each one of them. The example of young Elisabeth shows very clearly again that even though the women hate their environment because the walls are witnesses of their eternal suffering (Broderick illustrates this hatred by saying: "On finit par prendre en haine les murs qui vous voient souffrir,"\(^1^8\)) they are nevertheless attached to it by a force unknown to them, a force which impels them to like that which tortures them, as though they were inflicting upon themselves this punishment. As the story of Minuit progresses, we see that though Elisabeth hates Fontfroid, she is unable to leave it because it acts like a magic charm on her. Green notes this on the occasion of her attempt to flee: "... Elle demeurait immobile, ... comme si de ces vieilles pierres usées par le temps émanait une force inconnue qui la retenait prisonnière."\(^1^9\) Even Phoebe, the main female character in Green's last novel, Chaque Homme dans sa nuit,\(^2^0\) cannot help exclaiming in her letter to Wilfred: "Il me faudra  

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\(^1^8\) Sud., p. 62.  
\(^1^9\) Minuit, p. 299.  
\(^2^0\) (Paris: Plon, 1960).
du temps pour m'habituer a cette grande maison melancholique." In this case, the house will certainly not mold the woman's personality, since she is grown up, but it does depress her and make her unhappy.

Elise, the suffering eighteen year old girl of Si J'Etais Vous, has since her childhood been unfavorably influenced by her surroundings. She, too, sits in the drawing room staring out the window wondering how she could escape. The hatred that she feels towards the Henri II furniture and the familiar rooms of the house is not, however, strong enough to make her leave. The rooms which have witnessed her suffering fascinate her, and a dual feeling concerning her environment, similar to that of Hedwige (Le Malfaiteur), never leaves her. Green says: "... Tout cet ensemble d'une majesté un peu funèbre formait un décor loin duquel Elise se sentait inquiete et mal à l'aise." The young girl herself says lovingly of the living room: "Cette salle à manger est ma forêt natale. Je suis là comme une bête sauvage dans sa jungle." To answer the question why it is that Green's women do not feel at ease anywhere except in their unhappy milieu, one must take their psychological processes into consideration. At the moment it suffices to ask the following questions: Could it be that the desire to inflict further suffering upon themselves binds them to that which makes them

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21 Ibid., p. 279.
22 Ibid., p. 166.
23 Ibid.
suffer in the first place? Are they so deeply inside of despair that they are paralyzed and cannot hoist themselves out of it? Are there masochistic tendencies present in the female characters, which are responsible for their morbid attitude? After a careful reading affirmative answers must be given.

Having thus attempted to determine the influences of environment in a restricted sense, in terms of the characters' immediate surroundings such as the house or room, we must also examine its influence in the sense of "milieu." In this examination family life and social class will be taken into consideration.

Jeanne in Varoula writes in her diary: "... L'enfer tout entier puisse tenir dans un salon de province." According to her the devil is roaming in this room where so much sadness has accumulated for fifty years. There is something hypnotic about an environment where time almost stands still and where habits trap men and women in a mechanism of evil. The price paid for this fascination is a high one, because inaction slowly kills the inhabitants; it kills their inner self and leaves only a void, a tragic vacuum. What is so pathetic and tragic about this is that the room mentioned by Jeanne is the battlefield where the "drame bourgeois avec ses basses violences, sa prudente cruaute, son manque total de poesie," takes place. The fatal influences of environment are exerted on the bourgeoisie, the social classes treated in almost

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24 P. 243.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., p. 267.
every one of Green's works. The laws governing the bourgeoisie are ruthless, base, violent and cruel, and the young women born into this social class suffer endlessly from the pangs inflicted upon them by this milieu. The "monde bourgeois," as Green indicates, is a world which lacks poetry, and thus imagination. As a result, we encounter very few women in the author's work who are able to forget or transcend themselves sufficiently to understand other people's problems and, by living imaginatively through them, to be in a fashion engaged in them. In Green's ferocious bourgeois world, such efforts would be from the beginning discouraged and stamped out in growing children. And ironically, the institution which performs this destruction is none other than the family, which constitutes the immediate milieu of the female characters. This family is in many cases nothing but an instrument of torment and imprisonment. The parents who could lead their daughters in the right direction fail in Green. They are either too self-centered or too lacking in understanding to fulfill their true mission as parents. The cases to be cited in support of this statement are only too numerous. Among the most obvious examples are the cruelty and complete lack of understanding of Adrienne Mesurat's father; Mrs. Fletcher's hatred and indifference towards her daughter Emily; Madame Plasse's sadistic tormenting of her daughter; Blanche's suicide without the least concern for the future of twelve year old Elisabeth; Madame Grosgeorge's satisfaction after severely punishing her young son for only minor reasons; Madame Vasseur's exaltation at making her niece suffer; the irresponsible and hypocritical actions which inflict misery upon the young girl of Elise's uncle; Henriette's complete indifference as to the wellbeing
of her son. This list could go on indefinitely.

We need not look at the environment here in terms of a community, since the drama of the women in Green usually is portrayed in the tight and narrow social circle of the family; the author almost never brings in an environment wider in range and scope.

We may conclude, then, that environment combined with the forces of heredity provokes in the case of many women catastrophes such as murder, suicide, and insanity. We must also add, however, that often the female characters are so tied to their milieu that they cannot escape it, and must go on suffering in it until death or madness delivers them. Everywhere we note that Green criticizes the emptiness and inaction of the bourgeois class and in particular the irresponsibility of the parents of this class.
CHAPTER IV

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AMONG GREEN'S WOMEN

When we speak of love in Green, we must qualify this term, for after a careful reading of the author's works, it is clear that there is something paradoxical in the love he portrays in his novels and plays. Love in the Christian sense of giving oneself, of charity and tenderness, certainly is hard to find here. Through a strange coincidence, love becomes distorted; it appears many times wearing the mask of hatred and it brings forth catastrophies. It is as though there were something poisonous or insidious in Greenian love, for it imposes pain upon those engaged in it, and it leads only to disaster. Green's treatment of love has aroused critical comments from a number of scholars; André Blanchet, for instance, says: "La haine se mêle à l'amour,"\(^1\) and Jacques Madaule goes so far as to say: "L'amour est absent dans ses romans."\(^2\) These distortions appear not only in Green's treatment of sexual love, but also in his portrayal of family relationships.

The maternal love which we encounter in our author is of an odd type: it is almost the opposite of what the average person understands


such love to be. It has often been said that maternal love is the purest form of love, because it is almost entirely devoid of selfishness. This does not at all apply to Green. The mothers of his books can best be characterized by the German word "Rabenvater." Indeed, true feeling and affection are alien to these women, and the bond which attaches them to their children is one of hatred, domination or indifference.

One of the first striking examples of monstrous mothers in Green's gallery is Eva Grosgeorge (Léviathan). This woman hates her sickly young son: "Elle détestait cet enfant qui lui rappelait son mari; il était le signe vivant de son esclavage, parce qu'elle se sentait incapable de l'abandonner, de le fuir, et qu'il faisait parti de cet ordre de choses qui lui avait été imposé sans qu'elle eut consentie." This hatred makes Madame Grosgeorge abuse and martyrize the poor child endlessly. She waits impatiently for André to make the smallest mistake so that she may punish him severely. She gets a secret satisfaction from seeing the fear in the young boy's eyes when she threatens him, and she rejoices even more when she petrifies him by explaining to him in great detail and in a soft voice why she is punishing him. The pages on which the procedure of punishment is explained are among the most repulsive in Green. One can get the full meaning and impact of the cruel actions of

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3 This word is translated into English as "cruel or unnatural" mother (the literal translation being "raven mother"); however, this does not express fully the negative connotation of the German word.

4 Léviathan, p. 146.
this sadistic woman only by letting Green speak!

-Lève ta tête et regarde-moi.
En disant ces mots elle serra un peu les dents et planta ses yeux dans ceux de son fils. Puis, les coudes au corps, elle leva l'avant-bras droit, le rejettant en arrière aussi loin qu'il lui était possible. Dans cette position elle demeura une seconde sans qu'un muscle de son corps ne bronchât et, tout à coup, après s'être insensiblement tournée vers la droite, comme pour prendre un peu d'élan, elle frappa l'enfant au visage avec la force et la brutalité d'une machine. Il frémit, halletant d'effroi, et se mit à hurler. Cependant sa mère ne le quittait pas des yeux; elle semblait ne pas entendre ses cris et observait à présent la joue où l'emprunte rose de sa main pâlissait peu à peu. Quelque chose d'étrange s'était glissé dans les prunelles noires de cette femme, une expression d'avidité et de plaisir qui transfigurait son vieux et joli visage et lui prêtaient comme un regain de jeunesse. En ce moment son esprit était si absorbé par ce qu'elle voyait, que rien n'existait plus pour elle en dehors de la meurtrissure infligée par ses doigts. Quelqu'un eût crié: "Au feu!" derrière elle, qu'elle n'eût peut-être pas tourné la tête.  

Before such a spectacle any normal reader shrinks back in horror, wondering how it is possible for a mother to be sadistic to such an extreme. But this is not the complete portrait of Madame Grosgeorge. Green goes on to tell us that she nursed André very conscientiously every time he fell ill. "Chaque fois que l'enfant tombait malade, elle le soignait avec exactitude, mais une joie terrible la ravageait; elle ne savait ce qu'elle espérait." Is this devotion to be interpreted as affection aroused by pity for the poor sick creature? Hardly, for it seems to arise primarily out of a secret urge to dominate. Nietzsche's concept of love, which states that we lovingly take care of the one who suffers in order to dominate him, has been thoroughly applied to

5 Ibid., p. 43.
6 Ibid., p. 146.
maternal love by Julian Green.

Another case of tyranny and sadism in a mother is that of Madame Plasse (Le Visionnaire), the woman who through the death of her husband has suddenly become the head of her family. Madame Plasse has only one daughter, Marie-Thérèse, but she is also taking the place of mother for Manuel, the son of her deceased sister. Madame Plasse inspires both her daughter and nephew with fear instead of love. She looks at them with "un regard d'inquisiteur." Like a ferocious black cat lying in wait for her victim, she hovers over the children in the living room. The rage of this woman has no limits, and while the punishing procedure she adopts is perhaps less cruel, it is quite similar to that of Madame Grosgeorge. She does not punish to correct Marie-Therese, but to humiliate her and fill her with terror. The daughter says:

...elle ne me punissait jamais sans m'expliquer loyalement pourquoi elle allait m'enfermer à la cave, par exemple, ou me retirer le cadeau que je venais de recevoir, et si je ne comprenais pas, elle se mettait en peine de me montrer l'étendue de ma faute et la nécessité d'un châtiment. Lorsqu'il s'agissait de psecudilles, elle se servait d'une simple brosse à cheveux pour me corriger; dans ces cas-la, j'avais le choix entre le plat de la brosse et les piquants.

The book is filled with violent scenes during which Madame Plasse screams at her daughter, accusing her of the most atrocious things in order to bring the poor girl to tears. Madame Plasse then enjoys almost sensuously the sight of the misery that she has caused. In such a

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8 Le Visionnaire, p. 27.
9 Ibid., p. 10.
10 Ibid., p. 9.
moment she resembles a person drunk with joy. Reading Marie-Thérèse's account, one gets the impression that like Madame Grosgeorge, this woman is almost rejuvenated at the sight of the effects that her scenes provoke:

...cette scène atroce qui me rendait si malheureuse procurait à ma mère des sentiments tout autres que les miens ... Le sang colorait son visage et lui rendait sa jeunesse; à tout moment, son œil limpide et mobile changeait de nuance sous l'empire d'une émotion que je prenais pour la seule colère. Parfois la pointe de sa langue essuyait ses lèvres et sa narine palpitait. Une expression envivrée renversait ses traits. J'avais devant moi une femme chez qui la colère ravissait les sources mêmes de la vie.11

Why does Madame Flasse treat her child, her own flesh and blood, in such an inhuman way? Here again the answer is obvious. Madame Flasse sees in her daughter the fruit of an unhappy marriage into which she was forced out of pride and to save her face. The hatred and rage which she can no longer inflict upon her dead husband is transferred to Marie-Thérèse. The young girl becomes the victim of the poison that is devastating this monstrous creature. The daughter has to suffer so that the "mother" may live. When Marie-Thérèse is a grown woman, she comprehends the cause of the torments inflicted upon her by her mother in her youth. She writes in her diary:

... c'était à mon être, à mon existence même qu'elle en voulait. Je demeurais à ses yeux la fille d'un homme qu'elle avait épousé par dépit et contre son gré, et de temps en temps, sous prétexte de me redresser, elle m'accablait de sa rancune ... car il fallait pour qu'elle respirât que je souffrisse un peu; ... elle jouissait du trouble qu'elle portait dans la mienne et pour tout dire, elle en vivait.12

11 Ibid., p. 41.
12 Ibid., p. 42.
Madame Plasse applies the same cruelty to Manuel, her orphan nephew. Since she cannot torment him enough at home, she goes so far as to follow him to the bookstore where he works and to persecute him in the backroom of the store, throwing the most insulting reproaches at him. The cause of this cruelty goes again back to her own frustrated sexual life. She had once been desperately in love with Manuel's father; however, he married her sister, and ever since, Madame Plasse had been tormented by this defeat in her youth. Now, to revenge herself on the father who did not love her, she tortures his son. Manuel says in his journal:

Pour se venger du père elle laissait à la tête du fils toutes les qualités dont celui-ci n'héritait pas: la force, la beauté, la bonne humeur, le charme; on eut cru qu'elle s'adressait à une ombre qu'elle voulait déposséder de son repos, elle l'appelait, elle lui montrait en moi la faillite de tous ses espoirs dont s'était leurré un mourant.14

When Manuel becomes ill and starts to waste away with tuberculosis, however, the cruel aunt is completely changed. She almost becomes the slave of the sick "king" whom she tries to pull out of the grip of approaching death. She spends night after night at his bedside; she feels "du plaisir à le soigner." But this sudden devotion is not a noble feeling, for had Madame Plasse been truly anxious for the recovery of her tuberculosis-ridden nephew she would have consulted a doctor instead of insisting so stubbornly upon limiting his care to her own

\[^{13}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 22.}\]
\[^{14}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 123.}\]
\[^{15}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 71.}\]
efforts. But she gets a secret satisfaction out of being closely connected with sickly people; "son oeil brille de satisfaction," and something "de radieux l'éclaire;" in other words, she is rejuvenated by her new vocation. The sensitive Manuel realizes perfectly well that this extreme affection is not a genuine form of love, but merely an ugly distortion of it. He notes: "Si j'étais romancier, je montrerais a quel obscur besoin de domination répondait cet étrange dévouement; cette charité agressive."\(^{17}\)

Mrs. Fletcher's (Mont-Cinèvre) conception of her duties as a mother is similar to that of the two women mentioned above. She is so selfish, self-centered, and enslaved by her passion of avarice that she would rather sacrifice the life of her child than to make a fire in the winter or to buy adequate clothing. The fact that she never treats the growing child with affection or tenderness, makes Mrs. Fletcher partly responsible for the young girl's suicide. Green says in this respect: "Toute marque de tendresse lui étant refusée, elle devint silencieuse et renfermée en elle-même."\(^{18}\) Mrs. Fletcher seems to feel that since she never wished to have this child, she does not need to love it; the only reason she takes care of the baby after it is born is to avoid spending the money to hire a nurse. In the first part of the book, Green shows her heartlessness clearly:

\(^{16}\)Ibid.

\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 97.

Mrs. Fletcher, qui ne se sentait pas beaucoup plus d'affection pour son enfant que pour son mari, s'occupa d'elle aussitôt qu'elle en fut capable, afin de ne pas avoir à payer une nourrice, mais elle le fit sans joie et avec l'amertume de prendre soin d'un être dont elle n'avait jamais souhaité la naissance à aucun moment.

In *Epaves* the situation is not much different. Although Henriette, the mother in question, does not mistreat her son sadistically, the young Robert is nevertheless an unfortunate child, for he was "un enfant conçu dans un élan de haine." He is too much in the world of his parents. Henriette is so busy trying to find happiness for herself that she ignores the boy completely. During the school year the unwanted son is safely put away in a boarding school, and during the vacations Henriette treats him with a complacent indifference. The reader might think that since Henriette is neglecting her duties as a mother, her sister, Elaine, who is living in the same household, and who sent Henriette in the first place onto the merry-go-round of debauchery, would cherish the little boy! She is secretly in love with her brother-in-law, so why should she not take the place of mother which Henriette so conveniently has left vacant? But alas, under the pretense of being as gentle as a lamb Eliane hides the predatory nature of a wolf. She also detests Robert: "...elle n'aimait guère l'enfant qui symbolisait à ses yeux une union qu'elle voulait détruire."

In *Varouma* Green presents one woman who does take her dead sister's place as mother but not because she has any feeling of affection.

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20*Epaves*, p. 79.
for her niece. She takes care of the baby "par un secret désir d'arriver à de certaines fins qu'elle ne s'avouait pas." The baby gives her an excuse to sneak into the house of her brother-in-law, Bertrand Lombard, for whom she secretly harbors a savage passion.

A different and more varied relationship is treated in Le Malfaiteur. In this book the mother does not dominate the daughter, but the daughter enslaves the mother. In fact, Madame Vasseur is afraid of her daughter Ulrique. The girl is presented here as "un tortionnaire" while the mother is "sa victime." The cold, almost perfect beauty of Ulrique inspires her mother with awe and admiration for the physical perfection that she never possessed. Madame Vasseur says in this respect:

D'où vient qu'elle est si belle? ... Ni ma mère, ni moi nous n'avons eu ce don, ces poignets, ces chevilles ... Son nez rappelle le mien en plus fin et sa bouche, la mienne, en mieux dessinée. Ses joues n'ont pas cette rondure un peu bête qu'avaient mes joues à son âge, Elle est parfaite. Son visage ne connaît pas ces moments ingrâts où le faux jour cherche un défaut à souligner, une ride à prédire. On dirait que la lumière et l'ombre se sont toquées d'elle.

Madame Vasseur does not mind being humiliated by her daughter, or obeying her. On the contrary, the scenes of humiliation fill her with happiness and make her adore her tyrant more. However, in this woman also looms the ferocity of a "lâche," for she in turn takes out her rage on her orphan niece who is living with her.

22 Varouna, p. 97.
23 Le Malfaiteur, p. 39.
24 Ibid., pp. 39-40.
25 Ibid., pp. 40-41.
We might note at this point that Julian Green is still preoccupied with dominating mothers, for in his last novel, another specimen of the type appears. This woman is not a cruel dominating mother, but the effect which her domination has on her son is maybe worse than that of the cruelly dominating mothers. Mrs. Howard certainly does not torment her son, but it is quite obvious that Angus may have become a homosexual because of his mother's over-protection.

If we now proceed to analyze filial love, we find that perversion has crept in here also. And this should not come as a surprise to anyone, for how can daughters have tenderness and affection for mothers and fathers who have deprived them of love ever since they were born? The response given by most of the young daughters is merely an echo of their mother's behavior. Hatred and disdain are the main forms in which the filial relationship appears in Green's works. We have already noted Ulrique Vasseur's mistreatment and humiliation of her mother. Also very typical of the attitude of most daughters in Green, but perhaps somewhat more expressive, is that of Emily Fletcher. The domination and cruelty of the mother have provoked in the daughter such a strong feeling of hatred that she wishes to avenge herself physically upon this woman who is to her nothing more than a stranger obstructing her way. Every time she sees her mother, the desire awakens in her to kill this hypocrite. Finding Mrs. Fletcher's hat one day when she is alone, she goes so far as to beat the hat and trample upon it, imagining that she is doing this to her mother.

\[26\text{Chaque Homme dans sa nuit (Paris: Plon, 1960).}\]
Marie-Thérèse, the mistreated young girl of *Le Visionnaire*, sometimes feels, as a grown woman, pity for her mother, but much more often she in turn treats her former torturer with cruelty. She says: "Souvent elle m'inspirait une pitié sincère et profonde; plus souvent encore, à ma honte soit dit, je me rappelais ses colères d'autrefois, ses injustices, le mépris dont elle me couvrait et je lui parlais rudement, à mon tour."  

Both Adrienne Mesurat and her sister, Germaine, despise, hate and fear their father. The old Mesurat symbolizes for the two girls everything that is evil. This intense and suppressed feeling of hatred eventually breaks out, and makes an unconscious murderer of Andrienne.

Closely related to maternal and filial love are the bonds of love that generally exist between female relatives. This sort of affection is also absent in Green. The Mesurat sisters furnish an excellent example and set a precedent in this respect for all future relationships of this sort in the author's works. Germaine, who is ugly and sick, is jealous of her young and beautiful sister. Since she is unhappy, she cannot bear to see Adrienne happy. She delights in torturing the young girl, and even plots with her father against her. Although Adrienne seems to be the victim of a cruel and unjust sister, she herself has no love or sympathy to spare for the pitiful and sick wretch. The illness of her sister only fills her with disgust and repulsion. They are both distant from each other, living side by side like stranger, and no tie of affection exists between them.

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27 P. 272.
Another very hateful relationship exists between Elaine and Henriette in Epaves. Jealousy and the will to destroy are the motives that underlie all their actions. We have already noted above how Elaine proceeded to destroy the marriage of her sister to possess her brother-in-law, whom she secretly loved. We must not forget that it was also Elaine who talked her sister into marrying the rich and empty Philippe.

Marguerite in Varouna had likewise been jealous of her sister and was happy only when Hélène was in the grave. During the funeral the vicious creature could hardly hide her "joie sauvage" behind her black veil.

The relationship between the two sisters, Jeanne and Laurence, in the third part of the same book, is in turn hardly characterized by love. Laurence ignores Jeanne although she is living on the money that is coming in from Jeanne's novel. She dominates her and does not take her seriously. She and the older brother, who also lives in the household, treat Jeanne as though she were a servant, or even a creature from the lowest level of society. In protest against this injustice Jeanne exclaims: "Ils m'ont bannie dans cet abîme de non-existence."29

A final example is the cruel behavior of Ulrique Vasseur towards her cousin Hedwige. Ulrique, though she possesses perfect beauty, is cursed with "une cruauté naturelle."30

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28P. 106.

29Ibid., p. 217.

30Le Malfaiteur, p. 58.
It greatly amuses her to see Hedwige suffer, and for this reason she coldly formulates a master plan of torture. She introduces the young girl to a homosexual with whom the poor girl falls desperately in love, but who cannot return her love. This love becomes the tragedy of Hedwige's life, and she eventually commits suicide because of it. Shortly before the events come to this climax Ulrique very casually takes a vacation and thus removes herself from the fatal happening.

In view of the above analysis we are forced to conclude, with Jacques Madaule, that love is absent in Green's works. Hatred, mistrust and dissension take its place, not only in the lives of the women in his books, but in the lives of all other characters as well. The main reason that the Greenian women are incapable of love appears to be that they are all too self-centered and egotistical. A second reason for the absence of love seems to be Green's belief that it is impossible for man to love his fellow-men in this world mainly because of his inability to communicate meaningfully with his fellow-men.\(^3\)

\(^3\)For further development of this thought see chapter VI.
CHAPTER V

SEXUAL RELATIONS AND THEIR DISTORTIONS

L'homme charnel vit avec l'homme spirituel. L'un essaie de trancher la gorge à l'autre. Renoncer au plaisir, c'est jeter l'homme charnel au cachot, mais il n'en continue pas moins de vivre, ligoté, baillonné aussi fortement qu'on voudra; il est là pourtant, et, ce qui est curieux, il change, suit une évolution toute personnelle. Ce qu'il désire aujourd'hui, n'est plus ce qu'il désirait à vingt ans, ni à trente ans, ni même à quarante. Un déterminisme inexorable contraint ces appétits furieux "à se développer dans l'inassouvissement."

In any study concerning the love passion between the two sexes, it must first be noted that Green sees his men and women as dual creatures, within whom a constant battle rages between the physical and the spiritual. And it should be further noted that it is precisely the physical aspects of love, which cause them so much torment and which underlie their raison d'être. Green aptly remarks that it is impossible to kill this physical desire in man, that it is possible only to deceive it, to put it to sleep, or to chloroform it with prayers. Julian Green himself seems to abhor physical pleasure: "Mais il y a dans le plaisir quelque chose qui me fait horreur." Nevertheless, in his Journal he repeatedly acknowledges its importance. Thus he says: "Les fautes charnelles apprennent à certains ce qu'ils n'auraient jamais pu savoir autrement .. L'expérience de l'amour physique dépasse infiniment

1Journal V, p. 85.
2Ibid., p. 63.
3Journal VI, p. 208.
le corps; elle englobe un monde qu'il est précieux d'avoir connu et où beaucoup de bien se mêle à beaucoup de mal. It is thus evident that despite his reservations about physical love, Green recognizes it as a basic factor in man's life, a factor which cannot be easily dismissed, but which must be accepted and dealt with. In fact Green thinks that it is better to recognize sensuality, which is the basis of sexual desire, and to bring it out in the open, rather than to allow it to slip into the subconscious where it becomes a much more dangerous force:

Tout dans notre vie étant de nature sexuelle, nos gestes, nos façons de nous asseoir, nos lectures bonnes ou mauvaises, notre manière de nous savonner le corps, enfin tout. Comment ne pas voir que lorsqu'un homme renonce au plaisir physique, il le remplace sur-le-champs et sans le savoir par mille petites choses où il cherchera une sorte de compensation à ce qui lui manque. Est-ce que je dis mal? Je pense que non. Je pense que faire une somme ou manger un gâteau, ou se celer dans un bon fauteuil, c'est proprement tromper sa faim, celle qu'on ne veut même pas nommer. Le péché mortel est éconduit, est mené à la porte de la ville à grands coups de tambour (c'est le diable qui bat le tambour), mais la sensualité revient tout doucement, se glisse par une poterne, déguisée comme il faut ... On ne gagne pas la partie en confisquant au corps son appareil sexuel, pour parler clairement. La sensualité se réfugie ailleurs. Elle est très subtile: elle peut même se cacher jusque dans les mortifications.

All that Green has to say in his Journal about love can of course be found in other forms in his novels. Physical love and unhappiness play an enormous role directly or indirectly in the lives of the women he portrays. It is the love passion which makes of them "les êtres de feu," creatures devoured by an unrequited, insatiable inner flame.

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4 Journal V, pp. 42-43.

5 Le Bel Aujourd'hui, p. 284.
In many cases we shall find that their disorder stems precisely from their frustrations in love, which produce in them a rapacious fire which they can neither subdue nor satisfy.

It is of course extremely hard to define love. Too many inadequate statements have already been made about it. Green's women are always selfish in love. As hard as they may try, they always turn upon the same pivot, which to them is the most important thing in the world - their own desires. They are so selfishly preoccupied with their own search for happiness that it doesn't occur to them to share the happiness of others or to provide happiness for anyone else. If in a genuine, authentic love relationship the individuality is not destroyed, we have to reaffirm that no Greenian woman ever possesses this sort of genuine love. The women are shattered, dispersed, they have become either "masters" or "slaves," and they cling to their perverse notion of love out of desperation. Now it seems evident from the start that if a relationship is entered into purely out of despair, it is merely a tool, used to quell the rising cry of despair within oneself.

Since the majority of the women in Green have been unable to come to grips with their own selves because their ethos is in a state of chaos, dispersed and uncollected, they cannot share a meaningful love relationship with members of the opposite sex. No matter whether they are young or old, married or unmarried, wives or even prostitutes, they can never be true companions to the men with whom they are involved; they are doomed to be always either slaves or despots.

As early as in *Mont-Cinere*, we find a weird marital relationship between Stephen and Kate Fletcher. Oral communications, the means of
mutual understanding, has completely disappeared between the two. They live together in indifference, rarely seeing each other, and one wonders why they married in the first place. Stephen's death finally brings more relief than sorrow for Kate.

In Léviathan, the love relationship between Madame Grosgeorge and her debauched, overfed husband is also anything but ideal. Madame Grosgeorge not only despises herself for her marriage of convenience to this bourgeois, but she develops, over the years, a violent hatred for him. When the occasion presents itself to have an affair with a man of her own age, she clings to it and stakes her whole existence upon it. Her physical desires, dormant for so many years, burst forth all of a sudden with an unforeseeable force, and when she realizes that Gueret, the object of her desires, has no interest in her, she commits suicide. Death seems the only possible relief for her thwarted desire.

And what conclusions are we to draw from the behavior of Madame Plasse (Le Visionnaire), the woman who so successfully plays the role of the sad widow, but whose heart leaps whenever her young nephew comes into the room? She had dominated and disdained her husband while he was alive, having married him solely to save face after her younger sister took her former fiancé away from her. Here, too, concealed physical desire manifests itself. When the twenty-year-old orphaned nephew Manuel comes into Madame Plasse's life, a new imaginary world of possibilities opens up before this woman, whose desire for love has been frustrated for so many years. Her rather ridiculous and grotesque

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6Le Malfaiteur, p. 37.
attempts to make herself look young and appealing are the result of this passionate desire.

The marital ties linking the Vasseurs in *Le Malfaiteur* are likewise perverted. Madame Vasseur, like her predecessors in Green's novels, dominates and hates her husband, and she bitterly regrets the mistake she made in marrying him: "...[elle] se demandait par quelle aberration elle avait pu se donner à ce petit homme, en quoi sa mémoire la trompait, car elle ne s'était pas donnée à cet homme, mais vendue à lui devant témoins pour une somme importante." 7 We should note that the love relationship in the mind of Madame Vasseur has been degraded to the level of prostitution, a state which requires absolutely no participation in the spirit of the female.

The typical example of the Greenian wife is of course Stephanie (Si j'Etais Vous). This young woman dominates her husband to a ridiculous extent. The relationship between the man and wife is here obviously nothing but a melodramatic farce. Stephanie will not give her husband up under any circumstances, however, not because her domination conceals love, but merely because she is afraid to lose her point d'appui in the world. Her attachment to her husband is thus nothing more than one's attachment to a piece of china to which one is accustomed. She observes him coldly without being actively and meaningfully involved with him.

A further unhappy love relationship can be found in *Epaves*. Here both husband and wife seem to be at fault. Henriette, who is young and

7*Le Malfaiteur*, p. 37.
flirtations, is only too happy to be freed from her boring husband when her sister moves in. Now she desperately seeks happiness in debauchery, drinking and cuckolding her husband every night with the poor little bank clerk Victor. This life of pleasure obviously kills any meaning which might have existed before in Henriette's life. Green's statement that sexual pleasure kills any true feeling of love in man applies to this woman: "Ce que j'ai contre la vie de plaisir, c'est qu'elle tue dans l'homme la faculté d'aimer. L'amour n'est pas nécessairement lié au désir; il le dépasse sans cesse, mais l'amour ne court pas les rues; c'est-là, précisément, ce qu'il ne fait jamais." From this destruction of the capacity for love results, no doubt, Henriette's instability and her solitude; her further sexual experience, instead of bringing her out of the abyss, only plunge her deeper into it.

The relationship between Ulrique Vasseur (*Le Malfaisant*) and her husband is similar. She, too dominates her husband. She tells her fortune with cards every night, asking whether her husband will die the next day. She cannot stand to be approached by him and displays a cold indifference even when she only has to sit with him in the same room. The thought that she might have satisfied the pleasure of this "imbecile" is an insult to her pride which she cannot digest so long as he is alive. On the other hand she is also tormented by the thought that perhaps he no longer desires her physically. Though obsessed with sex, she repeatedly refuses opportunities for physical relations with men much more

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8 P. 74.

9 *Le Bel Aujourd'hui*, p. 12.
attractive and desirable than her husband. Why, then, did she not seize these occasions? A battle seems to be raging in this woman between her pride, which is always ready to inflict masochistic tortures upon her, and her carnal desires, which seem to be insatiable.

It is one of Green's beliefs that the sexual instinct does not accomplish anything and only brings madness into human life. In his Journal he compares this instinct with a savage elephant who is attached by one foot, and who desperately tries to free itself. In Ulrike Green seems to show how erotic passion, as it grows in intensity, must end by becoming impossible to satisfy in purely human terms.

The only married woman in Green who does establish a meaningful relationship in her marriage is Jeanne in Varouma. However, since Jeanne is almost the complete impersonation of Green himself, we cannot look at her as an example of the typical Greenian woman. She has too much of the author in her to be considered apart from him.

If we now approach the unmarried Greenian female protagonists, we find that they indeed differ very little from the married ones in their conception of and participation in love. The first ones to consider are Marguerite (Varouma) and Eliane (Epaves), each of whom shares a house with the man she loves, in both cases the man being a relative through the marriage of a sister. These two women have within them "la rage d'une amoureuse frustrée." At first glance their overpowering

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10 Le Malfaiteur, pp. 112-113.
12 Varouma, p. 226.
conscientious devotion appears to be the result of an ideal love; it soon becomes evident, however, that this love springs from secret, unrequited physical passion. The tragic suffering which can plague a woman of this type is best depicted in Eliane's inner monologue:

Elle était donc celle, un être charnel, une malheureuse affamée, et qui avait honte ... elle portait dans son cœur un désir qui la rendait vile à ses propres yeux et ce qu'elle appelait mentalement son amour se réduisait à une basse envie de plaisir ... Jamais elle ne serait libre, il y aurait toujours autour d'elle un mur invisible et Philippe, tout près d'elle et hors de son atteinte, perdrait peu à peu sa réalité. Jusqu'à la fin de sa vie elle plierait sous le faix de son lourd désir, muette et dévorée de regrets, plus vieille chaque jour, aux côtés de cet homme que les vêtements lui cachaient même dans sa bière, s'il mourrait avant elle.13

If we can say, then that the motivation and nature of their love is physical, how does this love manifest itself? Its chief manifestations are the secret attempts these women make to dominate their respective partners. Thus we notice that though Eliane is outwardly a slave who bends to every minor wish of Philippe, actually she controls every one of his moves, going so far as to choose for him the books she wants him to read. Marguerite wishes to love her brother-in-law, Bertrand Lombard, in so many impossibly diverse fashions that her life is doomed to be unhappy and tortured, preciscely because of its self-consummation. She would have liked to be simultaneously his daughter, wife, and mother, to obey him, to govern him, and to treat him as an equal, so that finally she could have given him not merely one heart, but three hearts. However, all that she ever became in the life of this man was a servant.14 This humiliation made her savage passion develop more gigantic proportions.

13Epaves, p. 220.
14Varoue, p. 107.
She was always both happy and unhappy when she was around Lombard, but in the end her loyalty always triumphed: "Si cela n'était tenu qu'à elle, cette femme se fut transformée en maison afin de mieux posséder l'objet de son grand amour." This perverted longing for absolute possession repeatedly defeats any possibility for a genuine love relationship.

But with these women the Greenian tableau of unhappy love relationships does not end. The young girls he portrays also find that love is either unrequited or illusory. Even in the images of love that these girls form in their own minds, there is something warped, poisonous and self-defeating. While most of them certainly would not go so far as Madame Legras, who says: "L'homme est une bête qui ne se laisse bien prendre que si l'on l'assomme du premier coup," they see in men little more than tools or beasts. And yet how desperately they try to find a raison d'etre in this love of theirs, which is doomed from the beginning!

In many of them the desire to love and to be loved stems largely from their longing to free themselves from the bonds which confine them, but their notions of freedom are vague and childish. If that which caused their initial protest against enslavement were removed, the freedom they dream of achieving would also fade away. This freedom could never be a positive value but merely a negative one. In some instances the desire for love is closely tied to the basic loneliness and solitude of which the Greenian women are victims, usually before the loved one is on the scene and after he has disappeared. In Adrienne Mesurat Green describes the

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15 Ibid., p. 108.
16 Adrienne Mesurat, p. 120.
effects of the consuming love passion of his young women thus:

Rien n'est plus proche d'une femme ensorcelée qu'une femme éprise. La volonté ne compte plus, sa pensée même lui est enlevée. Elle n'est rien sans celui qui seul peut la faire agir et, si elle est séparée, elle tombe dans une espèce d'engourdissement moral et ne garde de la vie que la conscience de la douleur et de la solitude.17

If we watch Adrienne as she schemes to get one glimpse at the doctor whom she loves and again at the end of the book as she wanders on the road, a crazy woman, we may say that the blow she received when she learned that the Doctor could not love her destroyed her point d'appui and sent her into madness.

Both Hedwige (Le Malfaiteur) and Eliane (Si J'Étais Vous) are overpowered by a strong feeling which they can neither master nor banish. These two young girls have just awakened, like Marie-Thérèse (Le Visionnaire) and Elisabeth (Minuit), to awareness of their physical bodies, and now they long desperately for some vague physical satisfaction. The secret passion for her married cousin which tears Elise apart is aggravated when she tries to repress it, becoming an unsurmountable obsession. Hedwige commits suicide when she realizes that she will never be, in the life of the homosexual Dollange Gaston, what she dreamed of being, namely: "sa femme, sa mère et sa fille tout à la fois."18 Since her illusion about love does not materialize, she finds it impossible to go on living and to run the risk of encountering disappointing love untrue to her dream.

17 Adrienne Mesurat, pp. 66-67.
18 Le Malfaiteur, p. 80.
Two peculiar instances of love in young women are found in Angèle (Léviathan) and Moïra (Moïre). These two girls either sell or give themselves to anybody who comes along. In Angèle, who was forced into her profession by Madame Londe, there is a sensitivity which demands more than physical orgies from a love relationship. Even in her, however, burns the insatiable desire for an impossible love which is typical of other Greenian women. Moria, on the other hand, is "une louve, une bête sans cesse affamée." She is a woman without any moral principles at all, who sees in love merely the fulfilling of the sex act. She is apparently the mistress of all the college boys in the town, and Killigrew says rightly of her: "Elle se donnerait à un gorille, si un gorille lui faisait la cour." Moïra is an exception in that she brings her enslavement to sexual instincts out into the open; most other women in Green are secretly disturbed by this desire but do not satisfy it as Moïra does.

François Mauriac's warning about physical love seems to hold true for the passion that we find in Green's women:

L'union charnelle satisfait un instant un vœu contradictoire de solitude et de la présence de la dualité et l'unité; mais l'antique tristesse de l'homme et de la femme lorsqu'ils se séparent, aussi loin qu'ils soient descendus dans le plaisir, témoigne d'une déception, d'un désaccord, tels que chacun se réfugie, s'abîme dans son propre épuisement.

Here, as in Mauriac's works, physical love rarely gives complete satisfaction. Green's heroines, on the contrary, become obsessed beings

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19 Moïre, p. 172.
20 Ibid.
devoured by passion. The story which Green tells is that of the soli-
tude and the hunger which spring from the subconscious, where human
aspirations, failures and hidden passions dwell.

We may conclude then by saying that in his treatment of physical
passion, as in his treatment of family relationships, Green shows no
woman who experiences a liberating love. Here again love is nothing but
hatred, and marriage is more of a refuge than anything else. Manuel's
statement equating love with hatred could come from any one of the
Greenian women: "Il me semble que ce mystérieux acte d'amour que j'allais
accomplir enfin remplaçait un acte de haine et se confondait avec lui."22
We should also not forget that the sex act between Manuel and the com-
tesse ends in her death:

Cependant le corps pâle et froid de ma maîtresse se refermait lente-
ment sur le mien, pareil à ces fleurs monstruuses dont on dit qu'elles emprisonnent l'insecte qu'attire la douceur de leur parfum. Ses
pieds se rejoignirent derrière les miens et ses bras sous sa nuque; je
sentis alors comme une brûlure la fraîcheur de cette chair. Au plus
fort de la volupté, j'eus l'impression de me débattre et de réchauf-
fer une morte dont l'inflexible étreinte ne se desserrait pas. Cet
enlacement glacial me fit savourer la terreur au cœur même du plaisir
et ce qu'on appelle l'ivresse des sens ne m'empêcha point de compre-
dre que j'étais la proie et non le maître. J'étouffai dans la lourde
chevelure le cri de joie et d'angoisse qui s'échappait de ma poitrine
et, le corps baigné de sueur, je tâchai de me libérer, mais ici com-
mença un long et singulier supplice, car celle qu'a bon droit j'ap-
pellai ma maîtresse employait toutes ses forces à me retenir.
L'horreur qu'elle m'inspira dans cet instant ne peut s'expliquer.
Assouvi, dégrisé, tremblant encore des efforts que j'avais fournis,
je luttais pour arracher ma chair de sa chair, mais on eut dit qu'
elle se souciait à moitié et mon corps se tordit en vain dans l'état de
ces membres qu'animaient par intervalles une sorte de fureur spasmodique.
Pour reprendre haleine, je cessais de me débattre et demeurai immobile; elle
attendait, les yeux revulsés, semblable à une noyée qui s'agrippe
au nageur et l'entraîne de tout son poids vers le fond de la mer. De
longues minutes passèrent et tout à coup un affreux délire agita
cette femme. Mon peu d'expérience me fit croire qu'elle devenait

22 Le Visionnaire, p. 251.
folle; je sentis en effet ses dents couper ma chair à la naissance du cou et poussai un cri de terreur. Si j'avais pu libérer une seule de mes mains, je l'eusse étranglée, mais je ne parvins qu'à me retourner sur le flanc avec elle, enroulant autour de nous le drap que je déchirais de mes pieds. Sa chevelure couvrit mon visage; du talon, des épaules, je réussis à me pousser jusqu'au bord du matelas et là, par un subrasaut convulsif, j'imprimai à la double masse de nos corps un mouvement assez fort pour nous désunir. Ma tête alla donner contre le sol. Je roulaï sur le tapis avec mon abominable fardeau, quand brusquement elle ouvrit les bras et son corps détendu quitta le mien comme pour tomber dans le vide. D'un bond, je fus sur pied, frémissant d'une peur que je ne songeai même pas à dissimuler ... Me levant enfin pour faire le tour de la chambre, je vins m'agenouiller près de ma maîtresse. Ma main frôla ses épaules et sa gorge, puis s'arrêta. Elle était morte.23

The strong symbolic language that Green uses here suggests that human love is so imperfect that if it does not end in physical death, it may very well end in the spiritual death of one or both of the partners involved.

23Ibid., pp. 251-53.
CHAPTER VI

THE HUMAN CONDITION

At this point in our study, we must go beyond the superficial meanings of all the elements that constitute human existence for Julian Green. Although the importance of environment, heredity and education in Green's work cannot be denied, it should be stressed that Julian Green is not essentially a naturalistic writer, despite his style. The tragedy of his women has a metaphysical aspect. Through his characters, the author puts forward the existential predicament of modern man. Green's subjective interpretation of his life could be that of any modern existentialist: "Ma réalité à moi est plus vraie pour moi que celle que me donne la vie, et c'est par cette réalité qui m'est personnelle que je tâche de rejoindre la grande réalité humaine." It is therefore necessary to analyze the components of the human condition in Green's books in an existential light.

It might appear from many of Green's books that man is a toy in the hands of fate. How many Greenian women do indeed scream to heaven, accusing everything outside themselves, in an embittered protest against existence as such! It is hard to forget Eliane's cry: "Si au moins on pouvait choisir." Eva Grosgeorge also is obsessed with the idea that she is the victim of a capricious, fatal, outside force. Angèle, in

\[\text{1} \text{Le Bel Aujourd'hui, p. 65.}\]
\[\text{2} \text{Epaves, p. 240.}\]
\[\text{3} \text{Leviathan, p. 145.}\]

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the same novel, imagines destiny as a monstrous being, a tyrant against whom it is useless to struggle. Adrienne Mesurat also asks wearily:

"Par quelle fatalité tout s'enchaînait-il comme dans un cauchemar?"

Here is finally Hedwige's reaction to her destiny in Le Malfaiteur:

"... Mais j'en veux au sort, j'en veux à l'impitoyable sort qui m'écrase."

Does Green, then make use of fatality or predestination in order to remove all responsibility for choice from his people? Is fate an evil force that enslaves men? It seems hardly so. To most readers this answer becomes evident after reading the author's Journal. The fatality in the novels and plays is nothing but an excuse employed by the characters in question to explain their inability to act and to relieve them of responsibility for their own failure. Not one of Green's women has obeyed the Socratic injunction, "Know thyself"; how, then, can we take their plaints about fatality seriously? Their "fate" is nothing more than a figment of their neurotic imaginations. They are too blind to realize that their inaction results from their own choice, and not from inescapable, inevitable, crippling destiny. Only one woman, Adrienne Mesurat, realizes this at the end of her life, and maybe it is precisely this revelation which drives her into madness: "Elle eut brusquement le soupçon qu'elle n'agissait pas toujours exactement comme elle

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4 Ibid., p. 84.
5 Adrienne Mesurat, p. 129.
6 P. 196.
7 Green pointed out that any interpretation of his books without consideration of the Journal is false (personal interview, July, 1960).
voila it. Il y avait en elle quelque chose qui n'obedissait pas a tous les ordres de la raison. C'etait comme un piege dans lequel sans meme s'en douter, elle s'etait laissee prendre. 8

Because of these discrepancies it is wiser to listen to Green's comments in the Journal on the subject of the liberty of man. Quotations like "L'individu reste libre malgre tout" 9 and "Dieu nous a fait l'honneur de nous accorder la liberte de choix" 10 support the contention that "les alienees" invent a fatal destiny to compensate for their personal deficiencies. In a later part of the Journal we read the following:

L'homme est libre, mais il est fait de telle sorte qu'il se croit prisonnier dans une gage etroite. Comme il l'aime sa gage! Il l'appelle Fatalite, Religion, Destin, Patrie. Et comme il la deteste aussi! Il pense: "Je suis un prisonnier qui reve d'evasion." Mais il n'y a ni prison, ni prisonnier, il n'y a que la liberte des enfants de Dieu. 11

Since the gravest problem in man's existence is not then a fatal destiny, what is it that burdens so many Greenian women and that causes them to lose their minds? What further misery comes to pass through their mode of existence? It is simply the fact of being in the world, of having to cope with the paralyzing sadness of everyday life. Green has summarized his view of the human condition as being the acute distress of man who is unable to escape neither his own destiny nor the hard necessity of death, and who finds himself in a universe which he cannot

8 Adrienne Mesurat, p. 244.
10 Ibid.
11 Journal VI, p. 292.
understand. Indeed most men do not comprehend the meaning of their "destin." For them it is merely "un fou qui embouche une trompette." The theme that human destiny often resembles a complex and tragic game of which we do not know the rules runs through all of Green's Journal as well as his books. "Notre vie, dont le sens général nous échappe presque toujours," could be the title of every work of our author. The woman who expresses this idea in the most eloquent fashion is Jeanne, who says:

J'ai compris que nous sommes aveugles et sourds, que nous venons de la nuit pour retourner à la nuit sans rien concevoir à notre destin. Peut-être même n'y a-t-il pas de destin, peut-être rien n'a-t-il de sens sous un soleil qui n'est lui-même qu'un phénomène accidentel, quelque chose qui a pris feu dans le noir et qui pour­rait tout aussi bien ne pas exister du tout.

Thus most men die without having ever understood the meaning of the role they have played. The complete ignorance into which Green's women are plunged makes them conceive the world as absurd because they do not understand it, and it develops eventually into a profound inner disorder. The inability to understand their destiny is not, however, the only tragedy of Green's women. To this is added their isolation and solitude, a condition which also afflicts the characters of such writers

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12 Journal II, p. 162.
13 Journal III, p. 52.
14 Varouna, p. ii.
15 Journal V, p. 278.
16 Varouna, p. 228.
17 Journal IV, p. 205.
as Kafka, Sartre and Camus. The female protagonists in Green suffer from a complete isolation, even though they are surrounded by their families. Some sort of sickly shyness or timidity is a part of each character's nature. Perhaps because Green himself has experienced isolation as a result of his natural timidity, he seeks to make the reader aware of this acute modern dilemma. One of the causes of the inaction in Green's women is that they do not understand themselves. The author says in this respect: "Je crois que l'immense majorité des hommes vit dans une profonde ignorance d'eux-mêmes, de richesses dont ils ne font rien, d'un bonheur indescriptible à côté de quoi ils passent en se lamentant sur les misères de cette vie." The timidity we talked about earlier can only be a partial explanation of the isolation of Green's heroines. Solitude constitutes the essence of their being because they were born into it, and because from the minute they are able to think they ask the question: "What is my role in the world?" (Madame Plasse in Le Visionnaire says: "Pourquoi sommes-nous au monde?" Their answer always is: "I don't know" or "I don't understand." Their isolation frightens them more than anything else in the world. Jeanne says in this respect: "Si quelque chose me faisait peur dans notre condition, ce serait cet isolement terrible où nous sommes tous." Green consciously endows his people with their morbid solitude and with their inability to communicate, precisely

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18 *Journal VI*, p. 313.
20 *Varoune*, p. 271.
because in this isolation he sees one of the major problems of our
generation:

L'être humain est séparé du reste de l'humanité par une barrière
qui presque jamais ne s'abat. C'est le drame de chacun de nous.
Les mots nous trahissent honteusement. Nous voudrions parler et
personne n'est là pour nous entendre, quand même nous parlerions
à vingt personnes tous les jours. Ce que nous pensons profondé-
ment est à peu près incommunicable... Parler à un homme, c'est
jeter un pont par-dessus un abîme, mais de l'autre côté de l'abîme
y a-t-il une route qui prolonge la ligne du pont? Bien rare. 21

All of Green's women are unable to get out of themselves and
communicate with those people who are around them. Their deep feelings,
their passions separate them from the rest of the world for ever. They
withdraw more and more, get caught in the quicksand of their own cons-
ciousness. Many times they seek to escape from themselves: numerous
indeed are the instances of flight in the novels. Many times they seek
release through desperate associations, but all this is to no avail.
The more they try to escape from themselves, the more securely they lock
themselves in their own prisons. Green has said on several occasions
that the big problem of any life is to escape from oneself. 22 In his own
life Green has tried various ways of escape from the human condition.
The most effective of these for him seems to lie in dreams: "Pour ma
part, la vie ne m'est jamais apparue comme quelque chose de tout à fait
réel." 23 Adrienne Mesurat, during one of her desperate attempts to
flee, "is suddenly taken by some sort of bewilderment." She was alone,

21Journal III, p. 113.
22Journal II, p. 143.
23Journal I, p. 43.
and could never make herself available to anybody. She thought that if the world were suddenly depopulated and she were the only mortal being on earth, her moral life would not change. Nevertheless Julian Green does not advocate escape as a possible remedy for human isolation: on the contrary, he considers it one of the gravest sins. Again and again he says that man must struggle, "Non seulement justifier sa vie, mais justifier sa journée, qui est une petite vie dans la grande."25 "Tant qu'il y a en nous une protestation contre nous-mêmes tout espoir est permis. C'est quand on s'accepte et qu'on renonce que la partie est compromise."26 And: "C'est combattre qui importe, même si on est battu chaque fois; accepter, acquiescer, est affreux."27 The misery and tragedy of the Greenian women lies precisely in the fact that they have no desire to justify their lives; they do not question themselves, or protest against themselves, but merely indulge in isolating withdrawal, in passivity. Bitter as this solitude is, it nevertheless has hidden charms for the unhappy women in Green, and they sacrifice themselves to it with great devotion and exaltation.

A further element of the human condition according to Green is boredom, "l'enmi." This is a ferocious monster which devours its prey. It is "la flûte sur laquelle le démon nous joue ses airs préférés."28

24Adrienne Mesurat, p. 125.
25Journal VI, p. 311.
26Journal V, p. 254.
27Ibid., p. 18.
28Ibid., p. 61.
This malaise or disease is a part of the lives of the women, and their
desire to escape this pathetic state is expressed very aptly by Green:
"Oui, d'échapper à l'inexorable ennui qui forme le fond de toute vie
humaine et dont les passions, les plaisirs les plus délicats, la souf-
france même ne peuvent nous distraire qu'un instant." Ennui very
often has its roots in the physical surroundings and it results from the
monotonous repetition of the same activities. Once it has installed
itself in the female protagonists, it spreads a dense veil of melancholy
over them, and eventually it smothers their inner selves. Emily
Fletcher, Adrienne Mesurat, and Madame Grosgeorge are typical victims
of this appalling condition; in fact Madame Grosgeorge fears that bore-
dom will eventually drive her to madness. In these three women,
boredom increases to such an extreme proportion that each of them is
finally driven to a sudden and rash action; a mysterious burst of energy
transforms them into active beasts. Thus extreme boredom eventually
gives birth to insanity and crime. All the following incidents can be
interpreted as direct results of l'ennui: the suicide of Elisabeth
in Mimit: the attempted suicide of Eva Grosgeorge in Léviathan; the
madness and homicide of Adrienne Mesurat; the suicide of Hedwige in Le
Malfaiteur; the insanity of Emily Fletcher in Mont-Ginère; and the
strange suicide attempts of Henriette in Epaves. Green explains these
sudden blind outbursts in the same fashion that Baudelaire explained them.

29 L'Ennemi, p. 58.
30 Leviathan, p. 58.
Le coeur humain est ainsi fait. Il laisse s'écouler de longues années et ne s'engage pas un instant à se mutiner contre son sort, puis il vient un moment où il sent tout d'un coup qu'il n'en peut plus un moment, qu'il faut tout changer dans l'heure même, et il craint de tout perdre s'il diffère d'un seul jour cette entreprise dont la veille encore il n'avait pas d'idée.31

So this deadening boredom pushes the human soul into an attempt to liberate itself from its chains.

Environment is certainly the immediate cause of the boredom which culminates in such terrifying actions, but what is the ultimate cause? "L'ennui" arises out of the sad fact that we are always the same people, that we have to stand ourselves every day of our lives till death, and that we are unable to deny our being.32 We are condemned to be, as Father Hopkins put it, "our sweating selves." The desire to be someone other than oneself in order not to be bored anymore is the main theme of Si J'Etais Vous. But alas, after having passed into several other people, Fabien finds out that boredom cannot be overcome so simply, for it is, in the last analysis, only a manifestation of the emptiness and nothingness inside the human being. Once the women realize this fact, their fear is transformed into a distressing feeling of anguish and despair. Before her suicide Hedwige "brusquement se rendait compte du vide de son existence."33 The boredom which tortures the main female characters is ultimately the result of the desolation which constitutes their being.

The final misery-provoking element is man's consciousness of time, the condition and substance of existence. Man's inability to find

31Adrienne Mesurat, p. 89.
33Le Malfaiteur, p. 187.
meaning in life, his solitude, and his boredom all proceed from his finiteness and temporality. One of the gravest agonies of Green's women stems from the fact that they cannot annihilate what has happened in time, and that they are unable to stop their lives so that what is to come need not come. Man's solitude is also a result of his temporality; he must live his own life and face its end alone. Boredom similarly rests within time.

Green's women conceive of the duration of time in two different ways. First we distinguish those who in a Proustian fashion dread the annihilation by time. Marie-Thérèse is one of the victims haunted by temporality. She observes: "La vie se présente à moi comme une suite d'anéantissements jusqu'à la destruction générale de toute mémoire... Cette espèce de mort partielle me glace." 34 Green himself refers to a fight in his life to halt time. He noted with extreme sadness: "Nous traversons les siècles dans une sorte de pénombre. On nous demande: "Qu'avez-vous vu?" A peine pouvons nous décrire le vol d'un oiseau ou les couleurs d'un bouquet, ou le jeu d'une tache de soleil sur un mur, et tout le reste retombe dans la nuit." 35

A second Greenian conception of time is particularly embodied in Eva Grosgeorge. To this woman who is so horribly bored, time seems to stand still; it bars her from the future thrills and excitements she is awaiting. Madame Grosgeorge is not made to wait; the slowness of time

34 Le Visionnaire, p. 65.
kills her.\textsuperscript{36} This even robs her of her sleep at night, but the minute the new day has arrived, she desperately wishes it had already come to an end. Anguish about the slowness of time is also felt by Emily Fletcher and Adrienne Mesurat. It is only natural for most Greenian women to have this impatient attitude toward time, for they are almost unable to go on existing anymore. They are exhausted from waiting for the future gratification of their desires. Their anguish arises particularly from the fact that they are certain that their aspirations are vain: so before the future ever comes our heroines have already despaired. Once they have reached the future, they can only try to annihilate the hours which they have so desperately wished to come.

Having torn away the illusory veils of the exterior world, having eliminated the false perspectives of social life, and having become conscious of temporality, Green's women find nothing but anguish; every hope is turned into despair, and despair itself tortures because there remains an invincible hope within it. Existence appears to be a dead-end street where one advances constantly knowing that one goes nowhere. Thus for them time is truly the primary curse, the symbol of the misery of the human condition. Man's inability to find peace in temporality, this torment of time which passes too fast and too slowly simultaneously, is the fundamental fact of existence for the women portrayed by Julian Green.

\textsuperscript{36}\textit{Leviathan}, p. 153.
As a Catholic writer Green is of course preoccupied with religion. He feels that especially in our disturbed, modern times, man needs religion in order to cope with his despair and anxiety. Since Green has in his own life renounced and resumed his faith, his personal experience should enable him to give some account of the importance that religion may have in man's life. He states: "Nous ne sommes sur terre pour autre chose que nous unir à Dieu et tout le reste est faux, même si tout le reste a l'air vrai, et colossalement vrai: la société, l'argent, les passions, la littérature ..."¹

It is extremely important for man to establish a meaningful relationship with God; this, however, is impossible if we build up a meaningless image of Him in our minds. Green has frequently attacked what he considers the fake images of God created by books and the theologians. He believes that man should assume a very personal relationship with God, a relationship in which it is unnecessary to define Him in terms of a historical personage. He says:

Ce n'est pas dans les livres qu'il faut chercher Dieu — exception faite pour l'Évangile, qui n'est pas "les livres," mais le livre — c'est en nous, car Dieu est en nous avant d'être dans les livres et beaucoup plus. Il est celui qu'il faut éternellement redécouvrir, et je dis éternellement, parce que notre éternité se passera sans doute à cela. Les définitions qu'on donne de lui sont souvent des obstacles à la connaissance que nous pourrions en avoir; les livres

¹Le Bel Aujourd'hui, p. 160.
spirituels, si riches soient-ils, construisent des systèmes, et aucun de ces systèmes n'est Dieu, mais ils se substituent à lui, trop souvent, dans l'esprit du lecteur. Le sentiment qu'un ignorant peut avoir de Dieu est parfois beaucoup plus élevé que ce qu'en disent les professeurs de théologie dans leurs livres. De plus en plus, je me méfie de ceux qui ne peuvent parler de Dieu sans citer des textes, comme s'il s'agissait d'un personnage historique.

As far as the people that populate his novels are concerned, Green would not state positively that they are saved, since the human mind is unable to possess such knowledge; however, he does hope that his tormented heroines in particular are saved. "Nous sommes sauvés dans la nuit." He has in fact expressed the biblical belief that God has sinners especially close to his heart: "Toutes les promesses que fait l'Eternel pour ramener à lui les âmes égarées! Il aime celles qui restent fidèles et persévèrent jusqu'à la fin... Mair on dirait qu'il a une préférence secrète pour celles qui "reviennent." A celles-là, il semble bien qu'il donne tout." God does not hate the sinner, but only his sins, according to Green.

The writer also believes that luke-warm believers rarely return to God, but that "les violents ont des retours brusques et définitifs." Doubting is not to be condemned, he says, because a living and active faith must provoke contradictions and doubts in the minds of its believers.

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3^Personal interview with the author, July, 1960.
4^Journal VI, p. 105.
5^Journal IV, p. 263.
6^Journal VI, p. 312.
7^Le Bel Aujourd'hui, p. 200.
"La foi qui ne provoque pas la contradiction est une foi chétive et mourante."®

It is perhaps surprising that almost none of the women in Green's works show authentic religious feelings. If such sentiments are found at all, they seem to be in the form of extremes. Green explains the lack of faith in his first three novels by the fact that he wanted to depict the human despair and misery which exist in a world where God is absent.® The women that one encounters in Mont-Cinère, Léviathan, and Adrienne Mesurat, are either religious hypocrites or unbelievers who reject faith on the ground that it cannot furnish them an answer as to why they are in the world. In Mrs. Fletcher (Mont-Cinère) Green depicts the dangers of a religion which has conserved the outer ritual, but which is unhealthy and dying inside. Mrs. Fletcher reads the Bible very carefully every day and this is as far as her religious activity goes. When the minister comes to ask for money for the poor, she harshly sends him away under the pretext that her "vie spirituelle ne regarde personne."® She tries desperately to justify her unchristian actions to her daughter Emily by saying: "Je suis chrétienne comme une autre... L'église est trop loin; est-ce ma faute? ... Est-ce que je ne suis pas aussi bonne qu'une autre? ... J'ai des bons sentiments comme tout le monde ... Le Ciel m'est témoin que je n'avais pas un cent à lui donner."®

®Ibid., p. 331.
®Personal Interview with author, July, 1960.
®Mont-Cinère, p. 125.
®Ibid., pp. 130-131.
And what about Emily? She is truly not too different from her mother. She thinks that church activities might be a means for her to escape her horrible milieu, but she soon loses interest when her dreams fail to materialize. One might add that her contact with the hypocritical spinster, Miss Prudence Easting, who only sits around church to trap the minister, is hardly encouraging as far as Emily's relationship with the church is concerned. Even when the young girl tries to pray at home, she loses interest because of the uneasiness prayer provokes within her. She is looking for some sort of inner peace which she believes prayer can give her as though it were a medicine which relieves pain: "Souvent, elle s'agenouillait au pied de son lit pour prier, mais elle perdait rapidement toute paix intérieure et ne réussissait qu'à augmenter le trouble de sa conscience." Emily's mistake seems to be that she lets herself become discouraged too soon. Green warns against this in his Journal when he says: "Nous sommes spirituellement très infirmes, et très infirmes, mais se laisser abattre est mauvais." Green's other female protagonists have the same problem. They pray a little while, and then they quickly fall into an abyss of despair. This is especially true for Angèle in Léviathan. She goes to church, but because she is unable to concentrate for long, she feels that she is not made to be religious and she forgets about religion.

It will not be surprising to anybody that the monstrous Madame Grosgeorge does not display any religious sentiments in this same novel.

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12Ibid., p. 58.

13Le Bel Aujourd'hui, p. 221.
What is interesting is the fact that she so categorically rejects all religions as false because they cannot explain to her why she is alive and why she will have to die one day. 14

The case of Madame Londe, the woman who without remorse sells her orphan niece to her clients to satisfy her insatiable desire for gossip, is also an interesting one. This woman reflects on religion in her happier moments; but alas! when sorrow or bad fortune befall her, she rages against this distant God who seems to her so unjust: "Mais elle ne croyait pas à la religion dans des heures pénibles comme celle-ci. Elle ne pensait au ciel qu'en moments de bonne humeur... Mais maintenant elle considérait qu'elle était trahie par le monde, par ce Dieu qu'on disait juste et qui s'amusait à détraquer la savante machine de sa vie bourgeoise." 15

Green himself sees in God the benevolent supreme being who "nous fait l'honneur de nous accorder la liberté de choix entre le bien et le mal." 16 His female characters, on the other hand, view God as some sort of foreign creature who is more or less similar to the other human beings whom they cannot understand. As a result of this conception they are unable to relate themselves in any way at all to Him. They are either unaware of or refuse to accept Husserl's phrase which Green himself so readily adopted: "la vie de tout homme est un chemin vers Dieu." 17

14 Léviathan, p. 145.
15 Ibid., p. 166.
16 Journal VI, p. 292.
17 Le Bel Aujourd'hui, p. 303.
Since they are never able to receive an answer to their question of why they are in the world, they feel themselves surrounded by "des ténèbres"; and only very infrequently does the light disperse their darkness. The only instance in Green's work where the heroine is enlightened in the end is found in *L'Ennemi*, where the Countess Elisabeth achieves pure and authentic beliefs, but only at the extreme cost of the loss of her mind.\(^{19}\)

While Green's attack on religious hypocrisy is perhaps less violent than that of François Mauriac, he does present pious and bigoted women who hypocritically use religion to their personal advantage, and the reader cannot help feeling that the author is passing judgment on these people. Eliane in *Epaves* does go to church to pray, and in these moments she feels that she is a bad, perverted, vicious and hypocritical woman; this insight which she gains while sitting in church never seems to affect her further actions and doesn't make her change her ways.

The pious Madame Plassé is also a first-class religious hypocrite although she goes to mass daily and knits sweaters for charity. She completes these chores almost with rage: "Peu à peu elle s'animaît et les aiguilles se choquaient de plus en plus vite dans la laine. Dieu sait que de rancune elle fit passer dans ces gilets destinés aux pauvres!"\(^{20}\) It is quite amusing to hear Madame Plassé's daughter Marie-Thérèse comment on her mother's piety. She says: "Et puis elle était pieuse. Je me

\(^{18}\) *Varoune*, p. 229.

\(^{19}\) This case will be further discussed at the end of this chapter.

\(^{20}\) *Le Visionnaire*, p. 260.
demande parfois quelles bêtes féroces nous deviendrions si un peu d'hypocrisie religieuse ne venait pas tempérer nos mauvais instincts. Que de fureurs la pauvre femme a dû dévorer "au pied des autels!"21. Furthermore, religion seems to be a convenient guise for this woman's sensuous ideas. When, for instance she talks about God she does it in such passionate words that one has to suspect unrequited passions and emotions within her. Her nephew Manuel speaks in amazement about her talks on the soul and divine love: "Madame Fassé me parlait de mon âme, à peu près comme un homme parlerait à sa maîtresse de son visage... Elle me parlait avec émotion de l'amour divin dont j'étais l'objet et, par un blasphème inconscient, tous les sentiments qu'elle n'osait s'avouer à elle-même, elle les attribuait à Dieu."22

Many young women in Green's novels find themselves in despair and are unable to hoist themselves out of it, partly because of their image of God and partly because of their inadequate conception of Christianity. Either they do not realize that they must bear the cross, or they are unwilling to do so. Green says in this respect: "Le christianisme sans la croix n'est qu'une rêverie de philosophe, mais personne ne veut de la croix. Même la représentation du Christ en croix est insupportable à

\[21\text{Ibid.}, p. 13.\]
\[22\text{Ibid.}, p. 99.\]
certainly. 23 The unhappy eighteen year old Elise in Si J'Etais Vous starts to pray when she is depressed after the marriage of her cousin Camille, whom she secretly loves. She cannot understand why the God whom she believed to be just suddenly deserts her in this moment and does not send her relief. She makes the mistake of seeking God only as a refuge from her unfortunate situation. God to her is something to cling to, a magic formula which dispels anxiety and sorrow; she posits His benevolence on the basis of her own wretchedness and despair.

"Elle se tournait vers Dieu avec une sorte de frénésie intérieure; sa prière était une lutte, lutte contre le doute mais surtout contre le dégoût d'elle-même, et parfois une lutte contre la simple envie de dormir, car elle rognait sur les heures de sommeil comme pour forcer la grâce à agir."

Young Hedwige in Le Malfaiteur is another young woman whose life is devoid of faith; she is indifferent to religion and totally unaware of the role it might play in her life. Her environment was certainly a factor in the development of such attitudes:

23 :Journal V, p. 176. This statement is to be taken as valid, and not the statement which we find in Journal I, p. 214: "Voir, depuis l'enfance jusqu'au jour de sa mort, des images de supplice dans les églises, dans les maisons et quelques fois dans les rues, n'y a-t-il pas là un fait vraiment singulier? Un homme cloué à deux morceaux de bois, voilà ce que le Christianisme nous montre sans cesse. L'Eglise est née dans une orgie de tortures... Un homme qui ne saurait ce que c'est que le Christianisme, si on le menait au Louvre, serait peut-être malade de dégoût en sortant... Je ne puis croire que l'âme ne puisse s'élever sans le secours de pareilles terreur." Green has since then become reconverted and has renounced this earlier statement.

24 :J'Etais Vous, p. 190.
Jamais il n'était question de religion à l'hôtel Vasseur. Hedwige elle-même avait grandi dans l'incroyance et passait devant les églises comme on passe devant un palais de justice ou tout autre moments où l'on est à peu près certain de ne jamais mettre les pieds. À ses yeux, la croix faisait partie d'un ensemble de choses qu'on a la coutume de voir et sur lesquelles on ne s'interroge pas, parce qu'elles n'ont de sens que pour autrui.²⁵

Many of Green's women seem to agree with Félicie (Le Malfaiteur) that "la vie est une féroce plaisanterie."²⁶ Green, however, would add that this is the condition of life without God, that life is a long charade, the sense of which is disclosed to us only after death.²⁷ Another curious idea that Green holds is that "Dieu rassure. Dieu ne fait jamais peur. La peur est le signe de la présence du démon."²⁸ In all of the women he portrays we find some sort of fear which they are unable to overcome. Without faith in God, they become increasingly ensnared in the fascinating net of despair. They are "trop pressées de vivre qu'elles ne s'interrogent presque jamais sur le mode d'existence qui est le leur."²⁹ Thus because they are incapable of examining their own hearts and of questioning their mode of existence, they are unable to find a meaningful relationship with God. Green says in this respect: "C'est en descendant au fond de nous-mêmes que nous rejoignons l'universel, plus qu'en nous mêlant aux hommes."³⁰

²⁵ Le Malfaiteur, p. 232.
²⁷ L'Ombre, p. 28.
²⁸ Le Bel Aujourd'hui, p. 113.
³⁰ Ibid., p. 59.
At this point it is necessary to analyze the process of salvation undergone by Elisabeth in L'Ennemi. This case is extremely important because through it the author shows that a woman who is an unbeliever, in despair for the greater part of her life, may, through the mercy of God, nevertheless enter heaven. When we meet Elisabeth in the beginning of the book, we might indeed think that we are confronted with another Mary-Magdalene. She deceives her husband first by becoming the mistress of his brother Jacques and then by becoming the mistress of his other brother Pierre. She is dying of melancholia; life and anything in life appears empty and meaningless to her: "J'ai toujours senti que, derrière tout ce qui m'entourait il n'y avait rien. Rien derrière les paroles qui m'êtaient adressées, et derrière les caresses qui m'étaient faites, rien. Ce vide abominable, je le portais en moi. Ce que les sens me disaient, mon cerveau ne le croyait pas. Le poison se répandait partout."\(^{31}\)

At the beginning of the play, she goes to church to make her husband happy, for she is quite conscientious about keeping up appearances. Actually, religion doesn't mean a thing to her: "La foi chrétienne m'apparaît comme un prodigieux amas d'idées fausses."\(^{32}\) In the third act, however, Elisabeth undergoes a mysterious experience. It is as though a miracle had happened; the lost woman finally sees the light. At this point she says: "Dieu m'écoute, il est autour de moi et j'ouvre les bras vers lui."\(^{33}\) In her love for the divine Savior she realizes suddenly that she has found peace within herself, that the battle inside her has ceased. She exclaims: "Il n'y a pas d'ombre dans l'amour, mais claire et joyeuse est la flamme qui

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\(^{31}\) L'Ennemi, p. 59.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 44.

\(^{33}\) Journal VI, p. 225.
nous consumera sans fin. Seigneur, je ne suis plus divisée contre moi-même, les frontières se sont effacées et la guerre cesse qui me déchirait l'âme en deux.\textsuperscript{34} Despite her faith, the death of her lover drives her mad, but at the end of the play when she wants to enter a convent, it is quite evident that she is saved. For those who find it strange that a woman with faith should go mad, Green has an answer in his Journal:

Quelqu'un qui me parle de l'Ennemi se dit gêné par le fait qu'Elisabeth qui a la foi, devient folle. Mais Elisabeth ne fait naufrage que sur le plan humain. Elle perd la raison et il a de quoi; on lui a étranglé son amant. Sur le plan surrêel, elle garde la foi comme elle peut et comme Dieu veut. Elle recite des bribes de l'acte de contribution dans son délire, elle est sauvée.\textsuperscript{35}

Green regards the mercy of God as infinite; it saves even those who by human standards appear to be lost: "Si la miséricorde de Dieu est infinie, je voudrais bien savoir où commence l'enfer."\textsuperscript{36} Man's main dilemma, according to Green, is that he is unable to escape either his own destiny, or the hard necessity of death, and that he finds himself in an incomprehensible universe.\textsuperscript{37} The only way that he can escape the despair which results is "en vivant dans le présent éternel de Dieu qui dévore passé comme avenir."\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{34}Journal VI, p. 255.
\textsuperscript{35}Journal VI, p. 255.
\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., p. 152.
\textsuperscript{37}Si J'Etais Vous, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{38}Le Bel Aujourd'hui, p. 300.
Julian Green feels that the greatest danger in today's world is to lose "le goût de Dieu." This loss can be prevented if we join the Church, the institution which represents God on earth. One of the greatest merits of the Church, as Green sees it, is that it makes it a duty for its believers to hope to the end. The Church, as far as he is concerned, is also the only human institution behind which no "néant" looms. Taking Green's statements in the Journal into consideration, we might therefore speculate that some of his suffering women might have found relief from their despair by assuming a meaningful part in the Church's activities.

For the author each human life is a mystery to which only God has the key; we must therefore to avoid despair, believe and hope in God. Green's motto, "Il n'y a de vérité ni d'absolu que dans l'invisible," is the spiritual message his books embody for twentieth century man, whose miserable predicament Green portrays in an attempt to show the results of ignoring or denouncing God.

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39 Ibid., p. 343.
40 Journal V, p. 234.
41 Journal IV, p. 197.
42 Le Bel Aujourd'hui, p. 250.
43 Ibid., pp. 60-61.
Chapter III

CONCLUSION

I have tried to establish in the previous chapters that Green's women are estranged, withdrawn creatures. Although their lives seem pointless, they constantly torture themselves with the question: "Why are we in the world?" This asking of something for which they never find an answer is expressed in their eyes by "cette tristesse d'une faim qui n'est jamais assouvie." They are too shy or too masochistically inclined to communicate their distress to other people. "Que d'abîmes d'une âme à une autre," it is said in Léviathan. They withdraw then into themselves, into a torturing and deadening silence. Jeanne had already said: "Je crois que d'une façon générale nous nous occupons beaucoup trop de ce qui se passe en nous-mêmes." And this seems to be precisely the primary problem of Green's women. The constant return upon themselves is the cause of much of their predicament. In their inner isolation they are confronted with a frightening emptiness, and this in turn produces boredom which they try desperately to escape. The history of each one of Green's women is actually best defined by the words of Pierre: "D'échapper à l'inexorable ennui qui forme le fond de toute vie humaine et dont les passions, les

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1 Si J'étais Vous, p. 239.
2 P. 289.
3 Varouga, p. 227.
plaisirs les plus délicats, la souffrance même ne peuvent nous distraire qu'un instant." In order to get away from or to forget their empty inner selves, these women indulge in all sorts of activities, most of which they find unsatisfactory because they lack the ability to give themselves wholeheartedly. Some, of their attempts at self-escape, let their imaginations run wild and blow up minor ailments to fantastic proportions. In facing these imaginary ailments they entertain some sort of fear. Green himself has pointed to the damage that an imagination like that of his women can do: "I have often believed, that imaginary evils can be just as troublesome as real ones and that there is often very little difference in the effects they have on the minds of their victims." Others of Green's women turn their anger against those around them, sadistically wanting to make them suffer or even wishing to destroy them. This activity at least provides a pleasure of short duration for them. But these women become prisoners of their own malice and they are perpetually tortured subconsciously by their meanness. Those women who seek love as a refuge from themselves always end up saying with disappointment and disgust: "L'amour c'est terrible..."

Green depicts his women as though they were the embodiment of evil, as though they were the true introducers of vice in man's soul. One might go so far as to call Green's heroines creatures of the devil, Lucifer;

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4L'Ennemi, p. 58.
5Memories of Happy Days, p. 7.
6Le Malfaiteur, p. 162.
at the very least, one has to agree with Jacques Madaule when he says that: "Les femmes, semblent déclencher par leur présence, en elles et autour d'elles, le drame latent." It must be noted in this respect that either Green portrays the romantic "la belle dame sans merci," or because of personal reasons he envisages inadequate and vicious women of this type. These women may represent aspects of his own personality, but it is quite obvious that they lack the lucidity and insight which Green displays in the remarks of his Journal.

The women in Green are thus not only estranged from themselves, feeling constantly "le vide de leur existence." but also from those around them. They feel "le poids et la tyrannie du corps dont la souffrance se mêle d'une façon si étrange à la souffrance de l'âme." The tragedy of the Greenian women is that of an inner defeat. Their inner beings are disintegrating and the world around them appears as a place of destruction, cruelty, bitterness and fear. Their greatest dilemma, however, is the fact that they are also estranged from God, who might save them. If Green is, like Gabriel Marcel believes, the contemporary French Catholic writer with the most meaningful spiritual message, then his heroines are particularly pathetic because they do not share the belief of the author which we find in his Journal: "Mais si nous avons

7 Reconnaissances, pp. 93-94.
8 Le Malfaiteur, p. 162.
9 Si J'Etais Vous, p. 158.
10 Personal interview with Gabriel Marcel, March 1961.
Dieu, nous avons tout...Dieu c'est la paix à jamais, la paix avec soi-même (il y a malgré tout une paix, une paix profonde que le monde ne peut nous ôter et qui est, je pense, une ombre de la béatitude sans fin)... Il y a cette présence incompréhensible qui anéantit d'un coup le faux, le décor." 11 We may say then that Green's women rarely see the light but are groping about in a disturbing and torturing darkness.

Throughout this study I have tried to avoid all value judgments with respect to Green's works. However, I do wish to remark that there are many discrepancies between his Journals and his works of fiction, a fact which makes any study of the author a difficult task. His Journals definitely contain hope and a message of peace, but his creative works, on the contrary, are masterpieces of pessimisme; they are depictions of hell on earth. It is no doubt because of the above mentioned discrepancies that Green expresses the wish that those who want to understand his works, have to read both the novels and the Journals. 12 The ultimate literary value of Green's work will, of course, not be determined for some decades to come since he is still actively engaged in writing.

11 Journal VI, p. 230.

12 During my interview with the author he said that there are two men living within him; the writer of the novels and the one of the Journals. He feels that it is hard for him to reconcile the two in his works. He believes that he has been able to do this only in Chaque Homme dans sa nuit.
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