Graham Greene's Aesthetics of Design, Sport, and Violence

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Abstract

This paper argues for the relationship of modernist architectural theory, health and leisure culture, and martial violence in Graham Greene's early criticism and fiction. The first section reads Greene's response to the rhetorical strategies and values of the new architects and argues that Greene draws on that rhetoric in order to associate it with the language and value systems of regimented military violence. The paper then examines Greene's representation of distinctly modernist recreational spaces like holiday camps and seaside resorts. For Greene, these modernist architectural spaces are also (like the movement's rhetoric) easily assimilated into systems of discipline and force, as are the athletic games associated with the holiday camp and resort. Moving from recreational to popular culture, the paper reads those same martial qualities in Greene's treatment of cultural items like story magazines and films. In this manner, Greene's fiction paints a picture of a culture of conformity to military values which have infiltrated every sector of civilian life - from architectural discourse to sport, leisure, and popular culture. The paper ends with

a short reading of Greene's descriptions of the Blitz. Paradoxically, it is here alone - in the instant of bombing - that Greene finds a reprieve from the pervasive regimentation of what he views as a culture of increasing discipline, surveillance, and organized brutality.

Keyword: Graham Greene, modernist architecture, sport, holiday camps, violence

This paper looks at the interrelation of modernist architectural rhetoric, sport, recreation, and militancy in the pre-1945 novels of Graham Greene. In particular, I examine Greene's response to the design doctrines of prominent modernist architectural theorists Herbert Read, Walter Gropius, and Corbusier. For these and other advocates of modernist design, the new architecture's subordination of form to function would facilitate physical as well as mental health, hygiene, and recreation. In its resistance to neoclassical and other architectural traditions, the new architecture of interwar Europe sought to incorporate the aesthetic and functional values of industrialism and took a minimalist approach to design.p In this manner, the movement aimed to create clean, efficient, affordable spaces using industrial materials like concrete, steel, and glass, to jettison unnecessary ornamentation, and thereby to create a healthier, more efficient citizenry.

In his engagements with modernist architectural theory Greene represents the movement's emphasis on pragmatism, efficiency, and fitness as a set of martial values easily appropriated by the state in order to militarize civilians in preparation for war. Greene's identification of military and nationalist interests in the rhetoric of housing and health culture informs his novels' disparagement of modernist approaches to design and sport. For Greene, the values imbedded in new approaches to architectural theory, sport, and leisure result in a society for which recreation is regimented, athleticism a form of training for combat, and popular culture a vehicle for habituating citizens to military life and its programmatic violence. For Greene, systems of social organization - be it in architecture, leisure, athletics, or art - are dangerously adaptable to systems of social surveillance and militarization. This Foucauldian

framework - in which cultural discourse is assimilated to state interests - enables us to understand Greene's classical liberalist leanings and his resistance to cultural institutions in which he perceives the language and values of coercive regimes.

I. Architecture in Greeneland

Greene's friendships and editorial work put him into close contact with theories of architecture before and during the Second World War. During the 1920s he worked as a sub-editor for *The Times,* which featured criticism on theorists like Corbusier. During the 1930s he was editor for *Night and Day*, which featured a regular section on plans and disputes in architectural theory (Hawtree, 1985). Perhaps most significantly, he was close friends with fellow *Night and Day* contributor, Herbert Read, whose criticism on architecture and design echoes modernist architect Walter Gropius'.

Greene's contact with architectural criticism impacted his work, and while he would eventually write a novel whose main character is a Corbusier-quoting architect (A Burnt-Out Case*,* 1961, p. 149), much of Greene's earlier fiction also consciously engages architectural theory. Greene (1980) acknowledges that architecture plays a key role in his fiction when he finds himself struggling to depict Liberia because there is "no architecture to describe" (Ways of Escape, 1980, p. 48). He says of his childhood Berkhamsted that "one's future might have been prophesied from the shape of the houses as from the lines of hand" (A Sort of Life, 1971, p. 15). Architectural spaces

are personally and creatively important for Greene. But it is not spaces alone that intrigue him. He is also drawn to architectural theory and develops its imaginative possibilities in his novels, which comment on, mimic, and re-contextualize the rhetoric of architectural design.

Attentive to the self-promotions of the new architecture, Greene engages with the principles of modernism as vocalized by architectural theory. As Elizabeth Darling (2007) points out, the interwar period saw a campaign to establish modernist architectural values in the general public. The movement's theorists sought not only to create new buildings but to create a demand for those buildings, buildings whose merits the builders would teach the public to appreciate. The writings of the new architecture were thus a style of advertising which sought to edify - an attempt to teach the consumer a new set of values by which to judge innovative design.

That Greene was doubtful about these discursive efforts is evident in his treatment of modernist schemes for housing projects. Greene was aware that the working class neighborhoods of the late 1930s suffered from poor housing conditions, and his criticisms of modernist architecture begin with the movement's failure to deliver affordable, quality housing to the masses. Modernist architecture called for equable standards of design for the home, asserting that the architect had a moral duty to provide the working class with an "enhanced standard of living" (Gropius, 1935, p. 45). However, as Juliet Gardiner (2010) observes, this much vaunted program was not realized in practice because modernist architects, no matter how genuine their advocacy of public housing projects, tended to take private commissions (p. 296).

While the modernist architect's promises to build better living spaces for the working class was in keeping with what Tyrus Miller (1999) has called the period's "unprecedented rationalization of social life…[and] the subordination of previously distinct spheres to impersonal or collective aims," Greene, aware that these promises were largely unrealized in practice, presents model housing projects as sites of abjection (p. 33). Slipshod housing projects appear throughout Greene's early fiction and function as denunciations of modernism's unfulfilled pledges to the poor. Distrustful of claims that the new program would enhance standards of living for the working class, Greene's novels feature neglected communities like *Brighton Rock's* Paradise Piece, a "wasted ground" where "houses had been pulled down for model flats which had never gone up" (Greene, 1961, p. 127).

The demolition and displacement of this community, razed for purposes of reconstruction and then abandoned, serves as a clear example of Greene's cynicism when it comes to the public housing schemes of modernism. Yet the remainder of the passage suggests something more than a mere betrayal of the working class. In a pre-Blitz, peacetime description of a domestic bombing, the passage informs us that those houses which remain in the derelict community, with their "flapping gutters and glassless windows," "look as if they had passed through a bombardment" (Greene, 1961, p. 127). This figurative flourish introduces one of Greene's subtler concerns: the relationship of architectural theory, warfare, and violence.

II. Rational Space, Thought, and Action: The Language of Modernist Design as a Lexicon for Mechanical Violence

Greene's novels explore the potential for violence in modernist ideology's elevation of reason, function and efficiency as standards of excellence for architectural designs, societies, and individuals. Greene disagreed with the opinions of his friend, the art critic and advocate of modernist design theory Herbert Read. Channeling Gropius, Read (1934) proclaims the inauguration of a new industrial aesthetic: the appeal of "objects designed primarily for use" (p. 49). According to Gropius, functional patterns in architecture not only appeal to reason over emotion; they also cultivate rationality. Architecture which is practical and functional in design thus exercises "a settling and civilizing influence on men's minds" (Gropius, 1935, p. 37). As Marjorie and Charles Quennell (1934) put it, "rational" arrangements substitute "order for chaos" (p. 136).

By contrast, in Greene's fiction this new ethos overvalues efficiency and produces stifling conditions. In *The Confidential Agent* London's modernist buildings signify "spiritless routine" (Greene, 1971, p. 56), and in *It's a Battlefield* the transparent "glass cells" of an office building render it lifelessly "blank" (Greene, 1934, pp. 1-3). Like reinforced steel, glass was a preferred medium of modernist architecture, whose aesthetic origins Corbusier (1986) locates in the automobile's embodiment of streamlined efficiency (p. 19). As though following the logic of the Swiss architect from automobile to building, Greene (1934) calls both "cages" (*It's a Battlefield*, p. 17, p. 21). For Greene (1934), neither the machine nor

the mechanized building represent freedom, speed, or efficiency: the building's lift is dysfunctional, and in the cramped cab of the vehicle one twists "a wheel a fraction this way, a fraction that," suggesting not speed, but immobility (It's a Battlefield, p. 17).

Characterized by confinement, modernist spaces in Greene's fiction are also sites of discipline and behavioral modification. In *It's a Battlefield*, the schemes of the prison and the modern factory are described in wryly identical terms (Greene, 1934, pp. 13-14, p. 24). Each possesses three buildings, Blocks A, B, and C; and each upper Block in the sequence grants privileges which the lower Blocks forbid, incentivizing the prisoner/employee to pursue promotions through compliance. This ironic approximation of reformatory and industrial space indicates how for Greene modernist design superintends human action. Significantly, Greene suggests that a building's design elements can be used to inculcate behavioral norms. Formally incorporated into a system of punishment and reward, the prison and workplace are structurally engineered to adapt individuals to approved modes of conduct.

As with behavior, so with thought: Greene's fiction acknowledges that the features of design can be used to teach, influence, and shape the psyche of an individual. In *Brighton Rock*, where "man is made by the places in which he lives," the female protagonist Ida's "mind worked with the simplicity and the regularity of" an electric sign (Greene, 1961, pp. 47-48). And the mental makeup of the young gangster Pinkie is shaped by the urban space of his childhood, "his gray cells…formed of the cement school playground" (Greene, 1961, p. 331). The idea that design elements not only impact but are formative of one's mental

life coincides with Corbusier's contention that architecture determines psychology (Corbusier, 1986, pp. 14-15). For Corbusier and other modernists, the new architectural aesthetic would create conditions in which "man can employ fully his gifts of memory, of analysis, of reasoning and of creation" (Corbusier, 1986, p. 17). Corbusier suggests that human behavior and psychology will come to reflect the expressions of logic and functionality communicated by clear and coherent design. But while Corbusier champions the rationalization of mental life, Greene sees a danger in the elevation of reason and pragmatism.

Appropriating the rhetoric of theorists like Corbusier, Greene explores the potential for violence in the overvaluation of efficiency. In Greene's fiction modernist buildings tend to house characters who execute acts of violence with speed and economy and without any fuss, as if the modernist emphasis on function complimented the cold rationalism of dispassionate brutality. *The Confidential Agent's* cruel murderess possesses a room that "seemed made and furnished for nothing but use"- a design approach which, taken alone, recalls that of the modernist camp (Greene, 1971, pp. 70-71). Likewise, in *The Ministry of Fear* the "modern building" is a "sinister," "disquieting" site of violence where professional spies try to assassinate the guileless hero Rowe (Greene, 1943, p. 112). The attempted murder (using a bomb) is precise, impersonal, and planned with "efficiency," as is the modernist space the assassins inhabit: yet another "huge white modern" building as "mechanized" as their protocol to eliminate human liabilities (Greene, 1943, p. 122, p. 40).

Throughout his work Greene announces that the mechanization of modern life has led to routine modus operandi, programmatic thought and behavior, and

intellectual detachment that underpins procedural violence. Written during the Blitz, *The Ministry of Fear* presents a London in which violence is as regular, streamlined, and automated as a tool of industry. The nightly bomb raids conform to a tight industrial schedule by which "one can set one's clock," the "routine" labor of the bombardier commencing early in the evening and continuing "till three or four in the morning: a bombing pilot's eight hour day" (Greene, 1943, p. 68, p. 22). Reducing civilian warfare to an ordinary trade, the German bombers' daily barrage is described in rationalist terms: methodized, effective, reliable. A similar automation directs the destructive actions of the assassins on the ground. One assailant bears "steadily down on Rowe like something mechanised," and another, facing imminent capture, takes up a pair of shears and slits his own throat "without hurry, serious, professional," his movements as systematic and unemotional as his work as a tailor: "everything he did…was carefully pondered…[with] no room in that precision for the eccentricity, the wayward act" (Greene, 1943, p. 20, pp. 203-205).

Dependable and direct, the deadly logic in Greene's novels suggest that late modernist "demands for rationality" establish a system of methods and values which can be assimilated to systems of violence. For modernist architecture, a rational design is simple, practical, and economical. In this manner, modernism draws on the lessons of industrialism and applies them to the home. Like industrial design, the new architecture should be clean, sleek, and efficient, its standards determined by functionality and ease of use. Architectural theorists acknowledge their indebtedness to the principles and

aesthetics of manufacturing. And Greene, too, traces design's call for functionality to its industrial origins.

For Greene, however, the interwar period's industrial and architectural ideologies herald the manifestation of the martial in quotidian life. Combining industrial, architectural, and militarized space in one barren landscape, Greene's *This Gun For Hire* (1934) characterizes the inner bounds of industry, a manufacturing goods yard, not as a wellspring of progress, but as a ruin of war, a "dark, desolate waste of cinders and points, a tangle of lines and sheds and piles of coke and coal…a no man's land full of torn iron across which one soldier picked his way with a wounded companion" (p. 89). This conflation of manufacturing and martial space gestures to the industrialization of war. But the scene also gestures to what in Greene's view is the popularization of the new industrial ethos and its normalization of non-civilian life. The two "soldier[s]," actually the civilian Anne and fugitive Raven, only half-jokingly have to agree that their refuge for the night, a storage shed surrounded by the "dark, desolate waste" of the goods yard, is "like home," even "homey" (p. 87, p. 101). Two years before this scene was composed, Gropius (1943) observed that Britain's best contributions to the modernist movement were innovations in basic housing design (p. 67). Here, Greene suggests that the modernist re-conception of home transforms domestic space into a stark environment suited to soldiers, each home a barracks, each civilian on reserve for mobilization in war.

III. Camps, Resorts, and Training for War: Regimented Recreation and the Space of the Foucauldian Holiday

This critique of the new aesthetic extends to its rhetoric around health and fitness. The general health of the working class was a major preoccupation of interwar reform and modernist architecture. Corbusier (1986) calls for designs that fulfill one's "right to health" (p. 19). Equally, Gropius (1935) invokes physical well-being and calls for communal gymnasiums (p. 29). Such demands from the continent were consistent with new legislation promoting physical fitness in Britain. The 1937 Physical Training and Recreation Act designated funds for "gymnasiums…holiday camps…and other buildings…for physical training and recreation" (p. 3). The 1939 Camps Act pledged to expand "the construction, maintenance and management of camps" (p. 40). And the camps themselves pledged to enhance physical health and community spirit by ministering to "rational" and "healthful recreation" (Ward & Hardy, 1986, pp. 52-53).

Greene portrays one such holiday camp in *The Confidential Agent*. The novel's "Lido" is a "cheap," seaside, sprawling "village" of accommodations, group activities, and recreation (Greene, 1971, pp. 194-195). In this, Greene (1980) acknowledges, it "resemble[s]" a "Butlin's holiday camp" (Ways of Escape, p. 91). By the mid-1930s holiday camps like Billy Butlin's were boasting affordable seaside getaways and informal social mixing via a regular program of games, contests, dining, and dancing. Targeting a lower and middle class clientele, Butlin's first camp at Skegness was a rapid success and resulted in a string of Butlin-brand camps, each a self-contained space equipped with

modern chalets, restaurants, dancehalls, swimming pools, and sports facilities. Espousing physical activity and exercise, the camps met demands for a healthier working class. In addition, historians have pointed out that the relaxed atmosphere of the seaside community lifted prohibitions and granted holiday-makers a degree of latitude unattainable in the working world. John K. Walton (2000), for example, identifies an element of carnivalesque misrule in the seaside holiday communities, where "the pleasure principle is given freer rein, the certainties of authority are diluted, and the usual constraints on behavior are suspended" (p. 3).

Yet for some the holiday camps embodied anything but the misrule of carnival. Far from liberating, the camps assimilated the individual into the group, inculcated consumerism and restricted freedom of movement through architectural schemes. Recognizing that "you can organize a holiday, but you can't organize people," Butlin set about an "experiment" which was "socially significant," outfitted his staff in red blazers and delegated them to arrange events for the guests (North, 1962, pp. 53-54). Accepting that "holiday-makers…are more relaxed if relieved of some thinking and organizing," Butlin proposed that the Redcoats, as they came to be called, should "lead, advise, explain, comfort, help," and generally organize the guests' leisure time for them (North, 1962, pp. 53-54).

For guests like Greene (1980), all of this leading, advising, explaining, and comforting was an unwelcome imposition, and the author of the Lido could tolerate no more than "two extraordinary days" at a Butlin camp before he "packed secretly and fled" (Ways of Escape, p. 91).

An "awful hotel" of "organized fun," the Lido reimagines the holiday camp as a bizarre incarnation of

modernist ideology in which the emphasis on function and efficiency has led to a form of leisure that relies on and reinforces regimentation (Greene, 1980, Ways of Escape, p. 91). Architecturally, the Lido draws on the new architecture's "maritime motifs," "porthole windows," and "paneling from superannuated ocean liners" for seaside resorts (Walton, 2000, p. 129). The building is designed like "an airport" or a cruise ship, is advertised as a "cruise on land," and its standard guestroom is "like a [ship's] cabin," with a "port-hole instead of a window" and a "washing basin folded back against the wall to make more room" (Greene, 1971, pp. 195-196). Recalling Corbusier's demand for design derived from ships and airplanes, the Lido also recalls iconic modernist plans like the L. M. S. Railway's holiday camp at Prestatyn (Corbusier, 1986, p. 19). Constructed the same year as *The Confidential Agent* (1939), the holiday camp at Prestatyn and the Lido share a "central tower" and "geometrical arrangement" of guest accommodations which some guests complained resembled "barracks for the mass holidaymakers of a regimented future." (Walton, 2000, pp. 129-130).

Greene's Lido examines the panoptic power of such a design. The Lido, a seaside resort of "circle after circle of chromium bungalows round a central illuminated tower," enforces discipline through exposure (Greene, 1971, p. 195). Every room opens "immediately…on to the unsheltered deck" facing the central tower, and when the hero D., a foreign agent of an unnamed government, seeks privacy in his room his fellow guests peek through D.'s window "to have a look" at the "foreign bloke"

(Greene, 1971, pp. 196-197). The panopticism of the Lido is pervasive, the tower's position of centralized surveillance recreated in the gaze of each guest. Habituated to

being on display, the Lido's guests pay no mind to the lack of privacy, romp around the open deck and banter back and forth so that all can hear. A newcomer like D. is compelled to listen to "everything that went on in the neighboring rooms," and the conversation is uniformly puerile (Greene, 1971, p. 196). With names like Pig, Spot, and Chubby, the Lido's patrons have been hailed in the Lido's language and inducted into its culture of group think and forced frivolity.

The Lido speaks to Greene's classical liberalist leanings and reveals a problem in Foucault's conception of panoptic control. For Foucault (1995), the panoptic model architecturally "reduce[s] the number of those who exercise [surveillance]…while increasing the number of those on whom it is exercised" (p. 206). Yet in the Lido the situation is reversed - everyone (except D.) is observing everyone else. The situation evokes Foucault's theory that the panoptic model encourages the public - indeed, anyone - to subject the institution to a surprise inspection and thus appropriate the role of panoptic authority, for "any member of society will have the right to come and see with his own eyes how the schools, hospitals, factories, prisons function. There is no risk, therefore, that the increase of power created by the panoptic machine may degenerate into tyranny" - anyone can "come and observe any of the observers" (Foucault, 1995, p. 207). Greene's Lido suggests that while such a model may indeed suppress tyranny in the monarchical sense of the word, it nevertheless encourages a different kind of tyranny, the compulsion to conform or, in the language of Mill (1867), "the tyranny of the majority" (p. 3). In Greene's Lido, everyone observes everyone else, and is in turn observed. The tyranny of the place is therefore twofold -

for the individual is simultaneously the agent and the object of surveillance, both coercing conformity and coerced to conform to the culture of the resort.

The passage draws a further correlation between disciplinary and recreational space when D. remarks that his room number at the Lido "sounds like a convict's" (Greene, 1971, p. 195). In Greene's analysis, institutionalized leisure is indistinguishable from institutions of discipline. During a prison tour in *It's a Battlefield*, the minister's secretary mistakes an "execution shed" for a "gymnasium" or "billiards room" (Greene, 1934, p. 15). Significantly, he also mistakes a school for a prison, linking education to recreation through the penal apparatus of the state. The error suggests that sites of regulation, sport, and instruction are akin. In fact, Greene intimates that disciplinary regimes embrace the doctrines of the new recreation and its expectation of healthful living spaces. In a draft of the novel the prison teaches its prisoners the importance of health and fitness. Transferring the prisoner Drover to a new cell, the warder promises warm quarters with good air, "beautifully ventilated [as] the cells are," an ironic interlude echoing modernist demands for wholesome designs. The prison also endorses a sporting zest for competition, the warder expressing his keenness for card games and his admiration for a condemned man who is a "real sportsman" and "plays poker" with the guards.

The same sporting spirit is alive in the Lido, where the games arranged by the management might as well be compulsory. Conceived for people who are "great…on physical fitness," the Lido's games are "organized" by a "sports secretary" who helps plan the day (Greene, 1971, pp. 195-196). This of course mocks

the "organized fun" Greene abhorred, that form of leisure which capitulates to authority for scheduling and other modes of direction. In Greene's view this regimentation resembles military training, a resemblance which comes into clearer focus when the Lido's young athletes spontaneously form a citizens' police corps. Led by the Lido's prospective manager who "had obviously been entering into the life of the place," the young men take it upon themselves to arrest D., by now a fugitive (Greene, 1971, p. 199). Notably, this confederacy comes into being inside the "recreation centre" at the base of the tower, a spatial affirmation of recreation's supportive services to central authority (Greene, 1971, pp. 197-198).

Although the holiday camps were not overtly political, it is instructive to note that Greene was conscious of nationalist undercurrents in institutions of sport and leisure. By the eve of the Second World War, Butlin had "divided the camp into four Houses, largely because he had learned that even when they were relaxing the English, as a nation, love to be in competition for something. So each House [named after a branch of the royal family] was duly given the opportunity to fight for honours for anything from athletics, football, swimming, cricket and dancing" (North, 1962, p. 64). That this fierce fighting spirit of the English "as a nation" is coded in nationalist terms was obvious to Greene (1980), who ironically noted that the Butlin dining halls were "loyally called Gloucestor and Kent after the two royal dukes" (Ways of Escape, p. 91).

The fundamental nationalism of the holiday camp informs the behavior of the Lido's militia-like band. The self-appointed police of the recreation room base their authority on a belief in English preeminence and a distrust of D. as a foreigner. Citing English superiority, they

presume that D. is guilty because the English police suspect him and are infallible (Greene, 1971, p. 201). Inflated with xenophobia, they recall a fellow sportsman's report of rampant lawlessness abroad and inform D., who is wanted for murder: "it's a mistake you foreigners make. In your own country you kill each other and nobody asks questions, but…[you can't] do that sort of thing in England," home to "the best police force in the world" (Greene, 1971, p. 201, p. 199).

That this chauvinism should dominate a holiday camp underscores the relationship between sport and recreation and the interests of the state. Greene presents the holiday camp as a product of national investment: in the same language as the 1937 Physical Training and Recreation Act's call for "gymnasiums, playing fields, [and] swimming baths" (p. 3), the Lido boasts "a gymnasium…playing fields, [and] swimming pools" (Greene, 1971, p. 195), a realization of the legislative contract and its goal of national security-for behind such subsidies was the understanding that a fit populace would make for a stronger armed force in the event of another military engagement. According to Lord Dawson, funding the holiday camps would help to build up "a fit race; fit not only in body, but as citizens" (Ward & Hardy, 1986, p. 51). Such claims alluded to and were bolstered by fears that the average working class man was unfit to serve as a soldier. In response one solution looked to athletic training as a form of peacetime preparation for combat. Such military preparations influenced the planning and surely also the culture of the holiday camps. In fact, Butlin's camps not only doubled as military barracks, but were built for the purpose (North, 1962, p. 76, p. 87).

IV. Games, Play, and Exercise: The Militarization of Sport

The way in which recreation was pressed into the service of national defense helps us understand the aversion to sport pervading Greene's work and the personal agonies of his childhood. Greene's physical education sought to turn the children of his school at Berkhamsted into battle-ready servicemen. It was no coincidence that the school acquired new playing grounds as World War I came into view, and like most of his generation the young Greene practiced military drills and marches, learned to handle a rifle, and generally grew up in a world where physical fitness and sport were connected to training for the Front (Sherry, 1989, p. 53, p. 58). Despite social pressures to the contrary, Greene resisted the injunction to join in the zeitgeist of nationalist athleticism. In his former schoolmate's opinion, Greene "didn't play games well. He wasn't in a school team or a house team. His physical participation was minimal" (Sherry, 1989, p. 70). In fact he so disliked the school's fitness programs that he tried to "hobble" himself with a pen-knife in order to be "excused gym" (Allain, 1983, p. 34). Understood in the period's political terms, Greene's rejection of school-organized athletics constituted a rejection of nationalist calls to arms or, at the very least, a rebuff to the regimentation now required of sport.

Reaching back to his youth, Greene's antipathy to state-controlled sport takes a form of flippant satire familiar to the short-lived magazine he edited, *Night and Day*. For example, the sardonic "England in Deep Waters" remarks that the nation, presently "sloppy" in sports, is nevertheless witnessing "vast and moderately expensive schemes by which Britain is to become physically fit," meaning that

"school-children will be dragooned into dressing up in shorts and doing a quantity of hips-firm-knees-bend nonsense, with or without tossing around some dummy rifles" (Hawtree, 1985, p. 67). The piece - which Greene would have edited - is consonant with his critique of physical education as a series of lessons on the fundamentals of soldiering. For "England in Deep Waters," Britain's ambitions to militarize civilians forebodes fascism in that England's physical education emulates German athletes' ability to "march…straight" and assume the uniform movements of an armed unit (Hawtree, 1985, p. 67).

The implication that the so-called valor of the soldier is in reality no more than a reflex of training and indoctrination elucidates Greene's contempt for overeager heroism. In *The Ministry of Fear* Arthur Rowe calls on a friend only to find that that friend's wife recently died when a wall collapsed during the bomb raid of the previous night. A relief worker and a hockey player, her self-sacrifice is surreal and absurd in light of its relationship to sport. The mantelpiece of her home displays "four silver cups with the names of [hockey] teams engraved" on them, and Henry, her bereaved husband, bitterly remarks that his wife rushed to help during the bombardment because "she thought she'd win another of those blasted pots" (Greene, 1943, p. 95). The man's mother reminds him, in the language of sport, that "she was playing for England, Henry," and adds that (as a Union Jack is unattainable) "we ought to lay a hockey-stick beside the uniform" adorning her coffin (Greene, 1943, p. 95). Combining symbols of sport and state service, the passage with its dry humor derides that athletic fervor which is an instrument of power. By the time the post warden predicts that the deceased will be hailed as a "heroine" and awarded another of those

blasted pots, "the George Medal-posthumously" (Greene, 1943, p. 97), the very idea of courage and athletic prowess has been reduced to a kind of sad and mindless savagery, registered in the "furniture [which] had an air of flimsiness" from having been battered around by the woman, causing the narrator to speculate that "perhaps in her home the hockey-player had reacted from the toughness of the field" (Greene, 1943, p. 96).

However the game might have influenced her behavior at home, the deceased woman will not actually be receiving the George Medal. The George Medal, "intended primarily for civilians" who showed "great bravery" during the Blitz, was not to be granted posthumously. Greene was no believer in awards from the state, and the post warden's error indicates that for Greene the royal warrant for this medal is especially dubious. Disqualified on account of death, the would-be heroine's ineligibility for recognition suggests that the state acknowledges individuals only insofar as they remain of use and in its service. The point is reinforced by the Major whom Rowe meets in a rural asylum. The Major, who "disapproved of civilians," had "always kept himself fit and ready to be of use" militarily (Greene, 1943, p. 145). Debilitated by trauma, this man who views his health as a state asset is treated as one, removed to the rural asylum and forgotten by the state which can no longer use him. What the Major has failed to recognize is that "if you are going to be kept alive by institutions run by and paid for by the State, you must accept the State's right to economise when necessary" (Greene, 1943, p. 220). For Greene, the state's esteem of its citizens is limited to their utility for the state.

Evaluated in military terms and devalued in death, civilians learn to identify with one community and

disassociate from others through, Greene asserts, the culture of sport. Reflecting on his experience at school, Greene (1934) remarks in *The Old School* that "games and I should like to be kept rigidly apart, for games are used more than anything else to teach…narrow loyalties" (p. 256). These loyalties are narrow in that they associate the athlete with an institution which is exclusive and encourages homogenous communities (Greene, 1934, p. 256). At the same time the athlete learns to direct aggression outwards at rivals. Although this aggression is to be sublimated for the good of society Greene also observes that the athlete learns a crude form of rivalry and not "sportsmanship," suggesting that the combativeness imbibed through athletics lacks integrity and might exceed its intended uses (Greene, 1934, p. 256).

Greene's intimation that sport does not displace aggression so much as cultivate it for institutional purposes also asks whether that militancy which is learned as a game might not foster an enjoyment of martial action for its own sake. Greene's spies, agents, and militarized civilians often experience a sense of personal gratification in acts of violence committed less for duty than for amusement. Although conforming to the plans of the state, these aggressors revel in games of violence not for national or other concerns so much as for the sheer pleasure of participating in contests of guile and force. When Rowe confronts his enemy, *The Ministry of Fear's* sadistic Hilfe is "sleeping as though he had lain down after a game" (Greene, 1943, p. 244). Waking to find the revengeful Rowe hovering murderously near, he smiles "with amusement…as though they…had been playing a game" (Greene, 1943, p. 245). Of course, the object of Hilfe's "game" is to eliminate Rowe. Hilfe's pleasure in the sport of destruction exceeds

nationalism even as it exceeds the basic rationale of self-preservation, his gamesmanship bespeaking a mind that has learned violence as a kind of pastime to pursue as a source of fun and diversion. When Hilfe is captured he regards the German bombers circling London and refers to his compatriots as fellow sportsmen, saying "with a curious wistfulness, 'What fun they are having up there,'" for:

> He was like a mortally sick man saying farewell to the sports of his contemporaries: no fear, only regret. He had failed to bring off the record himself in destruction. Five people only were dead: it hadn't been much of an innings compared with what they were having up there; wherever men killed his spirit moved in obscure companionship. (Greene, 1943, p. 258)

Moving beyond national allegiances, Hilfe identifies with the bombers not as fellow countrymen but as fellow contenders competing in wreaking carnage. In Greene's analysis the problem is transnational, the pleasure in violence pandemic, and the English, too, have developed a taste for the application of force.

Written before the Second World War, Greene's *This Gun for Hire* scrutinizes a youth culture whose sense of 'fun' and physical potency fulminates in expressions of sadism. In the prescient novel Britain is on the brink of war, and during a gas drill the young medical students are delegated to comb the streets and 'rescue' anyone they find not wearing a mask. The students' leader Buddy raises their role in the gas drill to a mission of national importance, planning to round up "conchies" (conscientious objectors),

pelt them with soot and flour and detain them in the mortuary, explaining that the goal is to abase people who think "so little about their country that they wouldn't even take the trouble to put on a gas mask" (Greene, 1971, p. 122). A mere pretext, Buddy's nationalism camouflages his deeper desire to dominate and degrade others.

That the company should use a civil defense drill as an opportunity to indulge a flair for small-town terrorism speaks to Greene's lack of confidence in the motives of public-spirited bands of brothers. The group cites selfless nationalism but actually coalesces around a shared exultation in the exercise of power and strength which their authority as the town's representatives permits them. Far from serving the good of the community, they make "predatory" rounds in search of "victim[s]," feeling that the "whole gas practice would have been a dull, sober, official piece of routine" if they had not turned it into a game (Greene, 1971, p. 122, p. 120). After brutalizing and "wreck[ing] the room" of a fellow student, Buddy and company are "immediately happy and at ease, exerting themselves physically like young bulls" (Greene, 1971, p. 125).

Greene's suggestion that assertions of nationalism provide an occasion to satisfy impulses of violence learned through militarized athleticism is evident in Buddy's robust body. Looking "forward with pleasure and excitement to war," Buddy "keep[s]…fit" so as to be ready for combat (Greene, 1971, pp. 127-128). His physical preparation not only requires an outlet for aggression but registers aggression in terms of the physical pleasure he associates with war. "Strong, coarse, vital, a town bull," Buddy relishes "a feeling of physical well-being"

as he plans "to do [harm]…physically" to his classmate (Greene, 1971, p. 122). In another encounter, he finds a "conchie" on the street, inflates "his chest," swells "his biceps," and feels "the satisfaction of superior strength. He'd punch his nose for him if he didn't come quietly" (Greene, 1971, p. 127). Buddy's satisfaction in violence is visceral and voluptuous, as if to say that the body developed as an instrument of assault takes its pleasure in the performance of its function. In Greene's estimation such a person in their lack of will and autonomy, in their domesticated role to the state, is less human than animal, for "like a great beast which is in need of exercise, which has fed on too much hay, Buddy Ferguson was aware of his body. He felt his biceps; he strained for action" (Greene, 1971, p. 121). Recalling that Greene's critique of militarization is imbedded in his critique of modernist theories of art, here again Greene breaks from modernist luminaries like Herbert Read. For Read (1934), the human body is the site of intuition-from its "harmony" and "proportion" one learns to "apprehend" the elegance of industrial forms (p. 29). For Greene, the body is a product of ideology, conditioned by martial systems in civilian culture to sense pleasure in violence.

V. Martial Violence in Popular Culture: Umbrella Stands, Boys' Magazines, and War Films

Greene adopts the language of commerce in order to express the civilian desire for experiences of war, implying that such desires are reinforced by the market. During the Blitz, Greene (1961) writes in an essay entitled "At Home" that "violence comes to us more easily because it was so long expected" (p. 447); and its victims thus "accept violence so happily, with so little surprise, impatience, or resentment" because pre-war culture prepared them for it (p. 450). This preparation is couched in commercial terms in Greene's work. The holiday camps are of course businesses which meet and build demand for what Greene considers a military-like experience. Likewise, Greene (1961) speaks of a kind of tourism of violence by which people travel to "corners" of the world where political instability fulfills their "craving" to be in close proximity to the dissolution of peace (p. 448).

This commercialization of war reappears in the transformation of martial artefacts into ornaments for the home. In D.'s hotel room in London the foreign agent finds "an umbrella rack in the form of a shell-case" and is reminded of the civil war he left behind, reflecting with bitter amusement that "we could make an industry out of that, with all the shells we have at home. Empty shell-cases for export. Give a tasteful umbrella stand this Christmas from one of the devastated cities" (Greene, 1971, p. 52). The hotel's casual treatment of violence and its absorption into the world of interior design are symptomatic of a social pathology diagnosable in consumer goods. Repurposed as merchandise, the bombshells-cum-umbrella

rack connote an apparent peacetime which is actually permeated by the materials and callousness of a culture inured to the prospect of war. Tellingly, D.'s last word on the rack ("give a tasteful umbrella stand this Christmas from one of the devastated cities") evokes an advertisement which, according to the data collection group Mass-Observation (which features heavily in the novel), was a manner of teaching. In its *Enquiry into People's Homes* (1943) the organization proclaims that advertising is educational (iii-iv). Understood in these terms, D.'s satirical blurb implicates the commercial sphere as an agent of instruction, teaching the consumer to be as familiar with the fallout of war as they might be with an object as common as an umbrella stand.

Of course, Buddy's notion of war is also determined by popular culture, his articulation of heroism paralleling that of the boys' adventure magazine. Assuming the adventure story's tone of daring and pluck, Buddy imagines himself a "leader of men. No Red Cross work for him when war broke: Buddy Ferguson, company commander; Buddy Ferguson, the daredevil of the trenches" (Greene, 1971, p. 121). During the First World War Greene saw soldiers aping similar language from boys' magazines, adopting a superficial dauntlessness and exaggerated bravado (Sherry, 1989,p. 56). Buddy's own imitation of the popular form calls attention to the easy transmission of ideology via the products of popular culture, an example of Greene's view that "all writing for schoolboys is propaganda for the established order" (The Pleasure Dome, 1980, p. 150). In the case of Buddy, Greene parodies popular writing in order to examine its ramifications in Buddy's benighted dreams of trench warfare and the way in which

those dreams introduce a kind of sanctioned aggression into civilian life.

The scene crystallizes Greene's concerns that the established order reaffirms itself even during periods of apparent liberty. Buddy believes he is free from restraint, self-determining, and able to do as he pleases, a sense of license which he perceives as a carnivalesque reversal of power. Confident that the transformation of the gas drill into a prank "conferred complete freedom from control," Buddy reflects that "even a surgeon," the most senior authority, "wasn't safe today if *he* [Buddy] gave an order" to harass that superior (Greene, 1971, p. 121). Yet true as this seems, Buddy is nevertheless subject to a way of thinking, speaking, and acting which has been prescribed for him by popular fiction. Perhaps this is why in "At Home" Greene (1961) likens the flames from an air raid to "a sticky coloured plate from the *Boy's Own Paper*" (p. 450). For Greene the atmosphere of the boy's adventure story is one of recruitment for the defense of the status quo, and the violence of the Blitz is the logical outcome of a society whose architectural theory, athletics, and popular culture has been mobilized for military purposes.

These three domains overlap in Greene's critique of *The Lion has Wings*, England's first World War Two propaganda feature. The film, which began production before war was even declared, seeks to reassure its audience that Britain is invulnerable to attack and culturally superior in matters of architecture, sport, and leisure. Produced in a rush, the film presents a disjointed combination of documentary and fictional segments. The documentary-style introduction boldly announces that "this is Britain, where we believe in freedom" before elaborating on the national achievements of

> A new Britain in which everyone of us might have a home of which he was proud, a gigantic task we undertook, to re-house the urban population in well-built, well-lighted, well-ventilated flats…a Britain of new factories as well as new homes, where people can work in healthy surroundings, a Britain of new schools where our sons and our daughters are equipped for life and taught to be good citizens of their country and of the world, in which the importance of physical health and clean living are taught. (Korda, A., Brunel, A., Hurst, B., and Powel, M., 1939)

Following this opening, unmistakably derived from modernist design in its emphasis on fitness and hygiene, the film contrasts British peace to German belligerence, mounts a slipshod recreation of the Kiel Battle, and slides into a purely fictional drama centering on Ralph Richardson's and Merle Oberon's portrayals of a Royal Air Force officer and volunteer nurse, husband and wife, doing their bit for the war effort.

Writing as a reviewer for *The Spectator*, Greene dismisses the film on its opening night as poorly wrought "propaganda" (Greene, 1994, p. 341). In particular Greene mocks the film's closing remark that England is fighting for "truth, and beauty, and fair play, and…kindliness," observing that this is an unconvincing "statement of war aims" Greene, 1994, p. 342). The review also ridicules the film's lack of realism in its recreation of the Kiel Battle, "fought in the Denham film studios," in which "all the deaths are German and all the heroics English"

(Greene, 1994, p. 341). Moreover, Greene recognizes the film's economy of architecture and sport and takes apart the methods by which each is transmitted as propaganda: the freedom of British "swimmers in a bathing-pool" juxtaposed to the "goosestep" and "grey lines" of Hitler's army; the tactic of repetition in the litany of England's new architectural accomplishments (its tedium paraphrased by Greene: "and the new workers' flats and the new hospitals and the new schools") against Germany's single-minded militarism (Greene, 1994, p. 341). For Greene, the juxtaposition of British architecture and recreation with German militarism would have been an especially tenuous binary. In his view, the "swimmers in the bathing pool" might be the rabid nationalists of the Lido, "the new workers' flats" the razed wasteland of *Brighton Rock*, and "the new schools" indistinguishable from the prison of *It's a Battlefield*.

Months later Greene (1994) was still thinking about the film, and finds space in an unrelated review (on *The Real Glory* and *Twenty-One Days*) to praise another critic's assessment that *The Lion has Wings* is "puerile" "propaganda" (p. 363). Few other critics were as honest or perceptive. A survey by Mass-Observation found that "83% of Press criticism was favourable to *The Lion has Wings*, and 58% praised the film greatly," perhaps from a wartime feeling of civic duty ("Public Reaction," 1940, p. 5). By contrast, Greene uses the film review as a vehicle for demystification, revealing the processes by which architectural theory, leisure, and athletics are woven into the fabric of nationalism.

In this regard Greene's critical work carries on the project of his fiction, and his criticism comes to inform his reactions to the bombing of civilian space. Albeit

obliquely, *The Lion has Wings* resurfaces in Greene's account during the Blitz of a bombed house "in Woburn Square neatly sliced in half":

> With its sideways exposure it looked like a Swiss Chalet: there were a pair of skiing sticks hanging in the attic, and in another room a grand piano cocked one leg over the abyss. The combination of music and skiing made one think of the Sanger family and Constant Nymphs dying pathetically of private sorrow to popular applause. (Greene, 1961, p. 447)

The reference to *The Constant Nymph* serves as a reference to that film's director, Adrian Brunel, and would remind Greene's readers of Brunel's latest (and, as it would turn out, last) film, *The Lion has Wings*, which, topical and popular, would linger in the public mind. Thus in the middle of a description of a bombed home Greene alludes to one of the authors of a film "preaching [the] invincibility" of England's impenetrable system of defense which the film promised would repel all invaders and prevent such an attack (Greene, 1994, p. 342). The bombed home in Greene's essay belies the film's promises, exposes its affected optimism, and implicates the film in the ongoing acculturation of the British to the conditions of war. Greene's assertion that the British are acclimated and "at home" in "the bombed cities" suggests a cultural normalization and production of violence which the film, like the state's stakes in health culture and recreation, helped to establish (Greene, 1961, p. 450).

VI. A Way of Escape

Elsewhere, Greene (1971) frames the voyeuristic compulsion to gaze on a bombed home as an invasion and an assault:

> a person's home has a kind of innocency. When a house-front gave way before an explosion and showed the iron bed, the chairs, the hideous picture and the chamber-pot, you had a sense of rape: intrusion into a stranger's home was an act of lust. (The Confidential Agent, p. 136)

Here, to obtrude on another's privacy is to sexually violate, and the disquieting equivalence of the gaze with an act of rape reflects Greene's discomfort with all forms of surveillance. Intensely private, Greene denounced the lack of solitude at Berkhamsted and detested the boarding school's "communal society which afforded no individual privacy, where even solitary walks were forbidden" (Sherry, 1989, p. 41, p. 69). Formulated in terms of institutional management, Greene's understanding of breaches of privacy extends to the bombsite, and the ruin represents the life laid bare and thus degraded by the community. The emphasis on the act of looking compliments the "Lido," where peering in on the private lives of others is a means of control, domination, and violence.

With its emphasis on the gaze as an act of assault and a limitation on freedom, the description informs Greene's later surprising and complex nostalgia for the Blitz. That nostalgia can in part be explained by the lack of surveillance, the escape from stringent social organization,

that occurs during the moment of bombing and its immediate aftermath:

> During the Blitz one loved London in particular. Awful as the war was, one is nostalgic for the feeling of that period. London became a series of villages. During a blackout you could see the stars and the moon even on Oxford Street, and flares dropping like chandeliers. In the morning there was the sound of broken glass being swept up. It wasn't white, as you'd think, but blue-green. (Greene, "Places," TS with author's revisions)

In this description of the blackout the gaze is inoperable as an instrument of social order or assault: the gazer gazes on no human subjects, is thus free from functioning on behalf of discipline, power, or force, and is in turn free from scrutiny. The scene is not rationalized but aestheticized in a swell of unexpected sensations-the loss of the immediate visual field, the sudden celestial view, the sounds and surprising blue-green of the glass-which arrests the linear temporal flow of the text and prompts a sense of hush and wonder at the rich diversity of experience.

The "flares dropping like chandeliers" against "the stars and the moon" convey an equally unexpected, celebratory sense of freedom. Of particular interest is Greene's evocation of a fixture of design - the chandeliers - coming unfixed during this moment of liberation. The figuration might be read as a celebration of Herbert Read's (1934) admission that in design it is the deviations from formal rules which constitute "an affirmation of our freedom of will, an escape from determinism in art"

(p. 29). For Greene, determinism in art leads to other forms of social control, and a break from determinism in art represents an opportunity to break beyond prescribed behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. This is why Greene glories in the fragmentation of the city into "a series of villages," decentralized and thus antithetical to the goals of the new architecture. Seeking to incorporate fragmented social space into a single organizational system, modernist architecture apprehends the urban zone as an organic unit, the part pertaining to the whole, and the entire structure manageable so long as the new architect "extend his researches beyond the house to the street, from the street to the more complete organism which is the city itself" (Gropius, 1943, p. 69). In Corbusier's (1986) words, "a well-mapped out scheme" for a community "inevitably imposes discipline on the inhabitants" (pp. 242-243). For Greene, any such organizational system-in architecture, athletics, or art-psychologically, physically, and culturally conscripts the individual into its mode of being.

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