

On *Brighton Rock*

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“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” *Matthew 16:18*

Brighton Rock is so named because Graham Greene (1904-1991) refers to the Petrine ministry, which is the bedrock of Roman Catholicism. We have to remember that Greene converted to Roman Catholicism and was very much aware of the role of the Pope within his new Faith. The Pope is infallible as a teacher of the Church¹, but is fallible like St. Peter as a private person. It is noteworthy that St. Peter denied that he knew Christ thrice though earlier in the synoptic Gospels, St. Peter clearly declares his undying love for Jesus. Yet when he faced possible social ostracization and even death at the hand of those against the new Rabbi, Jesus, Peter emphatically denied ever knowing either Jesus or His Disciples. Greene in all his novels interrogates this ambivalent nature of love. Greene’s awareness of love is modelled on the Roman Catholic understanding of love. This in turn is shaped by Patristics.

The Church Fathers understood that to be human is to be inevitably weak. Perfection and intellectual fullness are reserved for God. But when this God became Man; He was simultaneously God and Man. He was not only man, nor was He only God. He was weak to the extent that He had to be enslaved to His Love for His creation, which He had Created ex nihilo. In *Brighton Rock*, we find what the deconstructionist John Caputo (b.1940), calls the weakness of God in Caputo’s *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion). It is reacting to this weakness of God that Greene constructs his theological anthropology deriving from St. Irenaeus (circa 130 –202 AD) , St.

¹ See *Pastor aeternus*, 1870.

Augustine of Hippo (345-430 AD) to St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD). Be that as it may; the point made here is that the title of this novel directs us to the ambivalence within each of us as reflected in each character of the novel. Except when it comes to Pinkie Brown.

Pinkie is demonic and is absolutely turned against God as all demonic entities are within the Abrahamic religions. We should note that Pinkie's demonic nature within the fictional universe of *Brighton Rock* is not to be confused with the etymological root of the word 'demon'; that which is derived from the Early Modern concept of the 'daemon'². Greene's understanding of a demonic being can be found in the *Catechism* of the Catholic Church. Yet Greene's God is One who brings good out of all evil 'telos'. Thus, the end of the novel shows how God brings about this good.

The analysis of the ending is for another day and another note.

Good Friday, 2020.

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² Kitty Scouler Dutta has a slim publication on the Renaissance idea of 'daemon' published decades ago by Jadavpur University.