

Representation of Kierkegaard's Aesthetic Stage in Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock**

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Abstract

This study argues that the anti-hero Pinkie in Graham Greene's first overtly religious novel *Brighton Rock* (1938) echoes Danish existentialist Kierkegaard's aesthetic way of life, devoid of ideal and courage. Being the first phase in Kierkegaard's three-fold existential ladder (theory of stages) into the fully authentic identity, the aesthetic stage carries in itself the seeds of a fulfilled selfhood. As such, with its plots and themes, *Brighton Rock* experiments with the capacity of such an aesthetic life to form an authentic selfhood through the main character Pinkie Brown. Yet, this experimentation fails due to Pinkie's living in absolute proximity to good and evil and his latent desire to experience them at the same time. His distorted view of religion and strong imagination of physical hell creates a cataclysmic force that eradicates himself though he desperately seeks for a pristine experience of his selfhood. Greene figuratively annuls this life-project by clearly demarcating it from a 'strange' operation of God's will. In the end, Pinkie as the embodiment of non-existing individual with his melancholy, anxiety, and despair progresses from purely destructive aesthetic categories of sensuousness to alleviating reflection which, in the end, enables him to make a 'leap of faith' that will carry him to a more elevated existence type.

Keywords: Greene, Kierkegaard, Stages of Existence, Aesthetics, *Brighton Rock*, Existentialism

GRAHAM GREENE'İN *BRIGHTON ROCK* İSİMLİ ESERİNDE KIERKEGAARD'IN "ESTETİK EVRESİ" NİN TEMSİLİ

Öz

Bu çalışmada, Graham Greene'nin ilk dini romanı *Brighton Rock*'taki (1938) anti-kahraman Pinkie'nin, Kierkegaard'ın 'estetik yaşam tarzı' fikrini yansıttığı iddia edilmektedir. Kierkegaard'ın gerçek benliğe götüren üç aşamalı varoluş evrelerinden ilki olan 'estetik evre' hakiki benliğe ulaşmanın ilk tohumlarını bünyesinde taşır. Aynı şekilde, *Brighton Rock*, kurgu ve temalarında Pinkie Brown aracılığıyla hakiki benliği elde

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edebilenin olabilirliğini deneye tabi tutar. Ancak, bu deney, Pinkie'nin iyi ve kötü kavramlarını mutlak birliktelik içinde, gizil bir şekilde tecrübe etme isteği yüzünden başarısızlıkla sonuçlanır. Saf dinsel bir benlik algısı tecrübe etmek istemesine rağmen, Pinkie'nin çarpık dinsel inancı ve güçlü bir cehennem imgelemesi kendi benliğini yok eden yıkıcı bir etki yaratır. Böylece, bu evreyi, diğer romanlarında görülen "Tanrı'nın tuhaf çalışma biçimi" düşüncesinden açıkça ayıran Greene, bu yaşam evresinin olabilirliğini reddeder. Sonunda, melankolik, kaygılı ve ümitsiz var-olmayan bireyin somut örneği olarak karşımıza çıkan Pinkie, tamamen yıkıcı, estetik 'duyusal' kategorilerden, sonunda, onun "inanç sıçraması" yaparak daha yüksek bir varoluş tarzına ulaşmasını sağlayacak 'düşünsel' estetik kategorilere ilerler.

Anahtar sözcükler: Greene; Kierkegaard, Varoluş Evreleri, Estetik, Brighton Rock, Varoluşçuluk

INTRODUCTION: THEORY OF STAGES AND THE AESTHETIC STAGE IN KIERKEGAARD'S THOUGHT

The concept of 'single individual' that is defined as the keyword of Kierkegaard's voluminous authorship refers to the highest level of existence and an absolute relationship with one's identity or one's own *selfhood*. In his great pseudonymous and signed tomes such as *The Concept of Anxiety* (1981), *Either/Or I-II* (1988), *The Sickness unto Death* (1983b), *Fear and Trembling* Kierkegaard categorizes selfhood as the highest form of existence, a goal to be attained, a relation, a synthesis of different concepts, and a transition from non-existence to existence. And these concepts are contextualized in his categorization of 'stages' for which he holds that humans live in one or more of three different spheres of existence which are called the *aesthetic*, the *ethical* and the *religious*. In other words, if human travellers of the world want to be cured of their existential crisis and attain natural selfhood, they are to pursue one of these stations or stages during their journeys to find the authentic selfhood. Thereby, the aesthetic, ethical and religious forms of life constitute the three distinct forms of existential possibilities that each person is required to choose and that determine a set of world views that prescribe certain ideals, motivations and behaviour. Since they follow a developmental progress and they are considered "progressive plateaus on a mountainside" which every individual should "ascend if he would attain to the highest point and experience the *summum bonum*" (Pojman, 1984, p. 121), they are generally referred to as 'stages.' As a person develops a more matured consciousness over time, these stages are imagined as vertical developments of identity. To elaborate, in the aesthetic stage the individual bases his existence on immediate sensate feelings, spontaneous desires and momentary satisfaction. Having no inward projection in

the self's development, its whole development expands from external world of possibilities. Unlike the aesthete's vegetative life, in the ethical stage the self reveals itself as grounded upon other forces than itself – like family, friends, society, state, religion etc. With a strong commitment to these elements, the ethicist creates ideals, commitments, values for himself to live for and to stick itself to. The religious stage, however, combines both finite and infinite, physical and psychological, actual and possible elements in its scope. Thus, it acts as the ultimate right path of the natural self. In *Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard likens existence to an apartment with its occupants¹. The basement belongs to the aesthetic person, the ethical lives on the first floor, and the religious person is on the second floor. Everyone wants to have a moral life but also secretly wants to satiate their basest desires and passions. Human and existence thrive in the context of its self-choice, freedom, and possibilities. Stages represent the confirmation of the dynamic nature of human beings in that they choose to live life a certain way. Elrod (2015) refers to each successive stage as the "higher degree of consciousness and freedom" one tries to attain during his search for authentic self (p. 74).

As the focus of this study, the aesthetic stage is handled in detail in the first volume of Kierkegaard's famous book *Either/Or* (*Either/Or I* from now on) where he divides the aesthetic stage into two categories personified by *immediate* and *reflective* aesthetes. In the first category, Kierkegaard's concept of immediate aesthetic stage is "the view that pleasure is the sole intrinsic good" and the aesthete tries to attain "the greatest possible amount of pleasure and the least possible amount of pain" (Evans, 2009, p. 71). Thereby, Kierkegaard opens *the Rotation of Crops* chapter in *Either/Or I* with a reference to one of Aristophanes' plays where all mundane desires are listed: love, literature, loaves, honor, sweets, cheesecakes, command, ambition, pea soup, etc. (p. 282). Bodily values or feeling of love are the primary objectives of an aesthete. As Evans (2009) argues, "The young child is a natural aesthete because the child lives "in the moment," dominated by immediate desires (p. 70). The aesthete as the embodiment of sensuality acts as the ultimate 'natural man' who seeks nothing but pleasure. Yet, this utter 'naturalness' leads one into boredom, melancholy, and depression². As such, the aesthete is an unhappy, homeless, nihilistic and despairing

¹ "Imagine a house with a basement, first floor, and second floor planned so that there is or is supposed to be a social distinction between the occupants according to floor. Now, if what it means to be a human being is compared with such a house, then all too regrettably the sad and ludicrous truth about the majority of people is that in their own house they prefer to live in the basement. Every human being is a psychical-physical synthesis intended to be spirit; this is the building, but he prefers to live in the basement, that is, in sensate categories. Moreover, he not only prefers to live in the basement—no, he loves it so much that he is indignant if anyone suggests that he move to the superb upper floor that stands vacant and at his disposal, for he is, after all, living in his own house" (Kierkegaard, 1983b, p. 43).

² "How empty and meaningless life is. -We bury a man; we accompany him to the grave, throw three spadefuls of earth on him; we ride out in a carriage, ride home in a carriage; we find consolation in the thought that we have a long life ahead of us. But how long is seven times ten years? Why not settle it all at once, why not stay out

individual. Thus, what the aesthete offers as a solution against this boredom, Caputo (2007) argues, is “never to let the gears of this either/or get engaged, never to allow yourself to get caught in its suction” (p. 26). The whole principle of aesthetic stage lies in avoiding making decisions and remaining neutral when forced by outside stimuli. For the aesthete, one needs to smile to death’s face just like the “insects that die in the moment of fertilization” and everything he does should be accorded towards the “most splendid moment of enjoyment” (Kierkegaard, 1988a, p. 20). His main aim in life is to “take himself as a given, complete with a set of wants to satisfy, and tries to satisfy as many desires as possible” (Evans, 2009, p. 71). In other words, the aesthete’s main aim in life is to achieve what Kierkegaard points out as “immediacy.” The first enjoyment from an experience cannot be repeated and subsequent encounters cannot be felt the same way as the first encounter. Therefore, all “the potency of the interesting must be exhausted” since “everything is buoyant, beautiful and transient” (Kierkegaard, 1988a, pp. 345, 367)

In the second category, the aesthete who “sees the other as a means to an end, as an object to be dominated and manipulated, and in so doing, engages in an act of destructive defiance” (Julin, 2011, pp. 48-49) comes to notice the great abyss in his existence and develops a *reflective* attitude towards his selfhood. Just like a baby’s growing up into the adulthood, the aesthete’s repetitive enjoyment and non-fulfilling sensuousness matures into an aestheticism that orders one to use his intellect or higher faculties. The reflective aesthete wants to cultivate the ‘interesting’ quality in any experience. Evans (2009) posits that “such a reflective seducer seeks not sensual pleasure per se, but lives for ‘the interesting’” as well (p. 80). However, enjoying the experience of ‘interesting’ is more enjoyable than getting pure physical taste from experiences. The important thing for the reflective aesthete is to attain a spiritual and intellectual pleasure in sensuousness. He posits that just like the body “the soul, too, requires sustenance” (1988a, p. 201).

While the immediate aesthete’s mood is joy and happiness, the reflective aesthete has a more melancholic and bored attitude towards life. The aesthete in this stage develops a more sophisticated sense of aestheticism because “repetitive forms of sensual gratification become boring” (Watts, 2003, p. 197). He creates occasions for new experiences or continually changes the method and object of enjoyment. A poet does not sit in his solitary room waiting for the coming of the muse. He needs an occasion to create his “even the most consummate, the most profound, and the most meaningful work” (1988a, p. 235). However, one cannot create his own ‘occasion’ for “the occasion is always the accidental” (p. 233). Thus, instead of lamenting, the aesthete embraces his situation and tries to extract even small amounts of

there and go along down into the grave and draw lots to see to whom will befall the misfortune of being the last of the living who throws the last three spadefuls of earth on the last of the dead?” (Kierkegaard, 1988a, p. 29).

pleasure. After all, “what is life but madness, and faith but foolishness, and hope but a staving off of the evil day, and love but vinegar in the wound” (p. 230).

Though immediate aesthete is presented with ‘actual’ pleasures and determinate set of actions, reflective aesthete has many options or possibilities to choose from. This is ironic in that what he adopts to “cancel all actuality and set in its place an actuality” is not an actuality. He is just too “intoxicated [...] by the infinity of possibles” (pp. 290, 315). According to Taylor (2000), the distinction between immediacy and reflection is that they are on the opposite poles of the same problem. While immediacy lacks infinitude and possibility, reflection lacks finitude and necessity. Thereby, “the aesthete who feels sad at least feels something, and thus has an object for aesthetic appreciation” (Evans, 2009, p. 84). The result is wandering aimlessly in the abyss of (non)existence. This is when the aesthete must show an act of will and move towards a ‘higher plane’ of existence – the ethical stage.

THE AESTHETIC STAGE IN *BRIGHTON ROCK*

Brighton Rock tells the story of a demonic, seventeen-year old youngster, Pinkie Brown, who tries to maintain his position as a gang-leader by killing, rivaling with another mob and marrying a waitress to secure his alibi for the murder of Fred Hale whose betrayal has led to the death of the previous leader of the mob. A few minutes before the murder, terrified and pursued, Fred attaches himself to Ida Arnold, a jovial middle-aged sex-figure of the city, in a desperate attempt to divert the mob but he cannot escape death disguised as a heart failure while eating Brighton rock candies. Acting as Pinkie’s nemesis, suspicious Ida she takes up the position of a volunteer detective to illuminate the murder. As she learns too much and is on the brink of persuading Rose the waitress to testify against Pinkie, the latter is stuck between the chain reaction of events that leads him to murder a nervous fellow gang member, make an enemy of a strong mafia leader, and lure Rose to marrying him to secure his escape. Though Rose acts as a salvation for him and his already distorted religion and faith, his spiritual dilemma persuades him to kill Rose, too. Pinkie takes her to the cliffs to stage her suicide, but Ida arrives at the last minute with police and evidence to convict him. Rose is saved, but Pinkie falls (or jumps) off the cliffs under great agony caused by burning vitriol on his face.

Though the vivid depiction of violence, brutal murders, hectic atmosphere and mercurial characters are not the elements that define a typical Greene novel, the book as his first fully mature work and as his first step into a new territory called ‘religious fiction,’ I argue, acts as an unconventional start to his more serious undertakings in his other religious novels. To do justice to the novel’s importance as ‘a turning point in Greene’s career, it is worth briefly mentioning that Greene reflected this unconventionality through his

employment of the same discourse strategies as informed by Kierkegaard's presentation of the aesthetic stage in *Either/Or I*. In his study, Peksoy (2019) argues that the formal elements in *Brighton Rock* such as narrative structure, discourse style and characterization reify Kierkegaard's aesthetic categories that is explored subsequently within the novel. Indeed, Greene's deliberate use of specific narrative devices that render and perpetuate a thematic analysis of the novel allow one to dismantle the story in a more potent way. Greene amalgamates the narrative elements, discourse formation and characterisation in the novel with its contextual and thematic message so that a balanced, harmonious presentation of them is ensured to lay the foundation for Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage. Leaving this argument aside, in the next sections, I associate Pinkie's aesthetic way of life in *Brighton Rock* as the main theme with Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage in *Either/Or I*.

PINKIE'S AESTHETIC WAY OF LIFE: NATURAL, SENSUOUS, IMMEDIATE

Graham Greene in *Brighton Rock* portrays the world of Pinkie as brutal, violent and desperate where he lives a blank life in the sense that he cannot concretize his existential self. Just like Kierkegaard's aesthete, Pinkie feels he was thrown into existence. However, he fails to form a meaning in this forced existence. Thus, he becomes a drifter, lonely traveller, or a never growing child in this world. His existence is purely natural in the same sense as an aesthetic work of art or a natural man. It is argued that Pinkie's existence can be resembled to what the aesthete 'A' offers as an aesthetic work of art. *Sensuousness*, proposed as the first characteristic of the aesthetic stage presented with its various manifestations and artistic embodiments, becomes a defining element to describe Pinkie's art-like existence. And it reveals itself in Pinkie first as adopting the category of 'natural-ness.'

The aesthetic person claims that a piece of art decorated with sensuality needs to be universal and natural. He likes seeing the world as a perfect 'whole' that does not need any interference: "happy Greek view of the world that calls the world a cosmos because it manifests itself as a well-organized whole, as an elegant, transparent adornment for the spirit that acts upon and operates throughout it" (Kierkegaard, 1988a, p. 47). If one tries to expound the beauty of the 'universe', his efforts will go useless, for this will destroy its integrity, its naturalness. It is beautiful as it is, in its unspoiled condition. Therefore, the duty of art should be to define the 'natural' to withstand time. As such, each person, experience or concrete material around Pinkie has a transcendental, natural quality. He looks "at the spotlight: music, love, nightingale, postmen: the words stirred in his brain like poetry" (Greene, 1938, p. 50), and they have no impact on him, as a baby makes no sense of poetry. He lives in an abstract, theoretical world. Just as Kierkegaard's speculation that Mozart's *music* has a purely sensuous, abstract quality, Pinkie's identity is depicted as a perfect unity

of natural qualities. Hence, it is argued that Pinkie utterly feels his existence only when he lives an unchanged, unspoiled, natural life with no outside interference. This position strictly stresses the sensuality in art-works, say *music* which is composed to be felt. Pinkie's insistence to live a natural life adumbrates Kierkegaard's continuous reference to music in its natural state. If you change even a single note in a beautiful piece of music, everything will be spoiled; it is beautiful in its natural, original form. As such, Pinkie's aesthetic way of life is likened to a beautiful piece of music that Pinkie tries to keep in its original form.

According to Amir (2016), the aesthetic stage constitutes the beginning because we are born into it" (p. 95). Thus, it represents the man in its most natural, primitive and undeveloped condition. Pinkie wants to preserve his existential integrity by living a natural, solitary, untouched life. When Rose tidies his room after their marriage, he looks "round with angry disappointment at his changed room the position of everything a little altered and the whole place swept and clean and tidied" and feels a threat to his natural condition: "it was her Hell now if it was anybody's he disowned it" (Greene, 1938, p. 213). So, his existence is shaken, and he feels "driven out" as his only physical contact with the outside world is disturbed. Sensuality is a state that one is *de facto* equipped with, and one does not act to alter it, just like a newborn baby. A baby's life is solely dependent on satisfying immediate pleasures and sensuous needs. It does not have an ideal, commitment and responsibility for its life. Similar to the Sartrean dictum which preconizes that we are "thrown into existence," the aesthetic person lies "in the middle of the ocean like a child who is supposed to learn to swim" (Kierkegaard, 1988a, p. 31). Since he has no power to change it, he chooses to live like a 'natural man' and enjoy it as it is rather than act to change it.

Pinkie developed an anomalous antagonism to domestic life that has the potential to shatter his 'unspoiled' – natural – becoming. Although he passionately has overtaken the gang leadership and wants to clear the path for 'the great future' awaiting him, he is happy in his unhappiness and creates hatred for everything that is upsetting it. Rose, the crumbs of Cubitt's sausage roll on his bed, a tidied room, Ida Arnold, his starting dreaming at nights are, I argue, what trigger the action in the story as they disrupt Pinkie's natural flow of life. He undertakes every risk to get rid of this situation: "That was what happened to a man in the end: the stuffy room, the wakeful children, the Saturday night movements from the other bed. Was there no escape anywhere for anyone? It was worth murdering a world" (Greene, 1938, p. 92). The most striking example of his hatred for unnatural condition is described in the garage of a suburban house when Pinkie is pursued by rival gang members. The garage is piled up with useless junk one buys to use for something, but this accumulated 'wealth' is what destroys the natural life. Thus, Pinkie starts hating the owner: "the Boy hated him. He was nameless, faceless, but the Boy hated him. The doll, the pram, the broken rocking horse.

The small pricked-out plants irritated him like ignorance. He felt hungry and faint and shaken" (Greene, 1938, p. 108). Thus, he always wants others to "leave him" to his natural existence. The reason why he condemns everyone because 'they don't know a thing' is not, I presume, because he knows what real faith is, but because he has noticed the futility of life. He hates Ida Arnold not as an enemy, but as someone spoiled with 'experience' against himself with 'limited experience.' He is unspoiled by the knowledge of the world, for which he developed a strange antagonism. He feels attracted to Rose because she is "the cheapest, youngest, least experienced skirt in all Brighton" (Greene, 1938, p. 113), with her natural, innocent qualities.

The depiction of naturalness creates a contradictory effect in Greene's early novels. His early protagonists are all young, seemingly unmatured teenagers who can be likened to Kierkegaard's aesthete. Yet, their potential to bring destruction and devastation is highlighted with their paradoxical outward qualities. Pinkie, for example, is a 'boy' who has no experience in life. Greene places so much emphasis on Pinkie's youth to refer to his *naturalness*. In most of the book, he is referred to as 'the Boy.' Though he is seventeen, his looks are "like an old man's in which human feelings has died" (Greene, 1938, p. 8) and "touched with the annihilating eternity from which he had come and to which he went" (p. 21). He looks older from behind and wears a suit "too big for him at the hips" (p. 21). He does not drink alcohol but drinks milk or squash out of the bottle. He does not bet or smoke, hates the opposite sex and sexual intercourse is repulsive to him. He never kissed a girl, for "anything was better than the lips" (p. 92). He is relentless with his friends as a child is cruel to others. He joyfully explains how he gave hell to one of his school friends when they met on the day he died. His appearance is that of an innocent child: "a light lit his face and left it; a frown, a thought, a child's face" (p. 228). This juvenile imagery in perversion follows him to death. As the vitriol burns his face, Rose could "see his face indistinctly as it leant in over the little dashboard light. It was like a child's, badgered, confused, betrayed—fake years slipped away he was whisked back towards the unhappy playground" (p. 242). Like Kierkegaard's aesthete, he sees the devilry behind innocence:

They took his mind back and he hated them for it; it was like the dreadful appeal of innocence, but there was not innocence: you had to go back a long way further before you got innocence; innocence was a slobbering mouth, a toothless gum pulling at the teats, perhaps not even that; innocence was the ugly cry of birth. (Greene, 1938, p. 141)

As Baldrige (2000) explains, Greene's frequent emphasis on Pinkie's inexperience and seeming innocence creates "a juxtaposition of his moral extremity" (p. 24). Greene portrays Pinkie as a wolf in sheep's clothing. He represents Christian idolization of humans

thrown into the world of sins. *Brighton Rock* is, indeed, a story of evil concealed behind the daily lives of innocent people in Brighton. Thus, what Pinkie finds as a solution is to remain aloof of the material world. He does not act to change the conditions of his existence and chooses to preserve his natural existence rather than being a number inside masses. In his utter immediacy and sensuousness, Pinkie is living in a world “for the poetizing arbitrariness” in which “all existence becomes just a game” (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 302). When he visits Rose’s parents to get their permission to get married, he affirms this mode of life: “nobody could say he hadn't done right to get away from this, to commit any crime...” (Greene, 1938, p. 143). He prefers living in hell to living a domestic, stagnant, polluted, unnatural life.

Pinkie’s *artistically sensuous* existence finds a better explanation with the role of music acting as a powerful background motif in *Brighton Rock*. Trying to achieve stability in his inner self, Pinkie’s life is reflected as a piece of music that has achieved the balance between its subject matter and medium. Kierkegaard posits that what makes *Don Giovanni* a great work is that Mozart skillfully combined the perfect subject matter (sensuousness) with a perfect medium (music which is sensuous). This subject-medium balance needs to be one’s ultimate aim in life, as Victor Eremita claims that “the accuracy of that familiar philosophical thesis that the outer is the inner and the inner is the outer” (Kierkegaard, 1988a, p. 3). In the same vein, music has a special importance in *Brighton Rock* as one of the intermediary agents of Pinkie’s existence. In fact, what connects Pinkie to the material world which he wants to divert from is music that reflects his sensuousness in Kierkegaardian sense. It acts as the only veracious thing that can remind Pinkie of what is real. As an egoistic sociopath, he only feels music or is disturbed by it: “That was his strength. He couldn't see through other people's eyes or feel with their nerves. Only the music made him uneasy, the catgut vibrating in the heart” (Greene, 1938, p. 45). He becomes aware of his existence whenever he hears it, for “this music”, “spoke to him in music”, “that music” are allusions to his life view. In his meeting with Hale in the bar, he is so annoyed by Ida’s voice that he shouts at her to shut up because it continually drags him down to the lives of ordinary men. When he is out to create an alibi for Hale’s murder, he goes to a shooting booth where he hears music in the background: “he felt the music as a movement in his belly; the violins wailed in his guts” which reminds him of “Hail Mary...in the hour of our death” (Greene, 1938, p. 21).

Life speaks to Pinkie through music but in a negative way, Pinkie considers. In *Collected Essays*, referring to Dicken’s novels, Greene (1969) considers Dicken’s novels as “lulling us with the music of despair” (p. 86). Similarly, considering other characters’ positive relations with music, Pinkie’s satanic existence is best described in music just like Kierkegaard’s example of *Don Giovanni*. He is argued to dwell inside music. At Snow’s

restaurant where he goes to scare Rose, the music again makes Pinkie experience disjunction between him and the world in its decayed nature: "The wireless droned a programme of dreary music, broadcast by a cinema organist – a great *vox humana* trembled across the crumby stained desert of used cloths: the world's wet mouth lamenting over life" (Greene, 1938, p. 26). He takes Rose away from the music to talk to her about Hale so that the music does not disrupt his evil plans. He feels pity towards Mr. Prewitt since "the room vibrated, and the music wailed through the wall" (p. 207) from next door. He considers Prewitt must be living in 'hell.' The music further "beat on the boy's resistance" when Sylvie offered him sex, which signifies his impotence to form his existence. In all these scenes music becomes a factor that reminds Pinkie of his awful condition "like a voice prophesying sorrow at the moment of victory" (Greene, 1938, p. 129).

According to Consolo (1962), "the pathetic vestige of Pinkie's religion" is "a shred of song" (p. 15). However much the music is repulsive to him, his whole existence is summed up with divine music, unlike the secular ones which bring him back to earth. Holding a vitriol bottle in one hand and touching Rose with his other hand, Pinkie is in a dilemma as to whether he should kill Rose who, he thinks, creates a connection with the material world. Upon learning that she is also a Catholic, he considers they might have something in common in their faith and thus, calls off the execution. The music from the bar is mixed with his memory of a mass hymn, and the reader sees Pinkie in all his musical sensuality. He exists in divine music:

'Why I was in a choir once,' the boy confided, and suddenly he began to sing softly in his spoilt boy's voice: 'Agnus dei qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.' In his voice a whole lost world moved; the lighted corner below the organ, the smell of incense and laundered surplices, and the music. Music, it didn't matter what music—'Agnus dei,' 'Lovely to look at, beautiful to hold,' 'the starling on our walks,' 'Credo in unum Dominum'—any music moved him, speaking of things he didn't understand (Greene, 1938, p. 52)

Although Pinkie asserts that 'any music' affected him, music that does not have eternal tones has no significance for him. Whenever he does something evil, the words "*Dona Nobis Pacem*" resonate in his head. When he is about to kill Spicer, his whole experience of 'murder' culminates in this lyrical unrest: 'grant us peace.' Pinkie's development as a character from beginning to the end of the story is evoked by music. His first reaction to "a little vicious spurt of hatred—at the song? at the man?" which is reflected by music as 'peace' at the beginning of the story, is transformed into a sense of loss at the end when he says he believes '*Credo in Unum Satanum.*' After the marriage ceremony, Rose and Pinkie go to see a film where "the Boy began to weep. He shut his eyes to hold in his tears, but the music went on" (Greene, 1938, p. 179). The music officially announces his damnation and his 'eternal

unrepentance' is revealed, which he fails to express. Musical sensuousness is Pinkie's language like Kierkegaard's aesthete.

Closely related to the musical nature of sensuousness, the aesthetic individual seeks 'immediacy' in all his experiences, for "music always expresses the immediate in its immediacy" (Kierkegaard, 1988a, p. 70). Watkin (2000) states that "the aesthete is the one who lives a spontaneous or 'immediate' life and, changeable in feelings, moods and bodily condition, thus interacts with his changing environment" (p. 53). One's behaviours and attitudes towards life in the aesthetic stage do not depend on reflection or spiritual experience; the person acts according to his basic instincts and feelings. It is 'immediate,' for the person wants to extract whatever pleasure he may have from every experience with no intermediary agents present such as conscience, ethics or religion. The pleasure obtained from music is momentary and temporary; thus, the aesthetic in person "is that by which he spontaneously and immediately is what he is" (Kierkegaard, 1988b, p. 178). The aesthete seeks an incessant pleasure that is immediately reified and consumed until he finds a new one. It is completely musical and immediate. Like music, it is "over as soon as the sound has stopped and comes into existence again only when it sounds once again" (Kierkegaard, 1988a, p. 102). The music's instantaneous appearance as an ephemeral experience becomes a defining element for the aesthete's coming into being.

For Greene, the crowd in *Brighton Rock* lives an aesthetic life, pursuing pleasure in every way possible. It is a dark atmosphere with "cramped streets and the closed pubs and the weary walk home" (Greene, 1938, p. 6). Thus, "with immense labour and immense patience they extricated from the long day the grain of pleasure" (Greene, 1938, p. 6). Pinkie does the same: to suck the life in its immediacy. He "is a bodily personality" (Rovira, 2010, pp., 61) that enjoys immediate sensual impressions. As Elrod (2015) maintains, this structure and movement "constitute[s] an abstract description of a process which occurs throughout the dialectical development of the self. It is the abstract form by which the self develops" (p. 40). However, the immediacy of pleasures is reflected in Pinkie in the form of inflicting pain to himself and to others. His understanding of getting pleasure from every experience is through pain and suffering. Pinkie's violent acts become a replacement of sexual desire that the aesthete praises as an immediate pleasure. As someone who would 'like to carve the whole bloody boiling' and feels no empathy for his victims, Pinkie feels elevated when he hurts Rose. When he decides to scare Rose, he shows her a bottle of vitriol to spoil her looks. He feels desire like a sexual pleasure: "just as a faint secret sensual pleasure he felt, touching the bottle of vitriol with his fingers as Rose came hurrying by the concert hall, was his nearest approach to passion" (Greene, 1938, p. 46). Again, when they are on the dance floor, "one hand caressed the vitriol bottle in his pocket, the other touched Rose's wrist" (Greene,

1938, p. 50) as if the idea of giving her pain is what makes him alive. He remembers "all the good times he'd had in the old days with nails and splinters, the tricks he'd learnt later with a razor blade" when Rose does not seem frightened, he feels disappointed: "what would be the fun if people didn't squeal?" (Greene, 1938, p. 51).

Pinkie experiences a sublime enjoyment when he sees others experiencing pain and he "couldn't picture any eternity except in terms of pain" (Greene, 1938, p. 97). He explains his religion only through suffering:

But you believe, don't you," Rose implored him, "you think it's true?" "Of course, it's true," the Boy said. "What else could there be?" he went scornfully on. "Why," he said, "it's the only thing that fits. These atheists, they don't know nothing. Of course, there's Hell. Flames and damnation," he said with his eyes on the dark shifting water and the lightning and the lamps going out above the black struts of the Palace Pier, "torments." "And Heaven too," Rose said with anxiety, while the rain fell interminably on. "Oh, maybe," the Boy said, "maybe." (Greene, 1938, p. 52)

For him, heaven was a word that cannot materialize itself. Thus, he preserves his faith through a strong belief in hell, pain, and damnation. When he is attacked by Colleoni's men, his knuckles get slashed and his first reaction is astonishment to pain rather than horror: "Pain happened to him; and he was filled with horror and astonishment as if one of the bullied brats at school had stabbed first with the dividers" (Greene, 1938, p. 106). He realizes that "the mob were enjoying themselves, just as he had always enjoyed himself" (Greene, 1938, p. 106). Even in the moment of possible death, he wonders how they enjoy themselves. He feels "the finest of all sensations, the infliction of pain" (Greene, 1938, p. 102) when he schemes for Spicer's murder. Pinkie's materialistic worldview makes him seek immediacy as he cannot experience peace or salvation "from the mirror over the ewer, the soap dish, the basin of stale water" (Greene, 1938, p. 98). He agrees to marry Rose though he finds marriage and sex repulsive and disgusting. He notices that there is "a kind of pleasure, a kind of pride, a kind of—something else" (Greene, 1938, p. 239) in the act which he cannot designate. This 'something', I assume, is the pleasure of committing a mortal sin. Since he cannot feel God in his daily life, he wants to "to taste God in [Rose's] mouth" by deliberately doing a secular marriage. With every sin he commits, as a human being, he seeks to feel his existence in its immediacy with the infliction of agony that succeeds.

PINKIE'S PROGRESS FROM IMMEDIACY TO REFLECTION

Pinkie's aesthetic life exemplified as absolute sensuality consisting of naturalness, transience, and immediacy takes a new form as the plot thickens. The same way the purely aesthetic individual takes up a melancholic mood after realizing the meaninglessness of this

kind of life³, Pinkie's stance in life evolves from being sensuousness into being reflective towards life. While the aesthete living in sensuousness has been quite content with his sensuous way of life in the beginning, later he develops an awareness of the failure of immediate sensuousness and assumes a mood of melancholy and boredom. As Ong (2009) argues, "a person at this stage is immersed in melancholy, taken to flights of poetic yearning, and determined to distance herself from external commitments and obligations" (p. 218). The aesthete notices that 'living like a work of art' in the moment leads to repetition of pleasures and thus, to boredom. In fact, it is not a negative quality, but a vertical "development from pre-reflective sorrow to reflective unhappiness" (Harries, 2010, p. 53).

Pinkie leads such a life in his search for existence which is always interrupted by allusions to a boring life with endless repetition. Harries' allusion of the aesthetic person as "Sisyphus, Tantalus, endlessly repeating the same meaningless act" (2010, p. 74) becomes a perfect description of Pinkie. He is a bored person, for repetition is the essence of boredom. As he looks for the 'interesting' in his daily life, he becomes more reflective of his condition, and the rejoicing he previously felt in pleasurable situations is transformed into a qualitative sorrow that produces reflection. Some critics claimed that Pinkie, as a child, watched the sexual acts of his parents and developed a hatred for life. Kulshrestha (1979) wrongly suggests that "the effect of the primal scene, the parents in the sexual act, is represented as a major crisis of Pinkie's pre-adolescent emotional life" (p. 60). At first, one is inclined to think that Pinkie felt lonely for "he had no share in their thoughts [...] he was like a soul in purgatory watching the shameless act of a beloved person" (Greene, 1938, p. 186). Pinkie's hatred for sex, life, human and pretty much everything, I assume, is due to infinite, pointless repetition of daily tasks. He is not scared of his parents' 'frightening Saturday exercises' but its being 'weekly' with seemingly no-end. In the end, he confesses that "he couldn't blame his father now" since "it was what [...] you got mixed up" (Greene, 1938, p. 220). Repetitive life leading to infinite boredom is what scares Pinkie. Thus, since he is scared that the habit will grow, his whole acts are construed as an 'escape from tedious life.' When he catches a glimpse of Rose's thigh on the bus, the dreaded act of repeated sex is what pricks him like 'sickness.'

Pinkie's trepidation of repetitive life culminates in his visit to his lawyer, Mr. Prewitt's house. Before the visit, his mind oscillates between killing and sparing Rose. He thinks maybe there is still hope for them and if they can manage to escape from the law, they can go on 'the way they are.' However, in Prewitt's gloomy house haunted by domestic tediousness

³ In *Either/Or I*, the aesthete's tone and mood start changing after the supposed speeches (*The Tragic in Ancient Drama*, *Silhouettes* and *The Unhappiest One*) delivered to a society of aesthetes called *Symparanekekromenoi* (translated as 'The Fellowship of the Dead')

with his wife for twenty-five years, he observes what is waiting for him if he marries Rose. Prewitt continuously refers to his wife as 'the spouse' or 'old mole' and keeps telling Pinkie that he should see her. He considers Pinkie 'lucky' as he is so young now with a life full of possibilities, unlike him. He observes that if they get caught "the worst that can happen to you [Pinkie] is you'll hang. But I can rot" (Greene, 1938, p. 209). Pinkie threatens to 'ruin' Prewitt, but it has no effect on him. Quoting from *Faustus*, he states that "Why, this is Hell, nor are we out of it" (Greene, 1938, p. 210), stressing there is no escape from this boring life. He incessantly reminisces the missed adventures with 'little typists' he might have had in his youth. Even Pinkie's offer of money does not tempt him, for no money can heal a mind corrupted like his. His sharp intellect, youth, bright career, the power of speech is piled up into this catatonic existence with no future expectations. The visit which took place on Sunday when Prewitt does not work symbolizes the aftermath of Saturday night exercises of Pinkie's parents. Infinite boredom is what it all leads up to and what Pinkie is terribly afraid of. This could be one of the reasons why "the word "murder" conveyed no more to him than the words "box," "collar," "giraffe" (Greene, 1938, p. 45). Everything becomes equally unsatisfying in the end.

Pinkie's methods for coping with this boredom are worth consideration since they seem to be pushing him more into non-existence rather than avoiding it. Just as the members of the fellowship of the dead are chasing sorrow in every place, Pinkie develops a positive disposition towards sorrow, pain and suffering. The aesthete whose motto in life is to conquer sorrow rather than abate it strives to find the secrets of sorrow, for 'sorrow' is more interesting than 'joy.'⁴ Joy is everywhere but sorrow is rare. The aesthete looks for pleasure in his every experience. However, since life is brief and not worth living, one should extract pleasure from sorrow as well as from immediate experiences. Pinkie seems to adopt a similar self-imposed sorrow in his existence in that he seems to embrace this condition rather than act to change it. He seeks sorrow and suffering, and similar to the aesthete that becomes more 'reflective' as time passes, Pinkie's reflection manifests itself as an acceptance of his sorrow. Rather than concealing behind a melancholic mood and despairing attitude, he transforms his sorrow into pleasures distilled even from minor incidents.

Evans (2009) states that "suffering is given a kind of meaning and is no longer pointless" (p. 84) in the reflective aesthete's world. This meaning, though, takes a more distorted shape in Pinkie. He considers that he is far beyond peace and salvation, for "hell lay about him in his infancy" (Greene, 1938, p. 68). This is a world of razor blades, murder,

⁴ Kierkegaard's aesthete gives a detailed account of three unhappy women - Marie Beaumarchais from Goethe's *Clavigo*, Donna Elvira from Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and Margarete from Goethe's *Faust* - as the embodiments of reflective sorrow. He argues that these three women became the subject of the fellowship's conversation due to their deep sorrow, for their sorrow is what makes them 'interesting' and 'existing.'

pain, gambling, despair, Saturday night exercises, dark room, stale water, and boredom. When he is driving Rose to the country to kill her, he snaps at Rose's statement that life is good: "I'll tell you what it is. It's jail [...] Worms and cataract, cancer. You hear 'em shrieking from the upper windows, children being born. It's dying slowly" (Greene, 1938, p. 226). As an immature young man, he has not seen any place else apart from Brighton. He became the embodiment of the city in a way – "I suppose I'm real Brighton" – as if his single heart contained all the cheap amusements, the Pullman cars, the unloving week-ends in gaudy hotels, and the sadness after coition" (p. 220). Yet, it offered nothing but sorrow to him since his childhood. According to Greene, "a brain was only capable of what it could conceive, and it couldn't conceive what it had never experienced" (Greene, 1938, p. 228). As Pinkie never felt goodness, kindness, and love in his life, he cannot imagine a life with these qualities. His upbringing guaranteed that he will have a despairing life: "his cells were formed of the cement school playground, the dead fire and the dying man in the St. Pancras waiting room, his bed at Frank's and his parents' bed" (Greene, 1938, p. 228).

The aesthete argues that the pain one experiences makes one a real human being. Feeling pathos is the real existence, for life would be boring and repetitive without it. Pinkie's situation could be resembled to ancient tragedies in which the hero's downfall is absolute with no possibility of being saved. He is a tragic hero doomed to eternal suffering, which ironically has a refreshing effect for him. Suffering rejuvenates his selfhood and he experiences his existence in its fullest meaning. Kunkel (1959) claims that "Dante merely visited hell; Pinkie comes from there" (p. 153). One of the rare moments that he fully felt his existence is when sorrow came upon him "like a vision of release to an imprisoned man" (Greene, 1938, p. 179). Then he tries to repent:

He felt constriction and saw hopelessly out of reach a limitless freedom: no fear, no hatred, no envy. It was as if he were dead and were remembering the effect of a good confession, the words of absolution; but being dead it was a memory only he couldn't experience contrition the ribs of his body were like steel bands which held him down to eternal unrepentance" (Greene, 1938, p. 179)

The scene clearly highlights his dilemma. While his conscience desires salvation, his body resists. Suffering is true existence for Pinkie, for he is poisoned by the pleasure of suffering. As Evans (2009) argues, "it has been recognized that tragedy offers something profound as well as enjoyable. So, turning one's own life into a kind of tragedy to be aesthetically appreciated makes sense [...] from an aesthetic perspective" (pp. 83-84). Like Adam who was thrown into the world due to his sin, he needs to experience faith through his self-induced sorrow. Harries (2010) posits that Adam and Eve came to know the difference between good and bad by eating from the tree. However, "the decision cannot

have been made with such knowledge" (p. 57). Since they cannot possibly have known this before the deed, they cannot be held responsible for the action. Only this way, only by sinning, they have become 'existing' individuals according to the aesthete. One is 'thrown into existence,' into the conditions not of his choosing. So, one needs to live like a drifter at the hands of fate and should do nothing to direct his life. That is the reason the ancient tragedy is more beautiful and epic. The hero's sorrow has an aesthetic quality: "The wrath of the gods is terrible, but still the pain is not as great as in modern tragedy, where the hero suffers his total guilt" (Kierkegaard, 1988a, p. 148). Pinkie's sorrow became 'an insane pride' that he utilizes to master in this fallen world and that acts 'like a love of life returning to the blank heart.' From this perspective, Pinkie is transformed into Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost* that states that "To reign is worth ambition though in Hell / Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n". He prefers being a master of his existence in his sorrow to being one in a crowd. When Dallow suggested that three of them leave the city and retire in a faraway city, Pinkie envisages a happy life. However, he quickly refuses since a happy, married life with friends around terrifies him. The main reason behind his hatred for Rose is that she could provide the 'heaven' he seems to be seeking. Yet, Pinkie cannot reify Heaven, for "hell was something he could trust" (Greene, 1938, p. 228). Joy and peace are categories that mostly depend on external conditions outside of our control. Pinkie chooses the feeling of sorrow and unhappiness that is easier to attain against happiness that lasts for a limited amount of time. To refer to Evans (2009) again, "it is very hard to be deliriously joyful over a long period of time, but not so hard to be chronically unhappy" (p. 84). Instead of not feeling at all or feeling an emptiness, Pinkie focuses on his sorrow as an aesthetic object of appreciation. The key point for sorrow to be appreciated is its not being repetitive and not providing the same feelings repeatedly. He wants himself considered happy due to his unhappiness.

It is also worth mentioning the ways Pinkie develops to cultivate the interesting and not to fall into this abyss of sorrow through repetition and boredom. As known, great works of art are produced by poets, writers, and artists based on certain happenstances that occur occasionally or accidentally. Likewise, an experienced aesthete should never feel bored, but know how to carve interesting experiences even from minor incidents. For him "a spider, the coughing of a neighbour, sweat running down a conductor's forehead" (Kierkegaard, 1988a, p. 235) are chances to produce great moments of joy in this meaningless life. Pinkie's stagnant existence is dominated by the same force of *occasion*. His need for an occasion to poetize his daily life creates destructive results for him and for people around him. Since life is accidental and the daily experiences and people around him are mere occasions, he does not create a bond with anyone, or his connection with them is superficial. Since "the person in the aesthetic [stage] finds meaning for his existence outside himself" (Bedell, 1972, pp., 81),

Pinkie feels himself forced to mingle with people and his involuntary contact with the outside world acts as the trigger of action. He acts according to the flow of actions. Even his passion for gang leadership that seems to be his only aim in life has no explicit realization in his mind. His long-term goal to overthrow Colleoni and to live in luxury like him acts as a momentary diversion from emptiness. Before his visit to Colleoni at the hotel, he considered Colleoni should be living a relatively untroubled life considering he seems to have everything a mafia leader might have: “the armchairs, stately red velvet couches stamped with crowns in gold and silver thread, [...] the wide seaward windows, and the wrought-iron balconies.” However, in the hotel “it was he who looked like an alien in this room” (Greene, 1938, pp. 63-64) and he realized that it is not the answer to his troubles. He still pursues to lead the gang though. He sees the whole affair as ‘acting-like-leader’ to kill time. Unlike his nemesis Ida Arnold who happens to have always plans, he acts according to the occasion. He accidentally meets Hale, his first kill, in a bar; he needs to silence Rose either by killing or marrying her as a witness; he decides to kill her on the way to the countryside; and instantly pushes Spicer over the banisters. Referring to his marriage with Rose, he states that “Hale and Spicer were trivial acts, a boy's game, and he had put away childish things. Murder had only led to this – this corruption” (Greene, 1938, p. 167). His thoughtless, unprepared, occasional acts lead him to more atrocity. Like Kierkegaard's aesthete, he treats his friends as ‘pebble stones on his way.’ His motto in life is “you couldn't make mistakes when you trusted nobody” (Greene, 1938, p. 58).

The most interesting solution the aesthete offers against the feeling of boredom and Pinkie seems to embrace is ‘the rotation of crops’ method. The same way a farmer changes the products he cultivates in the field every year or changes the land for better yields, the main point of crop rotation is finding the new, first and interesting so as not to fall into boredom that is the root of all evil, all activity in the world. The aesthete states that “boredom is demonic pantheism” which means that everything has equal value – working or not working, marrying or not marrying, makes no difference for the aesthete. Hence, one need to find new ways of enjoyment which is also unsatisfying itself. For lonely prisoners condemned to a life sentence, a spider in the cell can be the source of great enjoyment for them. The rotation of cultivation method is thus a meaning discovered in what is in itself meaningless. Similarly, Pinkie is quite capable of cultivating the interesting and enjoyable in his life. In fact, since his marriage with Rose will be ‘like a prophecy, a certain future, a horror without end’ he quickly looks for ways to avert it. Similar to Ida Arnold's statement that “I like to start something fresh [...] not off with the new and on with the old” (Greene, 1938, p. 29), Pinkie tries to find new ways of enjoyment, but in more devilish ways. When he is looking for a way of escape from marriage, he considers planning Rose's murder to make

it look like a suicide. At this moment “an insane pride bobbed in his breast; he felt inspired; it was like a love of life returning to the blank heart” (Greene, 1938, p. 203). His discovery makes him embark on a new adventure in his motionless life; this time, he will experiment in killing a girl as his previous murders had lost their significance. Using the aesthete’s rotation method, he finds new ways of experiencing the feeling of murder. Otherwise, one kill is no different than the other one for Pinkie. His real motive in killing Rose is to experience what it would be like to cause someone else’s damnation by intentionally forcing her to commit ‘a mortal sin.’ His intention might be justified, considering his suspicion that Rose knows about his murders and might be working with the police or Ida. However, it is later revealed that Rose does not know anything about his kills. Thus, his motives for killing her are removed. However, he deliberately informs her that he is the culprit so that he could create the motives for her murder. Though his friend Dallow warns him that there is no need to kill her and Rose told him that she loves him and will do whatever he pleases, his lust for the pleasure of inflicting pain is insatiable.

After their first night in Pinkie’s room, Pinkie feels a momentary satisfaction while Rose is sleeping in bed. At that moment, he “was [in] hell then; it wasn't anything to worry about: it was just his own familiar room” (Greene, 1938, p. 182). In the familiar atmosphere of his dark room with its “the ugly bell [...] the long wire humming in the hall, and the bare globe [...], the washstand, the sooty window, the blank shape of a chimney” (p. 182), he once again started to experience his dull, solitary, obtuse existence with nothing to worry about. However, when he felt sexual desire aroused “again, like nausea in the belly,” he felt defeated again since “he no longer had a sense of triumph or superiority” over Rose (p. 187). After all, “all attempts to conquer boredom depend on the cultivation of variety” (Evans, 2009, p. 78). The whole act of sex or the feeling of committing a mortal sin had lost its interesting nature for Pinkie.

“all his pride coiled like a watch spring round the thought that he wasn't deceived, that he wasn't going to give himself up to marriage and the birth of children, he was going to be where Colleoni now was and higher... he knew everything, he had watched every detail of the act of sex, you couldn't deceive him with lovely words, there was nothing to be excited about, no gain to recompense you for what you lost, but when Rose turned to him again, with the expectation of a kiss, he was aware all the same of a horrifying ignorance” (Greene, 1938, pp. 92-93).

Like Kierkegaard’s aesthete, he has exhausted the first and the interesting quality of sexual encounter; thus, he needs to find other ‘crops’ to reap. He felt “momentarily exhilarated by the strangeness of his experience.” The spectre of a domestic life starts haunting him again since “now there would be nothing strange ever again he was awake” (Greene, 1938, p. 187). Rose as a person has lost her significance as a source of enjoyment:

“there was nothing he could see that was heroic in the bony face, protuberant eyes, pallid anxiety” (Greene, 1938, p. 143).

Just after Spicer’s death, his girlfriend Sylvie meets Pinkie in a bar and proceeds to have intercourse with him. Pinkie also agrees since he will know what is ‘the game’ like and be experienced before his marriage with Rose. When she is “wait[ing] for him with luxurious docility” (Greene, 1938, p. 134) at the back of a car, nausea, disgust and fear seize him and he runs away. The carefully laid plans and strategies to conquer someone is more important for Pinkie than having someone so easily. The idea of adventure and the enjoyment it carries is more satisfying than the experience itself. Thereby, Pinkie is argued to be impersonating *Johannes the Seducer* in the last chapter *The Seducer’s Diary in Either/Or I*, where Kierkegaard consummates the aesthetic life-style by describing how he seduced a young girl in his diaries. The chapter acts as if *Johannes* is incarnating the concepts of aesthetic stage described here. The Seducer’s whole aim in life is to “to accomplish the task of living poetically” (Kierkegaard, 1988a, p. 304). Unlike the immediate sensuous and bored aesthete, he seems to have embraced life and tries to enjoy it no matter what. However, the Seducer’s actions are not directed towards getting physical enjoyment; what he seeks is the reflective enjoyment which means getting intellectual pleasure. Every new experience that will divert him from daily life is welcome. Though he is young, handsome and rich and can get every girl he wants, he deliberately wants the most difficult and adventurous ones: “the fishing is always best in troubled waters” (Kierkegaard, 1988a, p. 322). His stance in life can be summarized as:

“Real enjoyment consists not in what one enjoys but in the idea. If I had in my service a submissive jinni who, when I asked for a glass of water, would bring me the world’s most expensive wines, deliciously blended in a goblet, I would dismiss him until he learned that the enjoyment consists not in what I enjoy but I getting my own way” (Kierkegaard, 1988a, p. 31)

Cordelia, the object of his desire, has no importance for him. Since he knows everything is either boring or will lead to boredom in the end, he is happy to experience little crumbs of adventure and achievement. He gets engaged to her and after a while deliberately breaks the engagement just to observe her feelings in new situations. Though he seems happy with his ‘scheming’ to enjoy the idea of pleasure, Kierkegaard shows the inadequacy and inapplicability of aesthetic life in this chapter. Seeing that “exits from his foxhole are futile” he tries to cover his despair through adventures and mind experiments: “he is continually seeking an exit, and continually finding an entrance through which he goes back into himself” (Kierkegaard, 1988a, p. 308).

On his visit to Rose's parents at Paradise Piece, Pinkie stands on top of a hill and briefly watches the slums where he grew up. He sees the place unchanged, preserving its desolateness. The scene he observes marks the end of his quest. The extreme poverty, glassless windows, rubble, torn gravel and asphalt, flapping gutter are what he has come from and what he will return to in the end. If his life continues as it does now, all that was demolished "had to be built again for him." Pinkie becomes a person who "confront the dilemmas of *The Waste Land*, struggling to find meaning in an empty world" (Crawford, 1982, p. 103). Like Kierkegaard's aesthete, he notices the "the vast superiority of vacancy" that his life is leading to, and "a dim desire for annihilation stretch[es] in him" (Greene, 1938, p. 144). Pinkie exhausted all kinds of material pleasure one can taste in life, and even experimented the feeling of condemning Rose to eternal punishment by leading her to suicide. Towards the end when he drives her over the cliffs where she is supposed to shoot herself, he feels a brief ennui; he is ready to leave everything as it is and turn back to his normal life. However, he "could hardly believe in the freedom at the end of it, and even that freedom was to be in a strange place" (Greene, 1938, p. 238). Still, Pinkie asks Rose if 'she would always have stuck with him' to give her one more chance. When she says 'yes' "he began wearily the long course of action which one day would let him free again" (Greene, 1938, p. 239). Unlike his previous evil deeds, this last one has a reflective nature. He no longer tries to extract enjoyment from killings; he feels a kind of apathy towards his existence.

Pinkie has been transformed into Kierkegaard's reflective aesthete: "It's not what you do," the Boy said, "it's what you think." He boasted" (Greene, 1938, p. 127). However, "the intrusion of the ethical" takes place "in the reflective aesthete's life" (Evans, 2009, p. 87), and similar to Kierkegaard, Greene shows the failure of aesthetic existence at the end of *Brighton Rock* with an open ending. Rose is afraid to shoot herself and throws the gun away. At that moment, Ida and Dallow arrive with a policeman at their side, and Pinkie thinking that he was betrayed moves for the vitriol bottle in his pocket. The bottle is shattered, and he is sprayed with vitriol. In an appalling agony, he runs and falls over the cliff. Whether he cracks the vitriol bottle himself or it was hit by a police baton and whether he jumps intentionally or falls by accident are not highlighted by Greene. Thus, whether Pinkie is saved or damned is unclear. However, considering that Kierkegaard's aesthete notices the impossibility of an aesthetic life in *The Seducer's Diary* and that the chapter acts as a turning point for a higher level of existence, Pinkie's jump also becomes a Kierkegaardian leap of faith towards a higher stage of existence. According to Kohn (1961), "the simple and intense moral universe that Greene presents in *Brighton Rock* reflects [...] that the primitive and horrible contain the seeds of grace" (p. 3). Though Greene depicts his 'leap' as 'withdrawn

out of existence' and 'whipped away into zero', the reader is forced to lean towards Pinkie's being saved through Rose's confessor at the end of the book. The priest states that "you can't conceive, my child, nor can I or anyone the ... appalling ...strangeness of the mercy of God" (Greene, 1938, p. 246). The recurrent use of "between the stirrup and the ground" highlights the possibility of redemption even for Pinkie. He might have been saved by this mysterious agency as he previously felt grace as "something trying to get in, the pressure of gigantic wings against the glass" (Greene, 1938, p. 239). In an interview, Greene highlights this possibility:

"I tried, as a sort of intellectual exercise, to present the reader with a character whom he could accept as worthy of hell. But in the end, you remember, I introduced the possibility that he might have been saved "between the stirrup and the ground." I wanted to instill in the reader's mind a fundamental doubt of hell" (Greene as cited in Allain, 1983, p. 148).

Pinkie's possible redemption through his jump into abyss metaphorically symbolizes the leap of faith Kierkegaard's aesthete makes towards ethical existence.

CONCLUSION

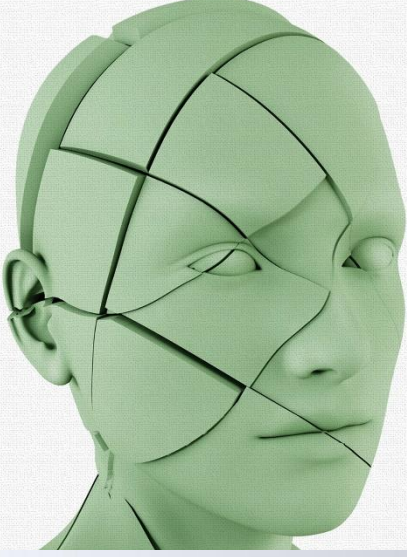
Greene provides the major character Pinkie as the embodiment of Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage with an immense freedom to experiment with his life. Thereby, Pinkie embodies an aesthetic person who fails to create an ideal for his identity, to relate it to a more beneficial agents, and to synthesize the opposite forces in his selfhood. He is depicted as the perfect personification of immediacy as the epitome of aesthetic stage. Like a piece of sensuous music which exists only in the time it is produced, Pinkie's existence is ephemeral – he experiences it only when he feels enjoyment. The peace, salvation and heaven which do not produce an immediate pleasure in Pinkie lose their significance and thus, he embraces the non-transient pain as his existence. Yet, just like Kierkegaard's aesthete, he notices the futility in this kind of existence and develops a reflective disposition towards life. The repeated, continuous pursuit of immediate pleasures and sensuous experiences lead him to a boring, dull life with no satisfaction. His previous antagonism against an intrusion to his natural existence is transformed into reflective sorrow that looks for ways to escape from this condition. Yet, Pinkie embraces his 'sorrow' as an element that stresses one's being alive and existing. Upon consuming all possible forms of enjoyment, Pinkie condemns himself to death and commits suicide, which acts as a metaphorical leap towards a higher type of existence – the ethical stage.

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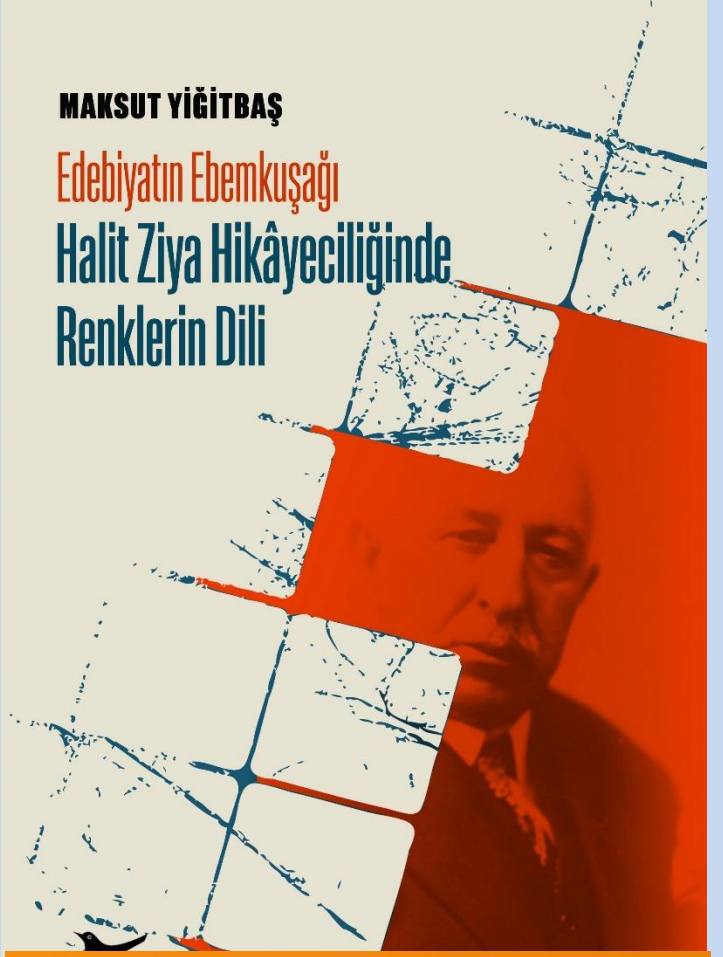
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MAKSUT YİĞİTBAŞ

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Yazma Sanatı

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Prof. Dr. Önder Göçgün

