

**FALLING OUT OF THE CENTER – COLLAPSE OF MEANING AND
RECONCILIATION IN WILLIAM GOLDING’S *FREE FALL* AND GRAHAM
GREENE’S *THE END OF THE AFFAIR***

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Abstract

The reading of Golding’s *Free Fall* and Greene’s *The End of the Affair* from the lens of modernism and postmodernism is helpful to formulate the anxiety to reach towards a totalizing meaning. The crisis of meaning experienced in these novels mirror the prevailing social anxiety of mid-late 20th century in relation to the perception of meaning and truth that faced considerable undermining. What makes these novels special for such analysis is their very treatment of truth and meaning. These novels perform a break from the early modernist tradition in their treatment of truth and meaning overall. It is possible to say that they possess postmodernist innuendos in their treatment of truth and meaning since they show that there can be no transcendental or single meaning, and concepts such as Truth, God, spirit and self are unidentifiable and mostly recognized as non-existent. Their communication does not rest on the success of communication itself, but, rather, on the restrictions and limitations of communication and its vessels which, in turn, reflect the absence of a center of meaning. The vessel to find this meaning seems to disintegrate. There is one significant element that these novels clearly portray: a constant unrest and an incurable anxiety and frustration in the face of humanity’s absurd condition(s) of existence that either needs to be faced or completely avoided for the sake of sanity.

Keywords: Search for Meaning, Reality, Modernism, Postmodernism, Stability.

**WILLIAM GOLDING’İN *SERBEST DÜŞÜŞ* VE GRAHAM GREENE’İN *ZOR
TERCİH* ROMANLARINDA ANLAM VE BÜTÜNLÜK YOZLAŞMASI**

Öz

William Golding’ın *Serbest Düşüş* ve Graham Greene’in *Zor Tercih* eserlerini modernizm ve postmodernizm merceğinden okumak, bütünleştirici bir anlam ve hakikate ulaşma endişesini formüle etmek için yararlıdır. Bu romanlarda yaşanan anlam krizi, önemli ölçüde zayıflatılmış olan anlam ve hakikat algısıyla ilişkili olarak 20. yüzyıla hâkim olan toplumsal kaygıyı yansıtmaktadır. Bu romanları bu tür analizler için özel kılan şey, onların hakikat ve anlamı ele alış biçimidir. Bu romanlar, hakikati ve genel anlamda anlamı ele alırken erken modernist gelenekten bir kopuş sergilemektedir. Bu romanların, tek bir anlamın olamayacağını ve Hakikat, Tanrı, ruh ve benlik gibi kavramların tanımlanamaz olarak veya yok olarak kabul edildiğini gösterdikleri için gerçeği ve anlamı ele alırken postmodernist imalara sahip olduklarını söylemek mümkündür. Bunlarının iletilmesi, iletişimin başarısına değil, daha ziyade, bir anlam merkezinin yokluğunu yansıtan iletişimin ve araçlarının kısıtlamaları ve sınırlamalarına dayanmaktadır. Bu anlamı bulmak için kullanılan araçlar da işlevselliklerini yitirmektedirler. Bu romanların açıkça tasvir ettiği önemli bir unsur var: insanlığın saçma varoluş koşulları karşısında bitmeyen bir huzursuzluk, tedavi edilemez bir endişe ve hayal kırıklığıyla ya yüzleşmeleri gerektiği ya da bundan tamamen kaçmaları gerektiği.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anlam Arayışı, Gerçeklik, Modernizm, Postmodernizm, İstikrarlılık.

Falling out of the Center – Collapse of Meaning in *Free Fall* and *The End of The Affair*

William Golding’s *Free Fall* (1959) and Graham Greene’s *The End of the Affair* (1951) through first person narration trace the self-questioning of their narrators on the existence of a meaningful pattern that could help them discover a totalizing meaning or a truth that govern their lives. The ongoing struggle to discover, create or reach towards some sort of meaning and stability

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was amongst the central problems of the 20th century. The dates these novels were written is highly significant as they coincide with the time period between what is considered as the end of modernism and early beginnings of post-modernism. Therefore, it is important to note that these novels do not strictly follow one kind of (post)modernism but contain poetics of both. These novels could be considered as pioneers of postmodernist fiction in terms of their relation with the search for meaning but also present a modernist attitude in how they deal with the ambivalence of meaning and truth. Thus, my analysis of William Golding's *Free Fall* and Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair* will mainly deal with the novels' problematization of an overarching meaning in a stable center and the consequential disillusionment and anxiety in the face of failure.

The 20th century, which is the era when modernism rose to its "heyday," could be considered as the era of the most significant shifts and breakthroughs that led to the "great turn of the novel" (Bradbury 1). This "turn of the novel" was brought up by the emergence of changes in every realm of living that expressed a turn away from the values of the 19th century. As many of the critics suggest "modernism" in the novel genre did not appear out of the blue, but rather, had its roots in deep and complex social, political, philosophical and scientific changes occurring at the time. Europe was shaken with the most devastating and destructive wars of history, whose consequences "transformed the European world map, and brought at least one revolutionary new ideology, Bolshevism, to political birth", thus, changing the whole system of governing and as a result the social class structure (Bradbury 7). The revolutionist agendas of Marxism and communism "disturbed the comfortable surface of a bourgeoisie age" and brought upon a time of "historical uncertainty" (Bradbury 8). Moreover, scientific enlightenment brought along a strong sense of doubt and disillusionment in religion and its practices as they no longer sufficiently expressed the meaning of life and existence. It was the time when God was dead.

In the light of all these events the question was "whether there was a solid observable reality, or whether all is art, artifice, illusion" (Bradbury 26). All these shifts of the 20th century pointed to the "[m]odernist disenchantment: scepticism towards the notion of 'truth', a sense of the individual's disorientation within modernity, and an historically situated pessimism over contemporary life combined with an understanding that the modern world has become spiritually bankrupt and culturally fragmented" (Childs 97). In fact, if there was one thing to be sure of it was that the truth and meaning were relative, meaning, "life or spirit, truth or reality this, the essential thing, has moved off, or on, and refuses to be contained any longer in such ill-fitting vestments as we provide" (Woolf 84). Modernism's emphasis was on how there was no single truth or meaning, and life and reality in general could be seen from many layered, multiple perspectives. By the 1950s even modernism itself started to become inadequate to define or pinpoint the growing concern and anxiety over this relativity of meaning and truth. The second half of the 20th century was marked by another break away called postmodernism that reflected a different attitude towards the issues of meaning and truth. Postmodernism called into question hierarchies, oppositions and unities but without completely denying that it is quite impossible to think outside of these categories. Postmodernism showed that "the signifying systems that constitute our world ... are not natural, given, or universal" and therefore, everything in relation to language, concepts like meaning and truth- are also constructed and illusory (Hutcheon 13).

What modernists realized was the fact that the previous works and the methods of representation they employed, did not correspond with the actual condition of things because life was essentially meaningless and fragmented. Postmodernism built on that notion but insisted that "the point is not exactly that the world is meaningless but that any meaning that exists is of our own creation" (Hutcheon 43). Postmodernists argues for a multiplicity of meaning instead of a single truth and suggests a free play of these meanings. While modernists writers and their works tend to portray an anguish towards any mode of meaning against such fragmentation and collapse from a center, the postmodernists embraced this new way of looking at life. The common problem with novel for both attitudes however stayed the same. What the novel, as a genre, needed was a new angle, a new definition that could capture the chaotic nature of life and individual, and from there, reach towards a newly created meaning or truth or, in postmodern context, acknowledge the impossibility "to unproblematically know that reality and represent it in language" (Hutcheon 119). Therefore, one of

the central concerns of modernist texts became a search for meaning in a meaningless world. For modernism, the impossibility of finding a pre-existing meaning presents a “primary epistemological difficulty; the task of art is to redeem, essentially or existentially, the formless universe of contingency” because meaning and reality are not readily given (Bradbury and Macfarlane 50). The aim is to repair where “the fabric of meaning [that] wears thin in places, and meaninglessness shows through” and while doing so to question if such a repair and reconciliation is truly possible (Trotter 77). However, postmodernist texts insisted that art and life cannot be easily separated; art is not functioning to repair or find what is lost but it accepts it is “beyond repair”. Novels such as Angela Carter’s *Nights at the Circus*, Jeanette Winterson’s *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, Julian Barnes’s *England, England* are amongst postmodern examples that embrace their own ambiguity and are usually self-conscious and self-reflexive over the ambiguity of meaning and direction. Postmodern narratives show that “no narrative can be a natural “master” narrative: there are no natural hierarchies; there are only those we construct” (Hutcheon 13). In doing so, postmodernism creates a multiplicity of perspectives and expands the limits for the exploration of new grounds or possibilities.

In *Free Fall* and *The End of the Affair* the search for meaning is mirrored in the dependence on science, religion and art that can present a center of meaning. However, the act of searching gradually reveals an extreme lack of direction. The search for meaning turns into a struggle for meaning that becomes frustrating and inconclusive because meaning is relative and cannot be located in a single center. This is evident in both novels’ failure to find a singular meaning in a fixed and stable center.

In *Free Fall* religion and science are presented as methods through which the protagonist Sammy searches for meaning. These two systems, religion and science are represented by Sammy’s two teachers in the novel. Rowena Pringle, Sammy’s childhood teacher of religion, stands for the belief in the order of God and her own perspective imposes that all existence has meaning and order. Nick Shales is the science teacher who sees things from a rational point of view and believes that the world is governed by causality. For Sammy, Nick’s rationalism and Rowena Pringle’s religious explanations form separate patterns with which he tries to understand the meaning and the working of the world he is a part of. Miss Pringle’s world which Sammy “inhabited by nature, the world of miracle drew [him] strongly. To give up the burning bush, the water from the rock, the spittle on the eyes was to give up a portion of myself, a dark and inward and fruitful portion” and yet “[t]he other world, the cool and reasonable was home to the friendly face of Nick Shales” (Golding 238). Sammy’s oscillation between these two worlds shows the impossibility of choosing as these systems both offer acceptable truths. What Sammy begins to grasp is that his narration “is not a reflection of *the* world, but a projection of only one world, one view out of the many that might have been painted” (O’Donnell 85.) Consequently, his own narrative further complicates and adds to the truths and realities of his childhood and adulthood from which he is trying to choose. The narrative progress and organization he attempts to create further disintegrates because he cannot simply “clap the universe into a rationalist hat or some other” (Golding 5). Sammy’s complex narrative shows that nothing can be captured in its entirety or totality because a single way of seeing is impossible in the first place. One single idea can be perceived from multiple views that can contradict each other, like the story of the burning bush: “Yet not one of us thought of Miss Pringle next door and her lessons. We might have shouted together that a burning bush that burned and was not consumed away surely violated the scheme of Nick’s rational universe as he unfolded it to us” (Golding 238). The biblical story of the burning bush has a dual significance because it fits differently to two different worlds. For Miss Pringle, the burning bush is the absolute truth whereas for Nick Shales it represents an impossibility. The story of the burning bush symbolizes the simultaneous and fluid existence of multiple, multi-layered realities. The story of the burning bush dislocates the notion of hierarchy between religion and science showing that they are both meaningful and contain equally sensible truths. By remembering the story Sammy realizes that trying to see things as one complete whole is impossible:

All day long, year in, year out, the daylight explanation drives back the mystery and reveals a reality usable, understandable and detached. The scalpel and the microscope fail, the oscilloscope moves closer to behaviour. The gorgeous dance is self-contained, then; does not need the music in my mad moments I have heard. Nick’s universe is real. All day long action is weighed in the balance and found not

opportune nor fortunate or ill-advised, but good or evil. For this mode which we must call the spirit breathes through the universe and does not touch it; touches only the dark things, held prisoner, incommunicado, touches, judges, sentences and passes on. Her world was real, both worlds are real. There is no bridge. (Golding 286).

Sammy's claim that "there is no bridge" suggests the absence of a totalizing truth and meaning but the acceptance of having unhierarchical, multiple truths and meanings. Sammy concludes his narrative when he finally understands that "he lives in several worlds at once", that he can extract neither transcendental nor scientific clarity to define his existence or end his existential conflict (O'Donnell 86). It is Sammy's narrative that Sammy as the storyteller hopes to establish as a stable center where he can find meaningful end points for his ontological questions. However, such a narrative progress is broken when the novel and Sammy's narrative end at a critical turn point where Sammy's all past experience and knowledge becomes more inexplicable. And yet, it is this confusion that Sammy begins to accept even if he does not come to terms with it. Sammy's search for a meaningless center is replaced by his confrontation with a patternless existence. In that regard, Golding's novel seems to be a pioneer of postmodern condition that necessitates a move away from any notion of center or a fixed standpoint. As Hutcheon suggests "postmodernism involves its offering of multiple provisional alternatives to the traditional, fixed unitary concepts in full knowledge of (and even exploiting) the continuing appeal of those very concepts" (60). Golding produces a protagonist who is moved by the very traditional aim of meaning-making and finding a single truth within a fixed center while this very attempt is deconstructed by a narrative end-product that portrays and creates multiple, unconnected worlds. This shift also provides Sammy with a new way of looking at the meaning-making process that moves away from wholeness and fixity.

In *The End of the Affair*, a similar kind of attempt to discover a pattern in relation to the search for meaning and truth is expressed through a wilful hatred of God that eventually turns into an unwilling belief in God. Belief, despite being the central force of the novel, is never adopted by Sarah or Bendrix at first and is always opposed by a rigid turn to science and rationalism. This is reflected in Bendrix's explanation of the world and god in abstract mathematical terms: "I find it hard to conceive of any God who is not as simple as a perfect equation, as clear as air" (Greene 5). For Bendrix everything is "quantifiable and open to precise formulation. Love, hatred, and jealousy are mathematical fractions of biological drives forever trying to cancel each other out" (Bosco 20). However, in doing so, Bendrix, much like Sammy, collides science and religion into each other. Bendrix's ongoing disbelief is a way of conforming his own rationalism, his own casual belief system:

I have never understood why people who can swallow the enormous improbability of a personal God boggle at a personal Devil. I have known so intimately the way that demon works in my imagination [...] I can imagine if there existed a God who loved, the devil would be driven to destroy even the weakest, the most faulty imitation of that love. (Greene 47).

The unknown sphere of god and religion "continually takes [Bendrix] into a world where the equation founders" (Bosco 21). The personal devil that he opposes as a rational option against god is a way to choose over what Bendrix knows, the modern world of science, technicality and rationality. However, such oppositionality suggests that Bendrix unconsciously realizes that "a god" he cannot understand might exist. Trying to see his life or his experience from only the rational point of view or from the side of his "personal devil" will not be possible. And yet his invention of a personal devil, something also religious, helps him to avoid facing this issue. His own rationalization collapses without the very thing he dismisses. Also, throughout the novel Greene reflects that religious understanding cannot be separated from the physical world, what is considered to be its opposite. The juxtaposition of spirituality and physicality is explored by Sarah Miles when she questions if God is real:

Dear God, I had said. I should have said, Dear Vapour. I said I hate you, but can one hate a vapour? I could hate that figure on the Cross with its claim to my gratitude - 'I've suffered this for you', but a vapour ... Why? ... Am I a materialist because I believe in the independent existence of that man with the bowler, the metal of the cross, these hands I can't pray with? Suppose God did exist, suppose he was a body like that, what's wrong in believing that his body existed as much as mine? Could

anybody love him or hate him if he hadn't got a body? I can't love a vapour that was Maurice. That's coarse, that's beastly, that's materialist, I know, but why shouldn't I be beastly and coarse and materialist. I walked out of the church in a flaming rage, and in defiance of Henry and all the reasonable and the detached I did what I had seen people do in Spanish churches: I dipped my finger in the so-called holy water and made a kind of cross on my forehead (Greene 93).

Sarah's dilemma suggests that "her own growing belief in God will proceed from the very grounds of her corporeal experience and her sense of "that material body on that material" (Gorra 119). It is significant that, only when Sarah decides to become a Catholic, she can see this duality. After the robot bombing of their building in London and seeing Bendrix's body covered in blood, Sarah, despite being an atheist, prays to save Bendrix. Her wish assign life to Bendrix's body is the very thing that causes her spiritual transformation because she "can't love a vapour that was Maurice" (Greene 88). Seeing that Bendrix is still breathing, Sarah starts to think that the unknown, mystical world of God might actually exist. For Sarah the first sign of this God is "the body of her lover" and she is "led by her abandonment of this body to put her faith in signs of divine presence in another body, the suffering body on the crucifix (Bosco 18). Therefore, Sarah's bodily longing and erotic paralysis cause her to "escape the human body" for the belief "of a god that bore no relation to [herself], something vague, amorphous, cosmic" (Greene 87). Sarah wants to remove the psychical body out of God's world because her physical restraint from reaching Maurice's body frustrates her and becomes the source of her extreme pain, which she takes as spiritual suffering. This is first signalled by the change in the way Sarah starts to address God. It is explained that during their affair Sarah never directly addresses Bendrix with his name but uses the pronoun "you". After her conversion, however, the "you" with capitals starts referring to God: "You took [my disbelief] into Your love and accepted it like an offering [...] I hated You for it and You'd taken my hate like You'd taken my disbelief into Your love, keeping them to show me later" (Greene 90). The replacement of "you" that referred to Bendrix with God shows that the human body becomes the "sign of God's presence, whether it be bodies in pain, bodies disfigured, or bodies in erotic intimacy [...] If God has become human flesh, then every finite body is a possible conduit of God's grace" (Bosco 18). However, this body and spirit relation becomes paralyzing since neither a return to body nor transcendence to spirit alone provides true peace and satisfaction. There can be no reconciliation because transcendental presence "is inextricable from an awareness of the physical world" and without the acceptance of this "another world [...] the "visible world" itself seem[s] to flicker and wane" (Gorra 119). Greene's subversion of the oppositional relationship between "body" and "spirit" or the "physical world" and "spiritual/religious world" presents a postmodern challenge to see and categorize experience according to binary oppositions. Sarah's choice is not simply one-folded because her devotion to religion means acknowledging both her love for Bendrix and a new way of performing that love from different channels. In fact, her choice is a symbol for her failure at choosing. Greene presents in *The End of the Affair* two characters- Sarah and Bendrix- who struggle to mend the gap between two modes of meaning, much like Sammy in *Free Fall*, by attempting to block and reject any religious occurrence that establish an alternative truth and reality and fail. Greene's portrayal of this failed attempt at mending also brings forward a postmodernist acknowledgement "to show that all repairs are human constructs, but that, from that very fact, they derive their value as well as their limitation" because "all repairs are both comforting and illusory" (Hutcheon 8).

While Golding's *Free Fall* and Greene's *The End of the Affair* engages in a postmodernist problematization of meaning- making to show that it depends on the acceptance of irreconcilable multiplicity of truths, the novel portrays an immense disillusionment and anxiety against this unbridgeable existence. Such disillusionment is rather is a modernist expression as what modernist texts seeks to achieve is to gain a sense of direction that reflects the search and yearning for a unitary meaning and truth. Thus, the struggle for reconciliation in both these novels remains to be struggles without any result because meaning is torn off from that direction. This is elaborated by epiphanic moments where the narrators understand the meaningful, overarching truth they have been searching for does not exist.

In *Free Fall*, the discovery that there are multiple truths and realities completely deconstructs the hope for reaching an ultimate meaning. This disillusionment comes in epiphanic form to Sammy when he is locked up in the dark cell:

The center of the cell is a secret only a few inches away. The impalpable dark conceals it palpably. Be intelligent. Leave the center alone [...] A darkness ate everything away [...] There was a whirlpool which had once been my mind but which now was slipping round, faster and faster; and a story leapt into the center of it, a story completely remembered, vividly visualized—story of the small cell and the ceiling that came down slowly with all the weight of the world. I was scrabbling at the high wall, but the ceiling was still out of reach and I could not tell. But I knew that there were crushed things hanging from it that stank as the cold scrap in the center was stinking; and presently I should hear the sound of its descent as it made unbearably small what was too small already, and came mercilessly down. So I was crouched in my fetid corner, gasping, sweating, talking. (Golding 205-206).

The utter darkness of the cell represents the impossibility collecting experience and its meaning into a single stable unit. The “rotting” center of the cell which Sammy tries to avoid facing seems to be a symbol for a deconstruction or destruction of a reality and a truth that can be explained, analysed and categorized. His reluctance to face the truth he has discovered in relation to truth and meaning shows Sammy’s increasing anxiety over the loss of control in organizing his lived experience into a coherence. This, indeed, is the moment of Sammy’s “free fall” because while he discovers and finally understands that there will always be truths and realities that are not finite and multiplying, there is actually nothing for him to do with these realities or with his newly discovered knowledge over them. In fact, it is this knowledge that casts Sammy “into a timeless void” where his epistemological questions are left unanswered (O’Donnell 86). This is a representation of a highly modernist paralysis against a very postmodern problem. As McHale argues modernism mostly focuses on knowing and

deploys strategies which engage and foreground questions such as : ‘How can I interpret this world of which I might be a part? And what am I in it?’ . . . What is there to be known? Who knows it? How do they know it, and with what degree of certainty? How is knowledge transmitted from one knower to another, and with what degree of reliability? How does the object of knowledge change as it passes from knower to knower? What are the limits of the knowable? And so on. (9)

It is the sudden acknowledgement of the impossibility to locate meaning within these epistemological questions or in their answers that creates an oppressive anxiety in Sammy. This concern is also present in extradiegetic level because Golding offers no solutions other than accepting “there is no bridge”. In that sense, the darkness that envelops Sammy and the story that collapses with the heaviness of “the world” is the erasure of narrative order Sammy has followed but also of a modernist narrative that no longer asks the right kind of questions to go beyond the impasse. This is why Sammy hangs “all systems on the wall like a row of useless hats” and says that “they do not fit” (Golding 2). He abandons all the systems because none of them wholly explain or bring about a clear and meaningful approach. Since that one meaningful, stable unitary system of thought does not exist Sammy rejects them all. Eventually what happens is that “nothing communicate[s] with nothing” (Golding 194). Nothing can point towards any sense of meaning or truth but each attempt to do so emphasizes the absurdity of it because, the way they try to assign meaning and truth to life cannot explain anything fully.

The absence of single meaning in *The End of the Affair* is conveyed through, ironically, coming to terms with the existence of a god figure. However, the world created by this god does not reflect any sense of unity, stability and peace but only offers cruelty, pain and suffering. God is only understood within the limits of pain: “I thought I am kissing pain and pain belongs to You as happiness never does. I love you in Your pain [...] You might have killed us with happiness, but You let us be with You in pain” (Greene 98). Equating God’s existence with extreme pain marks a state of emotional and even physical state of frustration that elaborates the state of man “as being trapped by incomprehensible circumstances in a state of total impotence and paralysis” (Kehinde 138). This paralysis is further elaborated through Bendrix’s comments on war. The world is devoid of peace but is oppressed with a meaningless cruelty and devastation:

Death never mattered at those times in the early days I even used to pray for it: the shattering annihilation that would prevent for ever getting up, the putting of clothes, the watching her torch trail across to the opposite side of the Common like the tail-light of slow car driving away. I have wondered sometimes whether eternity might not after all exist as the endless prolongation of death (Greene 55).

What the world entails is a meaningless monotonous function without significance or purpose. God's world in a sense "underwrite[s]" man's acts of finding a meaning beyond the limits of that world and yet he is forced to an acceptance of a world devoid of meaning (Gorra 119). In fact, man is left without meaning and without any sense of stability in relation to himself because as Bendrix says it is God who has "done enough": "O God, You've done enough, You've robbed me of enough, I'm too tired and old to learn to love, leave me alone forever" (Greene 160). What God provides is just an extreme sense of the nullity of human existence since everything outside him is rendered meaningless. Bendrix is confronted with an abstraction of meaning. Faith is a symbol for this deprivation and an unbreakable cycle of futility. This sense of emptiness is also portrayed in Bendrix's inability to finish his novel. With that loss of hope in meaning and truth Bendrix has "come to an end of [his] interest in work now; no one can please [him] much with praise or hurt [him] with blame" because his novel does not and cannot contain the hope for a unitary truth as it had in the beginning (Greene 122). His art and himself are emptied out. Despite being a very technical writer, he realizes that his narrative lacks such meaningful structure, thus, the possibility of a meaningful ending is impossible. This collapse of meaning becomes visible in the way Bendrix starts perceiving his life: "she wanted me to have a second chance and here it is: the empty life, odorless, antiseptic, the life of a prison [...] what did I do to you to condemn me to life" (Greene 119). Bendrix's life is stripped out of any sense of order and meaning. He is condemned to live which suggests that he has no control and no sense of direction, hence, no meaning or purpose. In Greene's *The End of the Affair* the disillusionment of the narrator is portrayed within a characteristically modernist progression in the form of a "shift from confidence to suspicion" (Nicol 20). This suspicion represents a world that

no longer seems to exist objectively, but comes to seem, as in Proust, wholly the creation of the narrator's ego. This results in a new relation between reader and author, as the reader is no longer able to rely on the author to guide him or her around the world of the novel. In fact, it seems as if the author himself is exploring this world for the first time (Nicol 20).

The disillusionment of Greene's narrator presents a world that no longer is readily available to him within a logic he can comprehend and yet it is through this that Greene questions and problematizes what the discovery of multiple truths means. If his art and writing cannot capture Bendrix's truths and realities in the way he wants them to be captured the continuation of it becomes pointless. Bendrix becomes suspicious of the ordering power of his own narrative and he cannot find any ready-made or easy answers to his questions about Sarah or his own beliefs and he becomes more frustrated in his inability to control the production of meaning as an artist. The suspicion Nicol mentions also lies, here, in the ability to move beyond such paralysis. The novel, much like *Free Fall*, ends when Bendrix's godly power over his narrative turns into a complication that begins to further his own anxiety over lack of control in meaning-making. It is this very suspicion and anxiety that reflects a bleaker attitude in looking at the multiplicity of truths and ambivalence of meaning that makes the novel's reaction modernist.

Golding's *Free Fall* and Greene's *The End of the Affair* can be considered as liminal or hybrid novels that work with both modernist and postmodernist agendas. The novels' engagement with the questions over meaning and truth show that there is no overarching truth or stable meaning. And yet, the novel also presents an epistemological struggle to order these multiple meanings which results with a failure that installs in a great pessimism and frustration. *Free Fall* and *The End of the Affair* present endings that seem to be on an impasse where the art of the narrators provide no consolation or solution. However, what both Golding and Greene achieve through these impasses, reflected through the distance towards art by the artist, is that it is only through art that the problems of reality, truth and meaning can be contemplated. What Golding and Greene provide through this is a self-conscious text that questions its very own limits and acknowledges those limits to transgress them. So, that impasse at the end of these novels is actually a threshold on the verge of being crossed.

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