



## SUBTLE TREATMENT OF POLITICS PICTURED AS POLITICAL IMAGINATION IN THE FICTIONAL WORLD OF GRAHAM GREENE

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### **Abstract**

*This paper vividly picturizes the faith of Graham Greene on socialism where all his novels are fused with social and political concerns along with love, innocence and personal relationships. Greene's fiction merely shows the picture of the world which is sad and violent. Truly speaking, he doesn't want to deal with outward reality but tries to poetry the best of inner world in man. It beautifully reflects how terrorism played a vital role in the life of a common man and turning the life so different due to the cries of humanity being subalternized, suppressed and fined with anguish. It examines rather neatly has man himself got secluded from the personal responsibilities towards the society, democracy. Promoting the public interests.*

**Key Words:** *Marxism, Treachery, Violence, Oppressiveness, Social Injustice, Responsibility.*

Graham Greene is rather undoubtedly one of the greatest exponents of the twentieth century English novel whose special contribution has been his immense capacity for effective story-telling and his unique vision of the world which has turned his obsessions into works of art. His fictional art has attained great complexity and artistic elegance as he attempts to represent some of the basic aspects of life. There is a sustained effort to interweave the psychological, the religious and political generating a fictional discourse that is multilayered. Greene believes that the corruption of human nature is the result of original sin. The tendency towards corruption according to him, originates in childhood. As Kenneth Allot puts it, "... a terror of life, a terror of what experience can do to the individual and a terror at a predator mined corruption is the motive force that drove Greene as a novelist" (PP 15-16).

"Disloyalty is our privilege" wrote Graham Greene in an exchange of views on the relation of the artist to the society. He has fought a battle against the power of abstractions which has tried to dominate politics. In a society which is governed well or bad, the government is a threatening force that almost exploits man's freedom. So Greene feels that it is the writer's responsibility to reject any special privilege given to him. His responsibility is to speak out the truth. Socio-political themes have always been important to novelists. In the words of Alan Swinge wood, "the concept of man as simultaneously the creator of social and historical world through his practices and yet an object is apparently determined by those very forces he has brought into being. Hemingway, Faulkner, Kafka and Greene always attempt to fictionalise the human situation. Their novels evoke dismay, fear, terror and bewilderment. In their novels, "an individual or ordinary individual shall be selected to represent the predicament of mankind in the particular circumstance under consideration and that the reader shall be invited to identify himself will that individual" (P 27).

Greene's novels arouse a profound sympathy for the bewildered victim or the suffering seeker. His novels, however, are not allegories or fables constructed to expound a previously determined scheme of ideas. W.H. Clark writes:

"The true novel rests on no such scheme; it  
Is an exploration, not an exposition and the  
True novelist arrives at his sense of life  
Through his story, he does not construct his  
Story to illustrate that sense" (P 170).

Greene's novels, no doubt, emphasize on the sterility and despair of the modern civilization, for they have a contemporary atmosphere superficially deal with the theme of great thirties – "strikes and political murder in It's Battlefield (1935), the machinations of armament manufactures in A Gun for Sale (1936) the Spanish Civil War in The Confidential Agent (1939) culminating in The Power and the Glory (1940) with the confrontation of Marxism and religion" (Jones 10).

George Orwell is known for his political satire. He had faith in socialism and it is the base of his satiric attack on different forms of totalitarianism. His view on socialism is based on decency, liberty and justice. His novel Animal Farm (1944) is anatomy of the development of totalitarian state. He says in great revolutionary struggle that the masses are led on by vague dreams of human brotherhood and then the new ruling class is well-established in power and they are thrashed back into servitude. His 1984 is a satire on modern society. Greene deals with political subjects and ideas; his aim is not social reform but examination of human behaviour which is affected by politics. In all his novels, his social and political concerns are fused



with the love-innocence-treachery motif to explore the situation of man, every man in society and in personal relationships. Thus, *Stamboul Train* (1932) depicts a failed political movements as it presents love, lust, treachery and failure at all levels in human relationships.

This concern for justice and truth infuses all of Greene's work, giving the universe he creates of complex dimension of reality. He has never quit fighting for mankind. Greene's novels are drawn from life as it is. His characters live, fall in love, toil, struggle and die. Each has his place in the society, from the judge or a policeman representing the established order to the outlaw, a murderer or a traitor challenging it and in between the industrialist, a worker, a writer, a communist and a priest. As a journalist, Greene travelled to almost every continent, collecting details which were to become the materials for his novels. When Greene deals with political subjects and ideas, his aim is not social reform but an examination of human behaviour, which is affected by politics and religion. In all his novels, his social and political concerns are fused with the love-innocence-treachery motif to explore the situation of man – every man in society and in personal relationships.

In *It's a Battlefield* (1934), Jim Drover, a London bus driver kills a policeman at a Communist meeting. A decent, soft spoken and honest man is thus turned into a killer. It is a battlefield and its victims are chiefly the poor, condemned by the workings of the economic and social system to insecurity, to mechanized factories, a hand to the left, a hand to the right, the pressure of a foot or to unemployment – the beggar did not beg because he would not work. Justice is unjust for the laws were made by property owners in defence of property. In *A Gun for Sale* (1936) attacks the capitalistic system. Raven is hired to assassinate the old Czech minister of war. His employer, the head of midland steel, counts on precipitating war and selling armaments to save his floundering business. A war won't do people any harm, claims Raven. He says it will show them what it is and give them the taste of their medicine. Violence is seen everywhere. It is in the oppressiveness of social injustice, against which every conformity provides no secure defence. It is a man's soul which destroys him when he gives way to it. It is unleashed in war. War sets people against each other or divides a nation. It turns man against his brother; it rends man and woman when the sexes are confronted. It calls for death. Violent death, either murder – the ultimate expression of violence against another or suicide, the result of frustrated violence turned against oneself. There is always one victim. Death, in Greene's work, exists as an abiding presence, as an inescapable part of life.

To exist is to choose Greene, though Fowler makes a serious attempt to draw this man who is in a moral predicament without any religious source. He is not a God tormented lonely. Fowler has not learnt the acrobatics of Scobie or Querry. Fowler categorically says he has no reason to believe in God. To exist is perhaps the most important thing which Greene tells through *The Honorary Consul*. Doctor Plarr is punished for his Cynicism and has a tragic death while Fortnum has a fortune to live. *The Quiet American* is an indictment of American involvement in the Vietnam War. It is an expression of venomous anti-Americanism. Greene mocks at their innocence. Fowler tells Pyle not to listen to East with their parrot cry about a threat to the individual soul. It is their country and they should run it. Flower blames America for not allowing Vietnam to think for themselves. Fowler exposes the grandeur myth of the third force. He has not seen any American figure around and their liberty doesn't mean anything. The Americans are contrasted with the Europeans. Greene says that it comes from the creation of the world. *The Comedians* is an attack on the police tyranny and diplomatic hypocrisy of Dr. Duvalier's rule. Haiti has a puppet government. The guidelines for Haitian politics are prepared in Washington. The country is passing through throes of civil war. Haiti shows how the Americans exploit the situation for their political ends. By controlling the local political machinery, the Americans wish to assert their presence in Haiti. *The Quiet American* represents the new, bright, chromium – plated innocence of American values, the glossy and falsely comfortable ideas in which human feelings have no place. It also comments about American complicity in Vietnam. Fowler recalls what Phat Diem had been like before the attack, which has no people. It is "full of rubble and broken glass and the smell of burnt paint and plaster" (*The Quiet American* 46). Through Fowler, Greene makes fun of the American innocence. Pyle is not a man but represents a nation. He is 'The Quiet American'. Fowler is a sensitive human being committed to humanity for fighting against misery and oppression. Fowler represents the reality of the nation.

Greene's Fiction is not merely a form but it is a form of truth presenting a kaleidoscope, a picture of the world which is sad, cruel and violent. He does not simply deal with outer reality, but he tries his best to portray the inner world of man. In all the three novels of Greene, terrorism plays a tremendous role in making common man's life difficult. In *The Honorary Consul*, Paraguayan terrorists attempt to kidnap the American ambassador to Argentina which results in seizing the Honorary consul for Great Britain. In his school days, Rivas wished to be a fearless person who would defend the poor and innocent. Even when he become a priest, Rivas could not forget his revolutionary aspiration in the face of all the poverty, oppression and hypocrisy he saw around him. He found his conscience at variance with his priesthood and so he broke his vow and married a woman. Excommunicated from the church, Rivas becomes a political terrorist. *The Comedians* discusses Dr.Pluliot's death on the bank of pond. The whole land is poverty-stricken and corruption raises its hydra heads everywhere. *The Comedians*



exposes the brutality of the regime and shows American willingness to support any amount of violence to prevent Haiti from becoming another Cuba. Horror and cruelty have corroded into the body politic of Haiti. The new secretary for social welfare symbolises the corruption of the state for which Greene uses the symbol of dental decay. Death is a proof of sincerity and lack of commitment in the face of modern life, in the face of Godless world where continual trouble is made by politicians, by capitalists, by intellectuals, by bureaucrats, by wall street bosses or communist bosses.

To conclude, the cries of humanity sound around us and within us, voices filled with anguish at a world gone away. In all Greene's novel, the cries are echoed. He offers no theoretical solutions either political, moral or religious. No political system is perfect and evil reigns supreme everywhere along with violence and death. Democracy has failed in its mission of establishing the rule of justice and promoting public good. Too often, it has served only the special interests of money and power, while remaining deaf to the voices of the poor. The kingdom of culminates in a Hitler or a Stalin. One can see our familiar values overthrown and humanity itself threatened with destruction. Man has lost its roots or has cut them himself turning his personal responsibilities over to society. Political and social creeds have become veritable religious, but religion itself solves nothing. No doubt, there is subtle treatment of politics in *The Quiet American*, *The Honorary Consul* and *The Comedians*.

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