

Thrill & Suspense as The Magnetic Force in Graham Greene's Novels



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Abstract

The English fiction has undergone several phases and developments in accordance with the interest of the readers and ongoing trends in literature. Some of the forms of the known to the English reader are- historical novels, Picaresque novels, Sentimental novels, Gothic novels, Psychological novels, the novels of manners, Epistolary novels, Pastoral novels, Detective, mystery, thriller novels, Science fiction etc.

Graham Greene is one of the foremost post-war novelists who gave English novel the spiritual dimension. Greene has been considered as a modern spiritual writer. His didacticism led him to be a 'Catholic Novelist'. His obsession is pre-dominantly religious. Accordingly Greene's modern novel has lost religious values. Greene is the writer of the profound religious orientation both in his so-called Catholic novels and his other works which is pervaded by an intense religious feeling. Greene's early thrillers manifest, if somewhat awkwardly on occasion, his wide-ranging ambition for the form, which he polished over a career spanning more than fifty years. Indeed, many of Greene's thrillers have themes and tonalities in common with his supposedly more serious novels.

The paper which is designed on Graham Greene's worth as a detective, mystery and thriller novel writer, surveys the various aspects of his detective novels that have ever since been full of interest to the reader all over the world and that reveal how they have long been providing entertainment to the reader

Keywords: Comprehensive, Picaresque, Sentimental, Gothic, Epistolary, Detective, Marxism, Liberalism, Plot, Characterization, Didacticism, Science Fiction, Bent of Mind.

Introduction

Generally the terms like 'detective', 'mystery' and 'spy' are taken as being similar words, but it is not so. They are different from one another. In literature, they are commonly used for the stories and novels and dramas that have some such suspense as throws them into a state of mind when they can know what ultimately happens. The detective story thrills the reader with mysterious crimes, usually of a violent nature, and puzzles his reason until their motivation and their perpetrator are, through some triumph of logic, uncovered. The detective story and mystery are, more or less, synonymous, but the thriller frequently purveys adventurous *frissons* without mysteries, like the spy stories of Ian Fleming, for example, but not like the spy stories of Len Deighton, which have a bracing element of mystery and detection. The mystery novel was superseded in popularity by the novel of espionage, which achieved a large vogue with the James Bondseries of Ian Fleming. Something of its spirit, if not its sadism and eroticism, had already appeared in books like John Buchan's *Thirty-nine Steps* and the "entertainments" of Graham Greene, as well as in the admirable novels of intrigue written by Eric Ambler.

In English literature, Graham Greene's reputation rests upon his being a novelist of international political affairs who had a special bent of mind to the writing of novels to be noted for their suspense and element of thrill. He was a prolific English novelist, playwright, short story writer and critic whose works explore the ambiguities of modern man and ambivalent moral or political issues in a contemporary setting.

To the name and account of the famous English novelist Graham Greene, in addition to the other writings, there are the following 28 celebrated novels that speak of his versatile personality as a novelist and fiction-writer-

1. The Man Within (1929)
2. The Name of Action (1930)
3. Rumour at Nightfall (1932)
4. Stamboul Train (1932)
5. It's a Battlefield (1934)
6. England Made Me (1935)
7. The Bear Fell Free (1935)
8. A Gun for Sale (1936)
9. Brighton Rock (1938)
10. The Confidential Agent (1939)
11. The Power and the Glory (1940)
12. The Ministry of Fear (1943)
13. The Heart of the Matter (1948)
14. The Third Man (novella; 1949)
15. The End of the Affair (1951)
16. The Quiet American (1955)
17. Loser Takes All (1955)
18. Our Man in Havana (1958)
19. A Burnt-Out Case (1960)
20. The Comedians (1966)
21. Travels with My Aunt (1969)
22. The Honorary Consul (1973)
23. The Human Factor (1978)
24. Doctor Fischer of Geneva (1980)
25. Monsignor Quixote (1982)
26. The Tenth Man (1985)
27. The Captain and the Enemy (1988)
28. No Man's Land (2005)

Each of them is specific in itself in terms of title, theme, plot construction and characterization. Here let us discuss in detail some of his major novels that have ever since drawn the attention of the readers and critics towards them.

Greene is regarded as a major 20th-century novelist who deserve an envied appreciation. His greatness and popularity in the world of the English fiction lies in the fact that John Irving praised him prior to Greene's death, as "the most accomplished living novelist in the English language." He came to be known as a leading English male novelist of his generation. By the time he died, he had got the status of being a writer of both deeply serious novels on the theme of Catholicism, and of "suspense-filled stories of detection. Words fail to enlist his achievements. He was shortlisted in 1966 for the Nobel Prize for Literature. In 1967, Greene was among the final three choices, according to Nobel records unsealed on the 50th anniversary in 2017.

Greene's fiction may be only thrilling, but at its core there lies his spiritual philosophy which made him realize and express through his works that the modern man has lost spiritual values. His fiction is originally divided into two genres: thrillers (mystery and suspense books), such as *The Ministry of Fear*, which he described as entertainments, often with notable philosophic edges; and literary works, such as *The Power and the Glory*, which he described as novels, on which he thought his literary reputation was to be based.

Few of Graham Greene's novels deal with actual spies, but many involve international intrigue, and all are set in the shadowy "neutral ground" that James Fenimore Cooper had identified a century earlier. In fact, during Greene's lifetime, his critics took

to referring to the settings of his novels, whatever their diverse geographical particulars, as "Greeneland." Greene's first important novel was *Stamboul Train* (1932; also published as *Orient Express*) and was set on the famous train that runs the breadth of Europe. Greene placed a variety of sharply drawn characters on the train, some pursuing private matters and others caught up in the increasingly desperate convolutions of European politics. In addition to publishing novels, Greene was also a film critic, and wrote *Stamboul Train* in the fluid, cinematic style that would later distinguish most of his fiction. His subsequent novels include *The Confidential Agent* (1939), which follows Spanish Loyalist attempts to secure coal in England during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), and *The Ministry of Fear* (1943), which involves an innocent man caught up in a spy ring. One of Greene's last projects of the 1940's was *The Third Man*, which he wrote first as a screenplay in 1949 and subsequently as a short, taut novel (1950).

Graham Greene worked just briefly for the British Secret Service during the second world war, but it was enough. One province of "Greeneland" would always be populated by various kinds of secret agent, culminating in the sad figure of Maurice Castle in *The Human Factor*. Perhaps more memorable is Greene's portrait of the accidental spy, Wormold, in his black comedy *Our Man In Havana*. Set in the last days of the corrupt Batista regime, Greene complained that the adventures of his vacuum cleaner salesman "did me little good" with Castro. "Those who suffered during the years of dictatorship," Greene wrote, "could hardly be expected to appreciate that my real subject was the absurdity of the British agent."

Objectives of the Study

1. To go through the English literature in order to have a peep into the origin and development of fiction through the various ages
2. To brood over the various forms of the English fiction
3. To find out the various genres in the twentieth century English fiction
4. To explore the choicest genre in the twentieth century English fiction
5. To make focus on the novels of Graham Greene
6. To point out the various themes worked out in the novels of Graham Greene
7. To evaluate the various aspects of the novels of Graham Greene
8. To evaluate in particular some of the novels of Graham Greene that fall into the category of detective, mystery and thrill novels
9. To be familiar with the various causes responsible for Greene's writing detective, mystery and thrill novels
10. To find out the effects of his detective, mystery and thrill stories

Hypothesis

1. The world of fiction is open to both the male and the female writers
2. The male novelists presented a wider outlook to the fiction writing than the female ones

3. The female English novelists are noted for their limited range that allowed them to knit the plot of their novels on the basis of what they came across and what they observed in their real practical life
4. The English fiction is full of variety in terms of contents
5. It has undergone several changes and phases since its origin
6. The age and its trends influence the novelists and provide him direction for writing in a particular field
7. The twentieth century, notable for its special features, such as, the World War I and II, inventions and discoveries, science and technology, saw several genres of the English fiction
8. Of the various forms of novels, the detective, mystery and thrill novels were the most popular form of novel
9. Graham Greene's novels fall in the category of detective, mystery and thrill novels
10. All his detective, mystery and thrill novels serve as entertainment novels
11. His involvement in the international political affairs is at the root of his literary work
12. Graham Greene is basically a spiritual thinker and writer who condemns the modern man through his works.

Review of Literature

Cates Baldrige (2000) in *Graham Greene's Fictions: The Virtues of Extremity* observes that more than a general assessment, Graham Greene's *Fictions* offers a fresh interpretation of familiar texts and attempts to discover within Greene's work a structure of thought that has not yet been seen with sufficient clarity. Each chapter focuses on a major aspect of Greene's thought as expressed in his novels. Greene's caustic attitude toward middle-class orthodoxies and his critiques of the three reigning ideologies of his time -- Christianity, Marxism, and liberalism -- are just two of the areas that Baldrige explores in *Graham Greene's Fictions*. Although five of Greene's novels are singled out for extensive evaluation -- *Brighton Rock*, *The Power and the Glory*, *The Heart of the Matter*, *The Comedians*, and *The Honorary Consul* -- most of his fiction is discussed throughout the course of the book.

Scott Simon (2004) in *Centennial for Author Graham Greene* said that Greene was best known for his well-crafted, realistic spy thrillers, set in exotic locales. Included among his most popular books are *The Third Man* and *The Quiet American*, which was recently re-released and made into a film.

Bernard Bergonzi (2006) in *A Study in Greene: Graham Greene and the Art of the Novel* observes that Greene was a great British novelist and a national asset, who had achieved a global reputation (and there are not many modern English writers of whom that can be said). This praise was echoed by some of Greene's co-religionists, who, after swallowing hard, acclaimed him as a great Catholic novelist.

Robert Lance Snyder (2010) in "Shadow of Abandonment": Graham Greene's *The Confidential Agent* observes that *Stamboul Train* (1932), *A Gun for Sale* (1936), *The Ministry of Fear* (1943), and *Our Man in Havana* (1958) gave priority to the development of plot rather than character. Further qualifying the text's standing within Greene's corpus are the circumstances of its composition.

Chris Herlinger (2011) in *Imagining Greene* in Islamabad observes that Greene affirmed no consistent ideology as a writer, perhaps save one: that the writer be prepared to "change sides at the drop of a hat. He stands for the victims and the victims change." Greene, the chronicler of Christian faith in the terrain of desperation and loss some called "Greene-land" (a term Greene himself loathed), had little interest or experience in what our popular media now call "the Muslim world... Toward the end of his life, Graham Greene acknowledged experiencing a kind of failure as both a man and as an artist, saying "there is no such thing as success. The priest can't hope to become a saint—or else it's an illusory dream which vanishes with time; the writer can't hope to write a book to equal those of Tolstoy, Dickens or Balzac." Marie-Françoise Allain asked Greene if he still felt "hounded by God." He replied: "I hope so. I hope so. I'm not very conscious of His presence, but I hope that He is still dogging my footsteps."

Suma Aleya John (2014) in her Ph. D. thesis entitled *Evil, Sin and Suffering in The Select Novels of Graham Greene* surveys that Greene tries to deal with themes like man's relationship with himself, with society and with God, Greene writes about 'sin and salvation' in his spiritual novels and believes that only faith in God can save man from his ruin. Greene's Catholicism is evidently moral, actioncentered, rather than contemplative or mystic. Shades of evil, sin and suffering can influence man in different ways. Greene has championed, through his character, the cause of the human heart to fall and has voiced the deepest hope and fears of man – the lonely man, the hungry man, the angry man, the defeated man and the divided man.

Mohammed Yasir (2015) in *The Moral Themes in Graham Greene's Major Novels* surveys that Greene's characters are rather understood by their moods than their motives. They are Aristotelian in the sense that their character and attitude create the acts they commit. But the touch of Shakespeare's characters is very obvious in them; they are everyday-life characters who got involved in such complicated circumstances that they became stripped of their will. The task of bringing such characters in a modern 118 sense of today's life was very difficult, but Greene could act it well because he himself is the centre of his characters; they are initially a reflection of his sophisticated character and mixed up world.

Stella Rimington (2018) in the article entitled 'What Graham Greene's Spy Anthology Reveals About Espionage' observes that the spy stories rank with ghost stories and fishing and golfing tales, in a special class of literature in which the real and the imaginary can be mixed in any proportion, so long as both are present. The strangest spy yarn may be to

some extent true- Graham Greene's wholly disingenuous introduction to this anthology says much.

Methodology

Solely based on the secondary data collected from the various articles and researches available on the various internet sites as well as from the novels and reference books selected for the study in particular, the study is a content analysis based one. The paper reflects the contribution of Graham Greene's contribution to the detective, mystery and thriller novels. The method includes study of history of the English literature with a special focus on the origin and development of the English novel, search for the various conventional and modern as well as advanced sources of secondary data capable of supplying the secondary data on the selected theme, selection of a few studies on the English literature and on Graham Greene, a detailed and thorough study of the selected studies, content analysis of the studies taken into consideration for the elaboration of thought in terms of the author, nativity of the author, themes worked out in the studies, characterization, application of the previous knowledge to the analyzed stuff, shaping up of thought and contents and making findings and conclusion. The method adopted for the study was inductive, while the approach that enabled the author to produce the thoughts analytical-cum-descriptive. In order to keep up and maintain the scientific spirit, all the steps suggested for the studies in literature were rigidly adopted and exercised so as to avoid ambiguities.

Findings & Summary

1. The detective story or detective novel is an invention of the twentieth century, and is capable of entertaining the reader through mysterious crimes of violent nature throwing the reader into a state of being puzzled, suspense and mystery
2. The detective stories and novels are thrilling enough for the readers to continue them to read till the end of the novel
3. The twentieth century as a whole witnesses the writing and creation of the detective stories and their popularity among the people
4. Graham Greene was a prolific writer and novelist who worked out the themes like Catholicism, liberality and Marxism in his works
5. His novels explore the ambiguities of modern man and ambivalent moral or political issues in a contemporary setting.
6. Graham Greene's Fictions offers a fresh interpretation of familiar texts and attempts to discover within Greene's work a structure of thought that has not yet been seen with sufficient clarity.
7. His spy thrillers are set in exotic locales and reveal his sense of delight in detective themes and stories
8. His plots are complex and are given priority over character
9. In the novels of Graham Greene the complex plots throwing the reader into a state where there is much scope to think and imagine, have been worked out

10. The characters in the novels of Graham Greene have a close resemblance to the people in real life situations
11. The characters in the novels of Graham Greene delineate the growing sense and rate of crime in the English society
12. Greene's characterization is different in that he mixes 11 the heroes' circumstances with their state of mind
13. Greene uses images from every-day life to feed the realism of his characters and action
14. Greene's heroes are more convincing as real modern-life, and even universal characters because of their unstable psychology and state of mind when their circumstances and society deprived them of their free will and undermined their stability and rectitude.
15. The religious theme in the thinking and as a background of the moral choice of his characters adds a new dimension to the intensity of their psychology.
16. His novels are a mirror to the materialistic twentieth century society where the spy and detective activities were at the peak
17. Greene brought that together with the early twentieth century literature of psychology and analysis where it is inside the human brain that significant battles of life take place, and mental conflicts have a subtlety and intensity, and an importance far beyond what might be expected from mere external examination of a human being.
18. Greene adopts apocalyptic settings and themes in his novels

Some of Greene's major detective, mystery and thriller novels include *The Quiet American*, *Our Man in Havana*, *The Power and the Glory*, *Brighton Rock*, *The Third Man*, *The Ministry of Fear: An Entertainment*, *The Human Factor*, *A Gun for Sale*, *The Man Within*. The tremendous success of each of them reveals the readers' interest in them. They not only reveal the people's interest in the suspense thrillers, but reveal the socio-cultural scenario of the age.

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