

Various Phases of Graham Greene's Journey as a Novelist to the World of Fiction



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Abstract

For Graham Greene the modern world has mechanized its creatures. He comes as the chronicler of a period in time when the world is extraordinarily sad. As a man, as a novelist, as a writer and as a literary figure- he enjoyed a long journey. All his novels, and especially, the Catholic novels like *Brighton Rock* (1938), *The Power and the Glory* (1940), *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) are so popular all over the world, and are increasing Greene's ranking as a novelist day by day. His other novels whether early or later ones, or written and designed on any theme, are not less important. They are full of the stuff reflecting Greene's intellectual personality, tastes, curiosities, desires, frustrations, failures, depressions, observations, and perceptions.

Some of the critics and even readers make an open allegation that there is almost the same stuff in all his novels, but it is not so. Greene's English and American detractors have insisted on the fact that he always writes the same novel. It is true that his hero has fairly constant traits, but the novels are not repetitious, they are developments. Every major artist has one theme which he always explores. For Greene it is the honor inspired by the wickedness of the world, by its cruelty and its corruption.

His essays, stories and novels- all are particular written with a fresh mood with hardly anything to do with the previous mood. In almost all of the twenty-three brief studies in "The Lost Childhood," whether it is criticism of a specific novel, such as "The Woman Who Was Poor" of Leon Bloy, or a character sketch such as the one on the sculptor Eric Gill, Greene is primarily concerned, in his role of critic, with discovering what he calls the "obsession" of his author -- the one theme -- and with illuminating the entire work by an analysis of the obsession. He sees every creative writer who has made any real achievement, as a victim, as a man victimized by an obsession. This is a difficult formula for a critic to follow but which, in the case of Graham Greene, is particularly rewarding.

A serious reader can easily discover the seeds of Graham Greene's making as a novelist. The literary essays in this collection are quite as personal in tone as the prefatory piece, "The Lost Childhood," in which Greene writes movingly of his first experience in reading, and of the book, "The Viper of Milan," by Marjorie Brown, which first inspired him to write, at the age of 14. He claims that this book revealed to him his "pattern" (which was to be later cast in other forms by religion), the pattern of "perfect evil walking the world where perfect good can never walk again."

Greene reveals himself to be a penetrating critic. Most developed are the opening essays on Henry James, where Greene analyzes what he considers the dominant fantasy behind the writings of James: "a sense of evil religious in its intensity." Some of these pages will take their place in the best Jamesian criticism, especially those on James' relationship with Catholicism and his treatment of supernatural evil. The essay on "The Young Dickens" is a further example of Greene's critical power of fixing on a principal aspect of a literary work. He sees the world of "Oliver Twist" as Manichean, and brilliantly discusses the levels of unreality in the closed Fagin universe.

The paper surveys Graham Greene's family, school and boarding circumstances that helped Graham Greene expose his sense and sensibility of fiction writing and prove himself to be a worthy writer and novelist of the twentieth century, and to interpret the entire journey of Graham Greene as a novelist

Keywords: Phases, Journey, Fiction, Creative Writings, Biography, Autobiography, Matchless

Introduction

Graham Greene's novels, such as, *The Man Within* (1929), *The Name of Action* (1930), *Rumour at Nightfall* (1932), *Stamboul Train* (1932),

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It's a Battlefield (1934), England Made Me (1935), The Bear Fell Free (1935), A Gun for Sale (1936), Brighton Rock (1938), The Confidential Agent (1939), The Power and the Glory (1940), The Ministry of Fear (1943), The Heart of the Matter (1948), The Third Man (novella; 1949), The End of the Affair (1951), The Quiet American (1955), Loser Takes All (1955), Our Man in Havana (1958), A Burnt-Out Case (1960), The Comedians (1966), Travels with My Aunt (1969), The Honorary Consul (1973), The Human Factor (1978), Doctor Fischer of Geneva (1980), Monsignor Quixote (1982), The Tenth Man (1985), The Captain and the Enemy (1988), No Man's Land (2005), and his several short stories published in The Lost Childhood confirm the fact that Graham Greene, who had often been underestimated and underrated in his childhood and boyhood, was not an ordinary person, rather an intellectual with varied hidden tastes that were known later through his literary creations.

No literary man or creative writer is born writer. He becomes a writer while living in the society with his fellowmen who join and leave him accordingly during the course of his life which keeps on moving through the stages, like infancy, childhood, boyhood or girlhood, adolescence, teenage, youth, middle age and old age. To some of the authors, life at every step comes as a bed of roses providing them all the blisses, but to most of them life brings struggles and unknown challenges at every step. The struggles and challenges of life faced by them at the different stages of life serve as important lessons to be learnt by them. The saying that every writer is the product of the circumstances goes well. In fact, one's circumstances make one a literary figure in the field of writing. However, one's temperament and complexes too play an important role in making one a literary figure.

Unlike many others, Graham Greene found his life as a bed of thorns pricking him through adverse circumstances at every step and throwing him into a state of depressions and frustrations. Graham Greene spent a major part of his life in writing poems, dramas, stories and novels. Obviously, his was a long journey during which he underwent several positive and negative phases. His unhappy childhood in his school-like-home where in particular his father, the headmaster, was always there to instruct and order him sternly what to be done and what not to be done by him, and at school and boarding where his class fellows and boarders did not miss any opportunity to mock and criticize him; his depressive adolescence which made him a case of psychiatry and psychiatrists; his stormy youth that made him an utterly lustful man who was ready to go beyond all the set limits of sensual pleasures through hundreds of women and girls; his disturbing married and family life that failed to provide him peace even for a single moment because of his turning out to be unfaithful to his wife and children; his professional life that forced him to face more and more struggle in order to establish him as a novelist etc. are the things that made his journey as a novelist possible.

Greene's family circumstances made him introvert repressing his desires for the fear of his parents or siblings; the hellish environment of the

boarding enabled him to be familiar with the various modes of behavior; his adolescence and youth filled the colour of love in his life, and allowed him to enjoy himself in any way he pleased. His obsessions enabled him to link him up to the goals he had set for himself, his fears, depressions and frustrations instilled in him sense of despair and pessimism, and his conversion to Catholicism allowed him to realize the power of God and religion.

Indeed, Graham Greene had an incredible experience of the world and its people. It is this sense of observation that helped him develop a keen insight to the things and the people around him, which later resulted into his fiction-writings in particular. All his novels, with the exception of few, are a mirror of his life that makes strong reflections of Graham Greene's own world and people. The journey of Graham Greene, which literally began with his casual reading of the "The Viper of Milan," by Marjorie Brown,

The book had an incredible impact on the delicate mind of Graham Greene who did not stop writing and creating poems and novels he once started, despite the fact that his early writings were not received warmly by the readers. His frustrations proved themselves to be a greater strength than before. Just with a conviction that some day he was going to be a true novelist, he continued to move forward in the field of fiction touching the higher horizons of success and an envied popularity as a novelist.

It is the result of Graham Greene's successful journey as a novelist that through his novels with varied themes, and multiple plots that he has reached the heart of the reader all over the world.

Objectives of the Study

1. To develop an understanding for the English literature through the various periods it belongs to
2. To concentrate on the twentieth century literature
3. To be familiar with the major literary trends in the twentieth century literature
4. To have a peep into the twentieth century fiction and the major novelists
5. To discuss the various features of the twentieth century fiction
6. To arrive at Graham Greene and to be familiar with the important episodes of his life
7. To discuss the various determinants that played a vital role in his making of the novelist
8. To discuss Graham Greene's worth as a novelist of the twentieth century
9. To discuss his contribution to the English fiction and literature
10. To discuss his entire journey as a novelist and the phases undergone by him during the journey

Hypothesis

1. An author is the product and creation of his age
2. Writings are the reflection of the inner working of the mind of the authors
3. Contemporary scenario along with the families affects the writers
4. The journey of the authors reveal their struggles during the various phases

5. Success of the authors is the result of their burning midnight oil, convictions, perceptions, observations and understandings
6. Graham Greene is a matchless novelist of the twentieth century
7. His journey as a novelist is not an easy and smooth one, rather full of difficulties and struggles
8. His novels mirror the various phases of his life that contributed to his journey as a novelist

Review of Literature

Ernest Mandel (2003) in *Delightful Murder: a Social History of the Crime Story* discusses that Catholicism's prominence decreased in his later writings. "Greene started out as a conservative agent of the British intelligence services, upholding such reactionary causes as the struggle of the Catholic Church against the Mexican revolution (*The Power and the Glory*, 1940), and arguing the necessary merciful function of religion in a context of human misery (*Brighton Rock*, 1938; *The Heart of the Matter*, 1948). The better he came to know the socio-political realities of the third world where he was operating, and the more directly he came to be confronted by the rising tide of revolution in those countries, the more his doubts regarding the imperialist cause grew, and the more his novels shifted away from any identification with the latter."

Anglefire (2004) observes that Greene's novels often have religious themes at their centre. In his literary criticism he attacked the modernist writers Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster for having lost the religious sense which, he argued, resulted in dull, superficial characters, who "wandered about like cardboard symbols through a world that is paper-thin."

Reporter (2004) under the head Norman Sherry lays bare the 'agnostic Catholic' writer, *Cover Story- A Turbulent Life* observes his extraordinary drive for sensual satisfaction that In addition to his wife who triggered his conversion to Catholicism, his lovers included Dorothy Glover, whom he met while serving as an air raid warden in London during the blitz; Catherine Walston, perhaps his greatest love, married to an English peer; the Swedish film star Anita Bjorg; and Yvonne Cloetta, companion of his last years.

Crisis Magazine (2005) observes that only in recovering the religious element, the awareness of the drama of the struggle in the soul that carries the permanent consequence of salvation or damnation, and of the ultimate metaphysical realities of good and evil, sin and divine grace, could the novel recover its dramatic power. Suffering and unhappiness are omnipresent in the world Greene depicts; and Catholicism is presented against a background of unvarying human evil, sin, and doubt. V. S. Pritchett praised Greene as the first English novelist since Henry James to present, and grapple with, the reality of evil.

Cook, John (2009) in *A Glimpse of our History: a short guided tour of Berkhamsted* observes that Henry Graham Greene (October 2, 1904- April 3, 1991), popularly known as Graham Greene, one of the most acclaimed English novelists and one of the

most cinematic of the twentieth century writers most of whose novels and many of whose plays and short stories were adapted for film and television. Born on the 2nd October, 1904 in St. John's House, a boarding house of Berkhamsted School.

Michelle Orange (2009) in *Not Easy Being Greene: Graham Greene's Letters* observes that a stranger with no shortage of calling cards: devout Catholic, lifelong adulterer, pulpy hack, canonical novelist; self-destructive, meticulously disciplined, deliriously romantic, bitterly cynical; moral relativist, strict theologian, salon communist, closet monarchist; civilized to a stuffy fault and louche to drugged-out distraction, anti-imperialist crusader and postcolonial parasite, self-excoriating and self-aggrandizing, to name just a few.

A Parkes (2011) in *A Sense of Shock: The Impact of Impressionism on Modern British and Irish Writing* informs that controversies of Walter Pater's circle, George Moore's heterodox responses to nationalism in Britain and Ireland, Joseph Conrad's representations of terrorism, Virginia Woolf's treatment of the shocks of patriarchy, and Ford Madox Ford's fictional account of the Great Depression may be referred to in the context of the twentieth century English novels.

De Botton, Alain (2011) in The Consolations of Philosophy, discussing the causes of frustrations, says that frustration is a psychological issue that refers to the individual's fear and hopelessness on being unable to attain his goals. Frustration is a common emotional response to opposition, relating to anger, annoyance and disappointment, frustration arises from the perceived resistance to the fulfillment of an individual's will or goal¹ and is likely to increase when a will or goal is denied or blocked.

Joseph Pearce (2011) in "Graham Greene: Doubter Par Excellence" observes that the novels often portray the dramatic struggles of the individual soul from a Catholic perspective. Greene was criticised for certain tendencies in an unorthodox direction – in the world, sin is omnipresent to the degree that the vigilant struggle to avoid sinful conduct is doomed to failure, hence not central to holiness. Friend and fellow Catholic Evelyn Waugh attacked that as a revival of the Quietist heresy. This aspect of his work also was criticised by the theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, as giving sin a mystique. Greene responded that constructing a vision of pure faith and goodness in the novel was beyond his talents. Praise of Greene from an orthodox Catholic point of view by Edward Short is in *Crisis Magazine*, and a mainstream Catholic critique is presented by Joseph Pearce.

Arvind Nawale (2013) in *Twentieth Century British Literature: Reconstructing Literary Sensibility* states that the twentieth century British literature marks the advent of new ways of looking at the world with comprehending, interacting and reconstructing literary sensibility. Modernistic point of view along with elements like experimentation and individualism were introduced in it. Focus on pluralism, quest for the self, lack of faith, fragmentation, alienation and much more found its reconstructed ways into its gamut.

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Saamy Prateek Jha (2016) in What was the impact of World War II on literature observes that the second world war brought about a change in the perception of people, thinkers and literary artists alike. It changed many old ways of thinking and gave us new offings. An increased attachment to religion characterised literature after the second world war. Thoughtfulness about the form of the novel and relationships between past and present fiction showed itself in the works produced. It inspired authors, poets, writers involved in each and every genre whether it be poetry, prose, fiction, historical novels, novellas, short stories, fantasy, adventure and the like.

Methodology

Prepared and designed on the basis of Graham Greene's Biography by Norman Sherry and Graham Greene's autobiography A Sort of Life (1971), the paper is theoretical in nature, and it aims at covering all those aspects that are important to be noted while discussing Graham Greene's journey as a novelist. For the purpose, immediately after the selection of the title, concentration was made on the novels of Greene. In order to be familiar with his personality traits, the articles and books dealing with the various stages of life were collected and gone through. The internet surfing helped the authors to know several such things about him as are not available in the books and journals available in the libraries. The most reliable sources for the preparation of the paper were Graham Greene's A Sort of Life and his biography written by Norman Sherry.

After a careful study of the important passages in the book, the details were penned down in the heading form, and then befitting them in the frame, an elaboration of thought was made reflecting under what circumstances Graham Greene started writing, what challenges he faced, and how he finally turned out to be a successful and one of the most popular English novelists of the twentieth century.

Findings & Conclusion

Graham Greene's extraordinary skill for analysis, his uncanny psychological insights and his ability to take apart the mechanism of man's inner life make him an unmatched novelist of the twentieth century. His circumstances as a whole whether at home, at boarding during his childhood and adolescence, or in the practical world when he found himself among the strangers and familiars, his sense of religion, observations and perceptions formed

during the various stages of life made him a platform for the literary creations.

His Catholic understanding of the world made him popular in France in particular, while he has made a strong place for himself in non-Catholic America and England. He works out several themes in his novels. Obviously, the novels essentially have stuff for everyone with any taste. His catholic novels provide much of Catholicism to the reader and satisfy the religious sentiments, while his entertainment novels have much of entertainment to the entertainment loving readers. The most notable aspect of his novels that kept him popular throughout the journey was the element of thrill and suspense enlivened by which the reader wishes to read his novels with curiosity, interest, zeal and enthusiasm.

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