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## MERGING RELIGION INTO POLITICS: FICTIONAL ART OF GRAHAM GREENE

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### ABSTRACT:

Graham Greene is an exceptional writer of fiction and non-fiction. His art of political narration always takes the hold of readers and critics. His works have been proved to be seminal in the studies of religion and politics. The merging of 'religion into politics' is a distinctive characteristic of Greene's writings. The formulating presence of religious issues within his fictions, journalism and correspondence has long been a subject of critical attention. For over 65 years, Greene's literary creativity and intellectual skepticism frequently depended upon his knowledge of religious matters to fashion dominant narrative and thematic concerns as he insistently wove theological elements into the fabric of his fictions. But his constantly shifting political perspectives, often closely linked with his religious affiliations, have proved much more difficult to categorize. Greene's writings have been interpreted as offering evidence of earnest political convictions or profound cynicism. The present paper is an outline sketch of Greene's chief works which acclaim him as a political writer. MLA eighth edition has been used to cite references.

**Keywords:** Political Lassitude, Political Author, Social Decadence, Fascism etc.

As a globally acclaimed essayist, Greene is consistently connected with governmental issues and religion in his fictions and open assertions. In any case, his political concerns, regardless of whether communicated verifiably in his works or on the other hand unequivocally in talks, news coverage and letters to papers have would in general be used by pundits essentially as a methods for deciphering the profound quality of his accounts or his decision of topographical settings. 'Graham Greene's books light up the ethical sense by organizing the story in a system of political awareness and the strict sense. They delineate that religion and governmental issues, generally observed as opposing powers, Church and State, hallowed and common, God and Caesar, are components of the equivalent reality.

His first novel *The Man Within*, was located in early nineteenth-century England on the Sussex coast during the social upheavals caused by smuggling, class inequalities and legal corruption. Broadening his geographical horizons, his second novel, *The Name of Action*, was based upon his German-embassy financed student trip to the Ruhr Valley in spring 1924 and set in the city of Trier, close to the German and Luxembourg borders, a politically liminal region where rival party factions fermented the rise of fascism. His third novel, *Rumour at Nightfall*, focused upon nineteenth-century Car list rebels in Spain and was endowed with a melodramatically inflamed political context. It reveals through its stylistic uncertainties and heavy dependence upon a single antiquated source

Thomas Carlyle's *Life of John Sterling* Greene's primary need as a still inexperienced novelist to catalyze his fictions with personally experienced political and religious perspectives rather than mere historical reading. These three early novels also merit special attention. They occupy a seminal position in the early development of Greene's self-conscious politicizing of his fictions.

Equally, they have been viewed as the expression of a journalist's dispassionate reportage or a novelist's creative opportunism in utilizing world events as raw materials to stimulate his imagination. Greene admitted that he rarely committed himself absolutely to any specific cause because he was afraid of having the restrictive label 'political author' attached to his work. He supposed, however, that whenever he tackled political subjects, he would still be deemed as a political writer, no doubt.

Politics are in the air we breathe, like the presence or absence of a God. (Greene,28)

Nevertheless, broad agreement over the importance of politics to Greene's literary imagination and creativity remains elusive. During the early 1930s Greene's travels and personal contacts were sometimes shrouded in mystery, such as his unexplained trip in 1934 to the Baltic States and his long-sustained contacts with the spy and probable double agent Maria (Moura) Budberg, the mistress of Maxim Gorky and H. G. Wells, who was somehow involved in this Baltic excursion. In *England Made Me*, set partly in Stockholm, Kate Farrant is the mistress of Erik Krogh, a Swedish manufacturer and the wealthiest man in Europe. His character was based upon the notorious Swedish match millionaire and fraudster, Ivar Kreuger, whose biography Greene had considered writing. This novel introduces Greene's preoccupation with corrupted capitalism and extreme wealth, culminating 45 years later in his disturbing novella about a malign Swiss toothpaste magnate, *Doctor Fischer of Geneva*. Finally, his exploration in 1935 of Liberia with his cousin Barbara was tacitly supported by the Foreign Office and his uncle Sir William Graham Greene. It produced his travelogue *Journey Without Maps* and Barbara's equally informative *Land Benighted*, thereby initiating his lifelong preoccupation with politically liminal Third World locations.

Greene's political mind formulation during the 1930s of the figure of the alienated or marginalized Englishman, traumatized by urban wastelands and the political lassitude of the ruling classes. *A Gun for Sale*, published in the same year as the Jarrow March against unemployment and poverty, parallels the natural savagery of Greene's experiences in Liberia with the casual violence and social decadence of provincial Nottwich (echoing Greene's depressing time in Nottingham as a trainee newspaperman). As a telling gesture to contemporary European anxieties, this fast-moving thriller is endowed with an exploitative commercial background set within Balkan politics and international espionage.

The blighted landscapes of *A Gun for Sale* highlight from a strongly left-wing perspective the dehumanizing qualities of English suburban life and directly inspire the degenerate urban decay of *Brighton Rock*. This most renowned of his 'entertainments', set within the gaudy, superficial gaiety of a seaside resort a previously unnoticed 1937 'seaside' source from *Night and Day*, a short-lived journal edited by Greene, will also be discussed develops into a disturbing moral fable of urban sin and damnation. Indeed, in his 'entertainments' Greene tends to be far more explicit in his analysis of poverty and social inequalities than in his later, more theologically oriented works. In both *A Gun for Sale* and *Brighton Rock* there is clearly something rotten about the state of English provincial cities, as there is in *To Beg I Am Ashamed*, a fictionalized account of the downwardly spiraling life of a London prostitute, in which Greene had some level of compositional involvement.

Greene's travelogue, *The Lawless Roads*, initiated by his first direct contact with South American politics and the clash between revolutionary communism and traditional Catholicism. These tensions enabled him to create powerful fictionalized parallels between man's infinite capacities for violence and self-destruction in Western Europe *The Confidential Agent* and *The Ministry of Fear* and South America *The Lawless Roads* and *The Power and the Glory*. The epigraph of *The Lawless Roads* ominously quotes Cardinal Newman's warning:

Either there is no Creator, or this living society of men is in a true sense discarded from His presence ...if there be a God, since there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity'. (Newman, 21)

Such a view reflects Greene's mounting anger during the 1930s at the stark contrast between the self-interested motives of politicians and the unanswered needs of their impoverished people. Western Europe and Latin America ultimately coalesce in *The Lawless Roads* to form a nightmarish duality as images of Belgian First World War battlefields blend with the contemporary political conflicts of Russia, Spain and Mexico.

The travelogue, a landmark text in the politicization of Greene's writings, traces an insistent movement from the specific to the universal, rendering the political situation in Mexico directly relevant to the impending crisis in Western Europe. News of the Spanish Civil War reaches Mexico as Greene travels back to England, on a German liner with Mexican volunteers for Franco, towards the apocalyptic clash between Christian Western Europe and the rising tide of National Socialism in Germany. On board, a young German farmer idolizes the memory of General Erich Ludendorff, the leader of military strategy during the First World War who in old age had been cynically exploited by the Nazis as an advocate of *totaler Krieg* (total war).

The farmer fanatically discusses the conflict among Catholicism and one party rule in Franco's Spain before Greene shows up back in England to terrible ARP banners, channels and hostile to airplane fire arms. *The Lawless Roads* additionally prefigures the relative political morals of *The Power and the Glory* in which the unavoidable social debasement of local towns echoes that of English commonplace urban life and the Lehrs' Eden like residence reviews deceptive communist Utopias. The hopeful Marxist Lieutenant shadows the goals of better than average regular workers British socialists while the Mexican jail cell mirrors a shocking microcosm of the fallen entrepreneur world, prefiguring the looming political fiasco going to overwhelm both South America and Western Europe.

*The Confidential Agent*, with its striking avoidance of full names for its key protagonists, focuses on the encounters of the unworldly scholar 'D.' with the aristocratic 'L.', reminiscent of Spain's General Franco. The Spanish Civil War, between the anti-clerical Republicans and Franco's fascists supported by the Catholic hierarchy, provides the lightly disguised political background for this fast-paced thriller novel. Supposedly, Greene tried to travel to Bilbao. Ultimately, these plans led nowhere but his disreputable eldest brother Herbert did reach Spain and may have acted as a spy for the fascists.

In an unreliable account of his exploits, *Secret Agent in Spain*, Herbert claimed to have supported the Republicans and also to have cultivated links with Japanese intelligence. Greene eventually supported the Republican Basques of northern Spain whose priests fought alongside them, echoing the Catholic clerical revolutionaries of Mexico. The plot and locations of this fantastic thriller mark another major development in the politicization of Greene's approaches to the social function of the novel, denoting his increasingly confident

Greene's final published work, *The Captain and the Enemy*, was partly set in the Panama of General Torrijos and in a self-reflective act of authorial closure – recalls several plot elements and characters from his first published novel, *The Man Within*. Its protagonist, Victor 'Jim' Baxter, is a failed writer and, like Greene, a humanitarian of conscience, struggling with the callous politics of a threatening world. Greene seems to suggest in this last novel that the concerns of his first novel could only be given moral substance for an audience of the late 1980s by reframing memories of its central relationships within the testing politics of Panama. In this sense, Baxter becomes not only a revitalized version of Andrews, his anxiety-laden counterpart in *The Man Within*, but also a representative of the kind of disappointed writer that Greene himself might have become if he had not persevered after the failure of his next two novels, *The Name of Action* and *Rumour at Nightfall*, to ensure that his subsequent writings possessed more meaningful political, social and religious contexts.

From the above discussion of a few works it would be appropriate to contend that Greene is a writer of politics and his art turns his fiction into political frame to enjoy the readers with fact and fanaticism.

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