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-ABSTRACT-

Convergent Critical Traditions in Graham Greene’s
Work. Non-English Influences and Romanian Reception

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2. Key words

Graham Greene, psychoanalytic tradition, catholic tradition, Existentialism, Romanian reception, French reception, cultural context, censorship, translations

3. Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to focus on Graham Greene’s literary fiction and its impact on Romanian as well as various international audiences of English, American and French readers. One of the most popular British novelists of the twentieth century, Graham Greene is also one of the most fascinating examples of misreading and critical contention in literature. The cause of this critical contention could reside in the dilemma in placing the British author given the complexity of his writing and its protean nature.

Hence, in light of critics’ and audiences’ hesitations in deciding whether Graham Greene is a catholic writer or just “a writer who happens to be a catholic”, an agile storyteller or a fine psychoanalyst of the human soul, a classic (in the tradition of Conrad or Dostoyevsky) or a modern writer (whose cinematic writing and modern anti- heroes go beyond tradition into innovation), we have endeavoured to try to trace to what extent the elements of various critical

traditions such as the Psychoanalytical, Catholic and Existentialist have influenced Graham Greene's artistic creation.

Thus, one of the aims of the present dissertation was to make an investigation of each of the three critical approaches that have been made to the British author's work.

It is our conviction that one cannot grasp the complexities of Graham Greene's world unless one acknowledges the crucial role that religion played in shaping the author's artistic vision. It is obvious that our perception of the author's religious dimension depends greatly upon the position assumed within each of the Psychoanalytic; the Catholic or Existentialist traditions as we consider that this approach would help us better comprehend the evolution itself of Graham Greene's spiritual dimension. Psychoanalysis, Catholicism and Existentialism, all provide us with a context to analyse the author's religious dimension.

Taken separately the critical stances assumed in each of the three traditions are not sufficient to offer a comprehensive explanation of Graham Greene's complex universe but together they manage to frame a dialectical approach to his writings.

Thus, after placing Graham Greene within the context of late modernist fiction, the chapter entitled *Freudian Readings in the Biographical- Psychoanalytical Tradition* invites to a reading centred on the relationship that exists between the author's traumatic childhood experiences and his literary creation.

In subchapter **2.1. *Berkhampsted, Betrayal, Deceit and the Birth of an Author***, I have presented major biographical data on Graham Greene in order to emphasize the similarities but also the differences that exist between Graham Greene's literary universe and the major events in his life.

Graham Greene's fiction, as well as his criticism, undoubtedly shows that he is one of the most autobiographical authors in modern British literature. The critic Adam Schwartz in his book *The Third Spring* rightfully sees how for Greene "fiction became his chief means of keeping his personal equilibrium, as Greene's characters frequently succumb to his own temptations".

Subchapter **2.2** points to the fact that the author's complex fictional work reflects a widespread knowledge of psychology mainly Freudian and Jungian concepts. We have therefore endeavoured to trace to what extent psychoanalytic influences and theories can be detected in Graham Greene's writings. Of course, analyzing characters from a psychoanalytical stand proves

a risky pursuit, yet, one immediately notices how Graham Greene's young or mature protagonists always follow the same pattern based upon their struggle to bring together their divided selves or loyalties. Therefore, we have opined Graham Greene's artistic merit lies in the imaginative power with which he creates a fictional world in which he restores and integrates memories of his past.

Given the aforementioned considerations we have also pointed out that we find the psychoanalytical tradition to be most appropriate in helping us to identify and decode the major recurrent themes and motives emerging in Graham Greene's literary universe as well as the way in which they evolve into recognizable patterns.

Thus, in the following we have provided a short analysis of the major dominant themes and preoccupations in Graham Greene's work and we have discussed the way in which they are illustrated in the author's most representative novels. Accordingly, we have identified three dominant preoccupations which shape Graham Greene's artistic outlook. The first preoccupation is articulated in the theme of the lost childhood and the subsequent motives of childhood innocence versus adulthood corruption and lack of communication. The second direction in Graham Greene's fiction concerns the catholic themes of evil and original sin versus the themes of redemption, possibility of salvation and pity, while finally the last preoccupation in Graham Greene's work finds expression in the themes of betrayal and loyalty versus disloyalty.

The next subchapter entitled *The Heart of the Matter. A Psychoanalytical Reading of the Concept of Pity* is a case study which explores the way in which the theme of pity permeates Graham Greene's modern writing. The focus on the "subtle nuances of the human psyche" in the portrayal of the main character makes us discover the reality behind the apparent, the thin line separating sinners from saints in Greene's novels. Furthermore, we consider *The Heart of the Matter* is most representative of Graham Greene's literary universe as it re-enacts most of its thematic concerns and preoccupations.

In the third chapter entitled *Moral Experiments in the Catholic Tradition* we have examined Graham Greene's preoccupation with the religious dimension and dogmas and the way in which cultural context influenced his artistic creation.

In subchapter **3.1 *The Catholic Novel Today*** we have attempted to define the concept of "Catholic author" which takes on different meanings as it seems to approach two kinds of attitudes or directions. Thus, as critics note, on the one hand we have classic literary Catholic

writings which illustrate doctrines of Catholic faith while on the other we have a new kind of Catholic writing which is the expression of a personal vision of human life, imbued with sacramental symbolism. Although these Catholic writings draw on elements of Christian doctrine their purpose is rather artistic than apologetic. They don't paint an idealized picture of what a man should be rather their role is to show life through the eyes of their character's inner spiritual life. Thus, most of the novelists we associate with Catholicism - Evelyn Waugh, Flannery O'Connor, Muriel Spark, Graham Greene are those belonging to the second category which refuses to separate the sacred from the secular.

Another distinction we felt compelled to do is that between traditional pre-Vatican II Catholic prose and that arriving after the Council's proclamation characterized by a growing rapprochement with secularity. Traditional Catholic novelists defined themselves in opposition to a number of values such as the Word Wars, industrialism, materialism or modernity itself. Catholicism's relationship to the word changed after Vatican II as the church no longer expressed the same monolithic and uniform worldview as it once did.

Nowadays Catholic novelists have incorporated recent developments in Church and society into their work in ways that highlighted new possibilities for Catholic fiction. Their novels are nuanced treatments of the problem of religious belief in today's society often built upon absurd situations. The works of Graham Greene, David Lodge, Heinrich Boll, J.R Tolkien, to name only a few, catches the comic spirit of those ridiculous aspects of Catholic life.

Our study of Catholic literary culture has brought us to the question of whether it is possible to be both a major writer and a Catholic at the same time. The writer who best typifies the struggle between one's calling to be a novelist and one's calling to be a believer in the Church is English novelist Graham Greene. His work can be considered as a prototype for the Catholic writer's rebellious and ambivalent relationship with the Church and with modernity. Moreover his work typifies both the religious themes and patterns present in the early twentieth century Catholic revival which structures his artistic vision through the lens of Catholic dogmas as well as Post Vatican II treatment of themes which enabled the dialogue between modernity and the Church. His religious imagination reflects through his novels the inherent dilemmas of twentieth century.

Thus, one of the aims of this thesis was to assess the importance of the religious aspect in Graham Greene's work, by trying to determine to what extent Graham Greene's cultural

context has influenced his literary work. Consequently, we aimed to delineate the author's ambivalent relationship towards the values of modernity as well as the tremendous influence of the *French Catholic Revival*, the imaginative discourses of the catholic scholar *John Newman* and the development of the *Vatican II Council* had upon his artistic vision.

We have tried to delineate the contours of Graham Greene's religious geography by situating his writing career within the English Catholic Revival. We have also tried to trace Graham Greene's appropriation of the *French Catholic Literary Revival* in his attempts to stand against Protestant discourse and modern secular thought. I have showed how Graham Greene's Catholic novels draw their thematic substance and doctrines from French literature.

The classic ingredients of the French Catholic novel appear in many of Graham Greene's novels such as *The Power and the Glory*, *The Heart of the Matter* and *The End of the Affair* and illustrate his familiarity with the French writers. In terms of thematic content *David Lodge* in the introduction to *François Mauriac's* novel *The Viper's Tangle* describes some of the key features which help us identify the ingredients of the classic Catholic novel as the following: "the idea of the sinner at the heart of Christianity, the idea of the mystical substitution, the pursuit of the erring soul by God and the conflict between the corrupt flesh and the transcendent spirit". This is more than evident in Graham Greene's novels *The Power and the Glory*, *The Heart of the Matter* and *The End of the Affair* whose main characters are representative for the ingredients discussed above.

Besides the obvious French Catholic revival themes another powerful influence on Graham Greene's Catholicism was played by the Victorian thinker and leading figure of the Oxford movement, the English scholar and apologist John Henry Newman. Moreover, many critics repeatedly linked Graham Greene and Newman in their ideological battle against the experience of suffering and the human predicament. Newman's writings as much as those of Graham Greene echo concerns about incertitude and personal doubt, being constructed on a vision of God based on Descartes' views presenting divine reality as subjected to one's own mental ideas.

In the fourth subchapter, *Vatican II Context and Graham Greene's Perspective on Faith* we have tried to focus on the second Vatican's influence upon the development of Catholicism and the way in which it was reflected the author's literary works. We have highlighted the fact that since the Council's proclamation the very history of the Church was to

be divided into pre Vatican II and post Vatican II periods. Similarly, literary criticism often analyzed Graham Greene's writings in terms of a Catholic and a Post-Catholic or social period which coincided with the proclamation of the Council.

Last but not least throughout this section we have tried to situate Graham Greene's writings within the historical and theological context of the Vatican II concerns in order to show how Graham Greene's Catholicism evolved throughout his literary journey by incorporating new developments which allowed his writing to find its appeal to non religious writers also.

In light of the strong connection between the British author and the French literary milieu another important aim of this chapter was that of presenting *A Brief Outlook on Graham Greene's Reception in France*. (subchapter 3.2) We have praised French critic's merits in being among the firsts to uncover the value of Graham Greene's work, however we have found the weak point of their literary endeavours as being constituted specifically by the fact that they tend to fit his work into all sorts of philosophical discussions and trends specific for the French novel.

Subchapter 3.3 *The Power and the Glory as a Modern Catholic Novel: A Case Study* continues our exploration of Graham Greene's religious dimension proceeding with a case study of the way in which the author blends catholic aesthetics with modern narrative devices in his masterpiece *The Power and the Glory*. We have analysed Graham Greene's innovative narrative and his unconventional style as it is evinced in the representation of God's voice and the way in which mythical elements blend with Catholic themes in order to create irony.

The conclusion is that Graham Greene's writing is both traditional and innovative in the sense that it employs modern narrative techniques specifically woven into a fabric of classic Catholic thematic ingredients.

Graham Greene's unorthodox approach to the religious dimension becomes more evident along with our exploration of the *Existential* dimension in Graham Greene's novels.

Along with the publication of the novels *The Quiet American*, *A Burnt Out Case* and *The Comedians* we can clearly discern the way in which religious dogmas so powerfully evoked in his Greene's middle novels are transfigured into a more subtle exploration of the religious or spiritual dimension in the fourth chapter entitled *Myths of Liberal Humanism in the Existentialist Tradition*. Here we have placed Graham Greene's writing in the tradition of Kierkegaard, Camus and Sartre arguing that one must look beyond Catholicism in order to

comprehend the profundity and complexity of Greene's artistic creation. Within this tradition it is easy to notice how all of Graham Greene's later characters engage in an existentialist struggle with the evil forces around them. The mastery with which the author portrays their efforts, their intense doubts and moral dilemmas reminds us of the existentialists' view of life as a "metaphysical joke" but also of their liberal opinions and intrinsic humanism. All of these ingredients also correspond to Graham Greene's artistic vision. They form his personal and unorthodox approach towards the spiritual dimension which represents the real substance of Graham Greene's writing as Samuel Hynes rightly assesses: "For Greene, truth is religious, not always specifically Catholic, or even Christian in any exact doctrinal sense, but concerned with a vision of human life that postulates the reality of another world."

The dramatic force driven from the author's depictions of the tensions between human and divine values in Greene's earlier novels diminishes much along with the author's focus on a different, wider, less dogmatic vision in his late novels. Yet, it is through his late novels that the author's reputation will consolidate as they offer a more balanced vision which aims to unite faith and reason in an existentialist, humanitarian approach.

The best exemplification of is the new **existentialist** direction in Graham Greene's novels is illustrated in *The Quiet American*, the anti-war, anti-American novel which uses political situation in order to portray moral and ethical dilemmas.

Another important aim of this chapter was that of presenting **a brief outlook on Graham Greene's reception in America (Subchapter 4.3)** in an attempt to go beyond the European label of his writings into reinforcing the author's position as a cosmopolitan writer.

In what concerns Graham Greene's reception in American which is inevitably linked to the novel *The Quiet American*, we notice that the novel has raised a high number of controversies within critics which ultimately points to the pluri-perspectiveness but also appreciation of his fiction.

Finally, in what concerns Graham Greene's impact on the Romanian cultural environment, the second objective of this thesis, **chapter 5 *Lost in Translation, Graham Greene's Reception in Romania*** represents our main contribution to this research paper and tries to present a variety of perspectives which does justice to Graham Greene's complex universe. Consequently, we have divided our research into three time periods, namely translations issued prior to 1989; translations issued after this year and reception peaks.

Graham Greene's massive reception through translations unquestionably took place in the communist period. In order to evaluate Graham Greene's reception during this period it we have presented a brief overview of the Communist policy regarding translations and the general orientation of the Romanian cultural life at the time.

We have highlighted the fact that the cultural atmosphere in Romania during the Communist years is inevitably linked to the concept of *world literature* which testifies to the opening of Romanian cultural life to the outside world. The promotion of a new educational reform by the communist political regime with emphasis on the acceptance of foreign literary values constituted a new cultural direction which expanded rapidly from the 1960's on. This process as Rodica Dimitriu claims resulted in the setting up of a "clearly outlined translation policy with precise objectives to fulfil." The new translation policy according to the same author facilitated younger generations' access to foreign literary values and a more tolerant position on foreign literary writing which was not concerned with politics. However, along with this broadening of cultural horizons the manipulation of literary production in a certain direction never ceased to exist. All literature which was judged inappropriate such as literary productions which relied too heavily on sex, religion or politics was banned.

Within this context and knowing that an author's process of reception into another culture depends to a large extent on the criteria of selection of the author's most representative creations and on the accuracy of translations received, we have presented Graham Greene's case as being illustrative for the distinct attitudes which were manifest in relation to translation policies during the communist period.

On the one hand, considering the fact that censors preferred books which were ideologically acceptable, we can fully understand why Graham Greene's spy novels had little trouble getting published while most of what the English critical canon considers his best writing, novels such as *The Power and the Glory*, *The End of the Affair* or *Brighton Rock* were never translated until after the 1989 revolution.

This strategy which favoured translations which suited the interest of the regime helped create a distorted image of the author's personality and art which overshadowed the religious and psychological dimension of his work.

Among Graham Greene's novels with a political or psychological setting which were admitted for translation were *Our Man in Havana*, *The Quiet American*, *A Burnt Out Case*, *The*

Heart of the Matter and *The Comedians*. We have at this point attempted to point out that this was due to the fact that on the one hand there is a very thin line separating politics from deeper humanistic concerns in Graham Greene's novels while on the other all literature with an anti-bourgeois label which warned against alienation in capitalist society was considered acceptable by Romanian authorities.

Having delineated some aspects necessary to the understanding of the Romanian socio-cultural context, we have proceeded with an analysis of the translators' critical opinion on Graham Greene's work as it is expressed in the foreword or afterword of the novels translated. Since only five of Graham Greene's Romanian translations were accompanied by critical studies namely *A Burnt Out Case*, *The Ministry of Fear*, *The Confidential Agent* and *Travels with my Aunt*, four of them translated by Petre Solomon while for the fifth, *Our Man in Havana*, Radu Lupan provided the translation, we have continued our analysis by briefly highlighting the critical opinions expressed in them.

We can conclude that in spite of the impressive amount of translations and reviews published before 1989, Graham Greene's worth as a major writer has remained largely unknown to the Romanian public due to the lack of translations of a large majority of his novels censored by the political regime. We have to note however the momentous impact the translations of Romanian critics Petre Solomon and Radu Lupan played in shedding a positive light on Graham Greene's reception in our country. A relevant proof of their high standards and quality is given by the fact that they have been republished in several editions many years after the Communist period.

After the 1989 Revolution, Graham Greene's novels rediscovered by the Romanian readership and critics inevitably lead to a framework for the reconsideration of the author's role and importance in our cultural environment. Along with this period of time, we witness the emergence of an important number of critical studies and re-editings of earlier translations as well as translations of works previously banned.

We can easily observe the most productive period which marked Graham Greene's reception after the fall of the Communist dictatorship spans from the years 2000 up to 2009 when Polirom publishing house supported the translation for the first time of the novels generally considered by critics as Graham Greene's catholic masterpieces namely *The Power and the Glory*, *Brighton Rock* and *The End of The Affair*.

We cannot help but notice that the material which constitutes the starting point of this second approach focusing on the British author's post-Communist reception is based mainly on periodical publications because unfortunately there are very few literary history books and only one monograph which contain valuable criticism on Graham Greene's position within the Romanian milieu.

A general view of the critical studies and translations published during these years lets us conclude that the British author's image was rehabilitated while the approaches focusing mainly on Graham Greene's figure as a writer whose works justify a political system were abandoned in favour of a modernist Liberal Humanist, Post-Christian, Post-Colonialist one. It is the period which marks the beginning of a new level of complexity in assessing the reception of the British writer in our country regardless of any political constraints of ideological nature.

The conclusion is that we can witness many divergent views among Graham Greene's critics while the evaluations of his position as a writer fall mainly into three distinct categories. The first one is centred upon Graham Greene's image as a skilled explorer of the human consciousness writing for a Romanian audience in need for moral and Christian values, the second is mostly interested in the writer's narrative technique and style, his "easy flowing story telling ability" (Vianu) while the third category appraises the cinematic qualities of his writing.

To this category belong Andrei Gorzo and Carmen Diaconu's critical insights which reveal an obvious tendency towards interpreting Graham Greene's novels as visual narratives in an attempt to depict one of the vital aspects of the British author's writing, namely its cinematic dimension.

Against these approaches, some critics such as Lidia Vianu favour a restrictive narrative perspective while others such as Mihai Zamfir and Cătălin Sturza base their critical analysis upon highlighting Graham Greene's search for moral identity in a world governed by anarchy.

As a concluding remark we notice that much of the criticism published during this period tries to reassess the critical literary heritage left by previous generations by offering a complex picture of Romanian criticism conversant with modern and postmodern paradigms. The way in which the author manipulates reader - response through his modern anti-heroes, through irony and cinematic devices is amply dealt with by the new generation of critics.

A testimony to Graham Greene's positive critical reception in our country was also marked by reception peaks moments which can be defined as decisive moments for the emergence of a writer's reputation within a certain literary audience. Such a reception peak moment was occasioned by the author's visit to Romania in 1974 when his reputation as one of the greatest novelists of the twentieth century was consolidated.

The most substantial contribution to this moment was that of the critics Petre Solomon and Radu Lupan who offered the Romanian reading public a complex image of the author in their provoking articles and interviews published in the reputed quarterly *Secolul XX*. They offer a complex insight into the British author's main achievements also insisting upon matters of interest to the Romanian public such as film adaptations after Graham Greene's novels, his attitude towards modern civilisation as well as his openly expressed dislike for labels.

The next periods which represent a peak in Graham Greene's reception in Romania are the years 1991 respectively 2004 marked by the author's death and the centennial anniversary of the author's birth, on the 2nd of October 2004.

The Romanian press would most notably mark these events with numerous critical contributions out of which Romanian exegete Mihai Zamfir's article suggestively entitled *Cel mai iubit dintre romancierii* (*The most beloved of novelists*) may best epitomize the writer's legacy expressed through the never changing relationship of affectionate, unconditional friendship with his readers.

To sum up we can state that Graham Greene enjoys a complex critical reception in our country although if his message is not yet fully deciphered. The controversies and differences of opinions made to his fiction, the very fact that critics tend to view his fictional world from different angles testify to the profundity of his thought. Finally we hope that our evaluation of the writer's work would serve as a basis for a future more elaborate re-evaluation and reception of Graham Greene's universe in our country.

