

## Alienated World of Graham Greene in It's A Battlefield and The Name of Action

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### ARTICLE DETAILS

#### Article History

Published Online: 13 March 2019

#### Keywords

Action, Loneliness, Novels

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### ABSTRACT

Graham Greene is a novelist of dangerous edge that cuts off the sin from the sinner. His protagonists are lonely and alienated men who grope for some faith to live by. Caught in the contradictions of love and life, they are at the loss to understand the ways of God and man. The atmosphere of Greenland is permeated with gloomy reflections upon disloyalty, despair, loneliness and death. The present paper is an effort to depict a sensitivity type of man of Greene's novels who would rather reject established social and religious codes of conduct and fear the loneliness and despair accompanying his isolated position. He in his novels writes about a man probing deep into his mind and intellect and the conflicts that rage there. It is the man within besieged by despair who occupies the central position in his novels. Such a man has to choose for himself without the aid of any outside help the question of commitment, a commitment for which he alone shall be responsible.

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### 1. Objectives

1. To Study the effect of Greene's surroundings upon his writings.
2. To analyze Greene's works in terms of Alienation
3. To explore biographical touch in the characters of Greene.
4. To Study Greene's works from psychological point of view.

**Robert Nibset-Social Critic Walter Allen is right in saying that Greene "depicts a world of broken trust and this lack of trust lies at the root of man's retreat into bad faith, non-commitment and isolation as well as alienation that result from it.** Greene's novels present such a world through a long series of characters who are lonely, anxious, isolated and suffering from what Mathew Arnold called "Alienation. Alienation is not something new, but it is a condition of man which has been the concern of many thinkers during the past and present time. According to the social thinkers alienation is inherent in man's "being in the world" especially in a particular historical world as noted by Marx and Hegel. Graham Greene is one of the greatest novelists, who sees the present age as the age in which the most disturbing phenomenon felt by man is the sense of estrangement from God, Society, environment and above all from his own self. Greene sees alienation as a positive force that teaches man that he is his own legislator and that he has to reach outside himself in order to liberate and realise himself.

In the novel 'It's A Battlefield and The Name of Action, Graham Greene studies the question of right and wrong, justice and injustice and mechanical routine involving a large number of persons in the problem of isolation, anxiety and despair. All this is particularly evident in It's A Battlefield where Greene brings to life the atmosphere of violence and lawlessness which has become a common affair every day, Through the fate of Conard Drover, the protagonist, he shows how modern man is crushed under the fear of political power that begets social justice and makes life more anxious, uneasy and isolated. The scheme of justice treats man just like an object

and Greene sees wrover or confused being as to his place in the scheme of things in the world, a scheme which is making his life more impersonal, dehumanized and fundamentally alienating him even from himself. It's A Battlefield encompasses the lives of number of characters tortured and troubled by a hostile world. The novel describes the reactions and the destinies of certain people connected in different ways with a London bus driver Jim Drover sentenced to death for accidently killing a policeman at a communist meeting. While reading the novel we are always conscious of metropolitan environment in which the characters live.

There are shabby basement flats with hair comings" as large as a baby's skull, rooms with stale air and dead bats on the floor, brothels which grow like mushrooms, factories where girls stand between death and disfigurement, prisons with A, Band C blocks which remind one of the circles of hell. Greene creates like T.S Eliot in his early poems, A Waste Land, a world of material poverty and spiritual emptiness. It stretches on all sides of characters, isolating them. **"The horror of loneliness was too easily attained; it was in the air one breathed; open any door it opened on loneliness in the passage; close the door at night, one shut loneliness in. The toothbrush, the chair, the cover and the bed were dents in loneliness. One had only to stop, to store, to listen and one was lost."**

Conrad Drover, Jim's brother is one such alienated and isolated individual, lost in his own vague and undefined sense to do something though he does not know what he really wants. He is aware that he must save his own borther but more than that he is painfully aware of isolation. He, like most of Greene's protagonists, had experienced an unpleasant and lonely childhood that worked its way into adult life. He is continually haunted by childhood memories of a traumatic type whenever he is under stress. He feels himself isolated from the common crowd in every possible way. His Christian name Conrad" tossed across the asphalt yard"...itself tends to segregate him, to drive him to isolation. He is filled with hatred and fear against those who have denied him happiness and security, his parents who isolated him through his name, the children at school who taunted him across the asphalt yard, the

men who threaten him and everybody else who do not take him seriously as a man, as a chief clerk and as a lover. At times, he hates even Jim for the plight which has fallen on him. He says to Milly, "I'm fond of him But he's making me hate him. **I've got to hate somebody for this.**" Conrad's feeling of fear, hatred and loneliness in childhood leaves an indelible imprint on his adult life, trained from early childhood to only "adding and subtracting, multiplying and dividing."

The urgent task of saving his brother from death becomes too enormous for him to control. He finds himself caught in whirlpool of circumstances where he can't decide between love for his brother or sympathy for his brother's wife. His sense of loneliness is aggravated by his helplessness to arrive at a decision as to how to tackle the situation at hand. He suddenly feels the dependence of both Jim and his wife upon himself, but his desire to do something for them is vague and confused. Instead of progressing, he retreats into the shell of obscurity and incomprehension. **"He seemed unable to think about his own death; anxiety was greater than fear, he seemed haunted by his responsibility for Milly. A missionary tapped the screen in the stove heated schoolroom with a long pointer, begged with passion "Look at these", and the children stored back... only Conrad felt the unbearable responsibility for their starvation."** Conrad's ever increasing sense of loneliness in having lost his brother and Milly leaves him all the more confused, abandoned and betrayed. Thus Conrad's plight is of an unhappy man who is caught in an unhappy web of circumstances. He stakes his life for a claim, which saddeningly enough is never understood. Kenneth Allott and Farris sum up the pathos of his condition most beautifully. **"He is first condemned to isolation from his kind; then to hopeless love; then to unwilling betrayal of his brother and finally to attempting murder and suicide and a lonely agonizing death."**

The novel *It's A Battlefield* includes so many characters who create an active though depressing human environment. They are like "dried peas rattling in an empty pot, incarnating in different ways. Greene's obsession with human isolation and failure, their inadequacy, dissatisfaction, shame and self-distrust are reproduced in Conrad Drover and Milly who are directly involved in the battle for Jim's survival. These two feel bewildered and insignificant in a world dominated by privilege and corruption. Milly thus lives in her own isolated world of helplessness and frustration. She, no doubt, wants to help her husband, but lacks strength enough to protest against his death sentence. Though she is directly involved in the battle for Jim's survival, she is only led to shame, dissatisfaction and distrust of the world around her. She shares with Conrad the same despair and passion. Physically weak and thin, she feels completely defenceless against the harshness of world. She exists, barely alone in her lonely, dreary basement, trottled by an oppressive loneliness. Fear dominates her being-fear of a lonely future ahead of her, fear of the insecurity without Jim and fear of losing interest in him.

In most of Graham Greene's novels, loneliness arises from the serious effort to know oneself along with others of your contact. Such loneliness is the lot of Oliver in the novel. The Name of Action who after his involvement with Anne-Marie betrays the society of his fellow revolutionaries, as well as the trust of the general body of fellow citizens whom he claims to represent. This breach of faith is the outcome of Oliver's desire

to understand deeply and absolutely the private life of Anne-Marie. It is a wish for sexual love in which he fails. As he moves to consummate sexual attraction for Anne Marie, he realizes that she is in reality not the woman whom he had mentally worshipped with so strong a passion that he would have liked to "take her with him into death". He wants to marry Anne-Marie. He does not want a mistress. He wants a wife. Oliver is in such a position in relation to Anne Marie, that her very presence even alienates him. Oliver's failure to know deeply the object of his desire is also reflected in the church scene at the time of the funeral of a priest when Anne Marie makes it very clear to him that she feels only lust and no love for him. The following conversation shows Oliver's inability to know Anne Marie at a deeper level and the isolation that grows out of this failure: **"I asked you to marry me," he said and seeing another negation on her lips continued with desperation, "I know that you don't love Demessener, you love me."** "You are too straight forward," she said, **"Things don't work like that. They move in circles. I wanted you, Chant with his eyes on the floor said,"** I think, I see. You mean last night wasn't love. It was \_\_\_\_\_

**"Lust", Anne Marie Demessener supplied the world which his lips boggled at.** In his heart he longed to be able to share the coffin with the priest. It lay now alone beneath the feet of Christ like a winter field lit by a few stars. But in its barrenness lay the seed of new life. In his own heart which lived and expanded with breadth and contracted with pain and despair there seemed no such seed.

Yet such alienation does not mean that Oliver gets torn away from the factual reality of his being or that of others. On the contrary alienation derives him into a kind of being who borders on the most aggravated "Self-dissection". He does not wish to live forever in oppressive isolation and pain. Alienation does not cut off Oliver from the full realization of the possibilities of choice before him, rather it leads to his getting entangled more deeply than ever before in his own thoughts and his relation with others. At the end of novel, Oliver stands not in an attitude of resignation of the events gone by but in an intense desire to understand himself and the two persons closely related to him; Paul Demessener and his wife. That is what alienation has bestowed upon him. Such a position is unique. Oliver's adventurous nature and his opposition to dictatorship stand behind him, he wants to commit himself to action and resolve all conflicts. In his alienated position Oliver is not so much in despair, because he has seen that there is a gulf between what he wants and what he can obtain. He has glimpsed the true nature of Annie-Marie who does not accept his love. But Oliver who believes in love and who loves her as "men love God", realises at the close of the novel that she belongs neither to him nor to her husband. It is then that Oliver stands in alienation from a world that can offer no permanent solution to man's total complex of desires. When man seeks communication he is faced with isolation and the weight of this reality bears upon him heavily. Real communication with others is not possible-that is alienation.

Thus Greene's novels present a whole series of characters who are lonely, alienated and anxious suffering from what Mathew Arnold called, "This strange disease of modern life-alienation." Marie Beatrice Mesnet best sums up the theme of the divided man-the alienated man: **"Lost in a strange world, unhappy, suffering from his plight, man questions his**

destiny, and in doing so becomes conscious of an interior division. He is existence and essence, a thinking and an empiric self. The working of his consciousness is felt as a dissection of his being.”

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