

## ‘Resymbolization’ of a Text; a Relatively Different Perspective of Graham Greene’s *The Quiet American*

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### Abstract:

*The Quiet American (1955) could be considered as one of Graham Greene’s most distinguished books; it is an epochal novel written during the phase of the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union. The novel deals with the interference of the United States in Vietnam ten years before Vietnam’s war. The role the Americans played in arousing an inner political crisis in the country previous to her military invention. The book reflects that this action was not out of American government concern about Vietnamese people themselves but merely a political foreign affair. They wanted to stop communism from spreading widely and reducing its role in the East. This paper attempts to analyse the novel concentrating on the message Greene intended through unveiling that historical fact. Meanwhile it displays the varied Americans responses to the text and how particular responses twisted the genuine intention of the author. They interpreted the meaning through ‘resymbolization,’ which has turned the main*

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*character – the American young diplomat, to a patriotic literary hero. The researcher also scrutinizes the text to expose Washington decision makers' policy in dealing with third world countries. Their devious inclination of achieving freedom and bringing democracy for those suffering nations which eventually turns to nothing except death and destruction.*

**Key words:** American Policy, democracy, Pyle, 'resymbolization', text reception Vietnam.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The intention of writing a literary text is reflected in the work itself in spite of the vain attempts of some readers to twist that aim or insert other interpretation to it. E. D. Hirsch developed that argument into a more modern one, he set a distinction between 'meaning' and 'significance' in an attempt to solve the old problem of multiple interpretation. A writer set a literary work with an intended meaning; that is "bound with the writer's 'mental object'" as Edmund Husserl indicates. It reflects what the writer has in his mind when he/she was writing the work. So, meaning is an "intentional object (not a physical object)" (Selden 1993, 188), and this meaning "depends entirely on the process of symbolization in the minds of readers" (Tompkins 1980, xx). The 'meaning' is unchangeable and it is 'identical' with the author's intention, and 'significance' is variable for it is based on "ahistorical... interpretation of a given work" (Selden1993, 188). The meaning must not "be appropriated" by the reader for it belongs to the author. Hirsch tried to save the author's right from what he considers "the moral bullying of interpretation". However, Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* has gone through much debate since it has "political meanings and ideological implications [that] have not always been recognized by critics" (Burns2007, 1).

British novelist Graham Greene (1904-1991) had shown much concern about the third world. The unique status he has among modern novelists is “due to the personal weight of the human issues which he tackles” (Blamires 1986, 106). He began his travel around the world in part to satisfy his lust for adventure, and in part to seek out material for his writing. He always wished to be considered “apolitical as a writer”, but he “enjoyed being politically connected” and regarded to be a “supporter to the oppressed” (Biography n.d.). The humanistic perspective in his writings came out of his personal experience for he knew well the socio-political realities of the Third World as he was operating. Being in touch with the rising tide of revolution in those countries increased his doubts about imperialism.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Greene's works generally carry messages to all great forces to stop inventing Third World countries. He sets *The Quiet American* in an era of decolonization, presenting the action from “the perspective of a British man who reflects back on time of British power” (Kramer 2006, 2007). He chronicled the end of empire “scorning those who stood in the history way” (Nolan 2003). It is the new age when Third World nations started to rise up and have independence. To Greene there are no good intentions: “God save us always”, says Fowler to Vigot, “from the innocent and the good” (Greene 1964, 15). Eventually, these good intentions – as history proved, happens to end with nothing except destruction and devastation. For more than a half century, the United States has been playing the role of the guardian of the world, involving itself in military adventures which causes harm and injury for both Americans and the countries subject of its interference.

Greene's novel has revealed this truth a half century ago. It is regarded as one of Greene's most distinguished novels, and frequently read for its ideological implication and political

meaning. It has another implication for it is considered "one of the first novels to present America as a source of the world's evils, a characterization that, by now, has a common place even in the works of American's own novelists" (Gorra 1986). Greene used his experiences as a war correspondent for *The Times* and *Le Figaro* in French Indochina 1951–1954 to write the novel. It is also known as "a typically Greenian prophecy of what would happen 10 years later when U.S. troops would arrive, determined to teach a rich and complex place the latest theories of Harvard Square" (Iyer 2008). Though it was written many years before the Vietnam War, we see the writer attacking the naïve and counterproductive attitudes that characterized American policy in Vietnam.

Readers' responses to particular texts, through history, have now and then proven to be of a noteworthy importance, and Americans response to *The Quiet American* is a vivid example since we can trace a 'new perspective' in their response. Many Americans sternly attacked Greene and the text for criticising American foreign policy involvement in Indochina accusing him of being anti-American. Pratt (1996) declares that later these accusations have tempered through the favourable critical comments on the novel in a number of American periodicals since there was a more realistic understanding of the American commitment (xiii). Hence, the book was commonly read and accepted by the American public in the decade following its publication.

In *Four Vietnams*, Charles R. Grey clarifies that during the second half of the twentieth century, and as responses to particular historical conditions and circumstances, "four different "Vietnams" [appeared] in American popular and literary culture,": the early Cold War version of Vietnam as a defenseless Asian "domino" exposed to "collapsing to Communism and thereby causing its neighbors to collapse successively;" another version appeared between the 1960s and early 1970s showing that American venture in Vietnam as

imperialistic, “an “immoral and criminal” attempt to suppress an indigenous people’s will to political and economic independence;” in the late 1970s this same war was viewed as a “tragedy without villains” and no one could be considered responsible of.

The final and most recent version beheld “the war as a “noble cause,” an altruistic, benevolent attempt to save the Vietnamese people from the horrors of Communism” (2005, iv). It is a general notion among Americans that they differ from other great powers in history, and their leaders also differ from other leaders. Andrew J Bacevich clarifies that Policymakers in the United States care much for ideals, as President Obama insisted in his Cairo speech that whoever depicts the United States as a “self-interested empire” is badly mistaken (2009).

Jacobsen, in his article “Revisiting ‘*The Quiet American*” (2003), argues that what Greene has missed, while portraying Pyle’s character is the “firm anchoring of their febrile fanaticism in calculated self – interest”, referring to American politics. He adds that they seek for the Project of a New American Century, so they are not like Pyle who was not seeking for his own interests; they desire to build an empire and an “everlasting warfare, a quest for power without responsibility or accountability.”

While Tom Burns in “American Interference” (2007) declares that Greene’s intention was exposing the dangers of so-called “American Innocence,” and that the “national preference of myth over history successful intervention in a foreign civil war depends on knowledge opposed to mere intelligence”. They never learn lessons from the past; they keep the same mistakes possessed with the desire for power and domination.

So there were different responses to the text over time according to the different historical conditions and circumstances. The research attempts to discuss the following objectives; the historical context of the novel, the Americans

reception and various reactions to the text, and finally the Novel's significance today.

### 3. READER-RESPONSE APPROACH

Reader-response theory emphasizes on the readers' essential role in understanding literature; it indicates that readers do "actively make the meaning they find in literature" during the reading process for the same text might be read quite differently by different readers (Tyson 2008, 170). The process of reading is "a journey through a book, and a continuous process of adjustment of viewpoints" (Selden 1993, 53). Any reader has certain expectations in his mind based on his memory of characters and events. As the text advances, these expectations are going to be modified. Finally, the reader comes out with "a series of changing view points, each one establishing a new total perspective" (ibid). As for the text's role of in the process, it varies from those who believe in its essentiality in creating meaning to the belief that the reader is the one who creates existence to the text.

Wolfgang Iser believes that a text is not to be dealt with as an "object", but the critic should know its "effect on the reader" (Guerin 2005). He also emphasizes on the careful "act of reading itself" which leads to the gradual "unfolding process" through which a reader can comprehend and "incorporates the various facets and levels of a text" (Selden 1993, 189). Iser argues that the authors' stated intentions in writing their texts, or the interpretations they may suggest afterward "are but additional readings of the text, which must be submitted for evaluation to the text-as-blueprint just as all other readings are (Tyson 2008, 175). In fact, the interpretation of a work is evidently effected by the social world in which the work is "produced and received".

Every audience responds to a literary work, as Jauss explains, through "the lenses" of "a particular horizon of

expectation" (Selden 1993, 187). Hence, he has developed a new literary theory that focuses on the reception of the text from the time it was written to the present. The horizon of expectation does not set the final meaning of a work. It is an obvious fact observed in the various tendencies a literary text might receive as it comes out in print.

Louise Rosenblatt states that any "story or poem or play is merely inkspots[sic] on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols" (1956, 62). Thus, the reader is the one who provides "the intellectual and emotional context" that gives meaning to these symbols (63). However, David Bleich, believes that there is no literary text beyond the meanings created by readers' interpretations since "the text the critic analyzes is not the literary work but the written responses of readers," thus; the readers' responses are the text. Bleich differentiates between what he calls real objects and symbolic objects. The printed pages of a literary text are physical objects, he adds, so they are real objects.

Reading the pages of the text is an experience that occurs in the mind of the reader, in the conceptual world, thus it is a symbolic object (Tyson 2008, 178). 'Symbolization' is the term he uses to refer to the reading process; it is the subjective reaction – feelings, memories, and associations to the printed words. There are also other factors; the accumulated knowledge, past literature one previously came across, in addition to the current physical condition and mood. When we interpret the meaning of the text, we are actually interpreting the meaning of our own symbolization which is "the meaning of the conceptual experience we created in response to the text" (ibid). Bleich calls the act of interpretation 'resymbolization'. 'Resymbolization' occurs within two actions; the desire to explain the text and in the evaluation of its quality. So, "the text we talk about isn't really the text on the page: it's the text in our mind" (ibid). Therefore, it is not the text that we like or do not like, it is our symbolization of it that we like or dislike.

## 4. DISCUSSION

### 4.1. The historical context of the novel

*The Quiet American* is an epochal novel, Gibson indicates, announcing the "inception of a new epoch at a decisive historical moment" (2008, 289). It was written during the phase of the Cold War, while the United States, through her National Security Director on March 1958, absolutely denied any "covert actions". It deals with the French Colonial war there; the colonial re-conquest for the United States and the Soviets. Both wanted to dissolve the old colonial rapidly for it belonged to the past. After the announcement of the Republic of China in October 1949, Indochina turned to be a "key battleground" in the struggle between the United States and the Soviets for domination. The American feared the withdrawal of the French for it might cause in the spread of communism. The novel is relatively considered an evaluation of political condition of Indochina and the geopolitical situation in 1951.

Greene starts the novel with an epigraph from Byron's "Don Juan": "This is the patent age of new inventions / For killing bodies, and for saving souls, / All propagated with the best intentions." (Greene 1964, 1). The author, here, prepares us for what the novel indicates about the new phase the world has entered. The book's authority does not rest only on what Gloria Emerson calls as the "first great warning" against American involvement, but in telling us almost everything in 1956, it pleases to an American yearning for a moral clarity, which apparently "have taken out of American literary reach" (Taylor 1980, 295). It refers to a particular modern form of innocence which hides the principle of implosion according to which "ferocious opposites reverse into one another". Gibson adds that the novel is about an early version of that innocence, and Greene reflects his own version of implosion "the collapse of any private moral space putatively vaporizable apart from global antagonism" (Gibson 2008, 289). Contemporary critics, in their



political readings, "have continued to read American foreign policy as well-intentioned," (Neilson 1998, p. 87) now that most literary critics have liberal politics.

The three main characters in the novel are Fowler, Pyle and Phuong. Thomas Fowler is the protagonist and narrator; he is a jaded British journalist. He is middle aged who fled to the East after a failed love affair that had ruined his marriage. Fowler covers the war From Saigon, passing along news releases provided by French military spokesmen. He stands apart and simply reports and refuses to take sides. Fowler is a proficient whose experiences in life turned him into a passive man: "I wrote what I saw; I took no action – even an opinion is a kind of action" (Greene 1964, 27). He did not want to be involved in what was going on: "I am not engagé" (ibid, 121) and even the reports he sends to press do not carry the truth because he absolutely knows that reality should be veiled.

Next is the title character Alden Pyle, the idealistic American diplomat; a polite, modest, and young American who is newly assigned as an economic attaché with the U.S. mission. Pyle is the son of a famous professor who lives on Chestnut Street in Boston. He is an earnest, serious, and well-intentioned young man. He had no experiences in life except the books he read of "serious writers", "the straight staff" with "contemporary themes" and "profound titles" like *The Advance of Red China*, and *The Role of the West*. He was indoctrinated by his studies, and theories that had no attachment to the complex local realities: "I had suffered from his lectures on the Far East", says Fowler, "which he had known for as many months as I had years" (ibid, 5). Actually, he is a CIA agent, supposed to have been sent to Vietnam with the Economic Aid Mission in 1950. Through Pyle's character the writer shows how the young generation is deceived with the ideas of improving the world. The word "quiet" was first used by Phuong to describe Pyle, and later it was associated with him. He is quiet for "the rule is to keep quiet" (ibid, 9) to cover the secrecy

of his mission. Quiet is also ironically used when it is compared with the bombing he caused in the country.

There is also Fowler's young Vietnamese beautiful mistress, Phuong. The love relation between Fowler and Phuong is difficult to be evaluated; it is not clear whether he actually loves her or not. However, he needs "Phuong desperately, for sex and companionship, to prepare his opium pipes each evening, above all as someone whose presence keeps at bay Fowler's fear of facing alone the terrors of old age" (Bacevich 2009). While the sole thing Phuong wants is marriage, which is a guarantee of security. But Fowler cannot afford her this; he remains formally wed and his Catholic wife, back in England, will not break the union.

Phuong is the beautiful woman who exposes the rivalry between the two men. She is "startlingly simple and transparent in her conduct" (Kerr 2006). Fowler sees her, tough, pragmatic, and virtually lacking interiority. While Pyle considers her helpless, childish, and innocent; so, he decided to be her heroic rescuer. Some critics consider her symbol for her own country, Vietnam, and the struggle between the two men for possessing her is the fight of the two great world forces for occupying the land (see Karmer 2006 & Burns 2007).

Greene is not hostile to Pyle who stands for American people; and he shows the virtues of this innocent young man through Fowler's comments: "he was incapable of imagining pain or danger to himself as he was incapable of conceiving the pain he might cause others" (Greene 1964, 75). Though he causes troubles wherever he goes, he does that with good motives not out of malice. His good nature is also reflected in his intention to marry Phuong in order to protect her from turning into a prostitute when Fowler goes back to Britain. Fowler sees him as incapable of lying; "he was one of the most inefficient liars I have ever known – it was an art he had obviously never practiced" (ibid, 109). But we discover later that Pyle is capable of lying – his fake mission and his pretended

ignorance of Vietnamese language, are only a veil to the act of bombing he was arranging.

Pyle truly believed in his own "duty to effect the transformation and salvation of Vietnam"; he had "pronounced views on what the United States was doing" (Steigman 2012) in the name of The Third Force. Harding's Third Force is a national party or popular group, it "is neither colonialist nor communist and that will be willing to fight the Viet Minh to ensure an American-style democracy in a united Vietnam" (Burns 2007). It is to be "free from Communism and the tent of colonialism – national democracy... to find a leader and keep him safe from the old colonial powers" (Greene 1964, 160). General Thé is the local man to implement this Third Force. He has a small army and has taken to the hills, and he stands for what now is called a terrorist. His men bomb a café during the day time in the centre of Saigon though they knew quite well that it was full of women and children during such hour.

So Pyle's mission is to work with those people, supply them with bombs, kill civilian casualties and throw the blame on communist. Simultaneously, this will reduce the French dominion and suggest their inefficiency to handle matters in Vietnam. With the false reports from the battle fields the American people are kept in ignorance of what is going on. Greene had explained clearly the "naiveté and the confusion behind the American presence in Vietnam with a clarity which no other novel has yet attained" (Gorra 1990, 145). The novel had predicated everything in advance and displayed some of the causes of its failure too. It was simply the United States vigorously opposing the spread of communism in the world.

The American Aid mission soon divulged to Greene and the French a two-faced; it was secret and illegal most of the time in its objectives, and quite different from the publicly acknowledged purposes. In fact, it was importing death instead of aiding people. The French were left to fight the hot war, the American the cold. Pyle considered his action in Vietnam as a

“fight for liberty” (Greene1964, 122). The Americans kept “clean hands” and let the French people to get their hands dirty.

In his later years, Greene had an interest in left wing governments of the Third World; it was not out of a “reasoned commitment to Marxism,” as much as the “hatred of ‘sinless graceless chromium world that he finds embodied in the United States.” (Gorra 1990, 144). The novel reveals how the United States try to enforce on Vietnamese their own will: “They’ll be forced to believe what they are told; they won’t be allowed to think for themselves” (Greene1964, 119): this clearly reflects Pyle’s worries of losing the country to the communists. Through the discussion that goes on between Fowler and Pyle about colonization, Fowler shows sympathy for those simple, poor people saying:

“We have brought them up in our ideas. We taught them dangerous games ... we are waiting here, hoping we don’t get out throats cut. We deserve to have them cut” (ibid, 120).

Fowler, here, wished that he, Pyle, and York Harding were assassinated by the Vietnamese. Harding stands for all politicians who just pass theories to people to apply while they are sitting in their offices not venturing once in spot. He also informs Pyle that the French are not leading the Vietnamese “on with half – lies like your politicians – and ours” (ibid, 121). Thus, Fowler prefers the French politicians over the American and the English.

Terry Eagleton sees such argue to encapsulate “one of Greene’s predominant themes” reflecting “the tension between the corrupt political ideology..., and overt liberal humanism” (Steigman 2007, 44). Poor people pay for the glory of Americans. The colonizers care only about “the political commissar”, but nobody “cared about the individuality of the man in the paddy – and who does now” (Greene1964, 123)? Fowler prevents Pyle from shooting the two young frightened

guards in the tower whom Pyle thought would hand them over as they are so simple and do not know the meaning of liberty.

In a previous argument with Fowler, Pyle accused the French of distrust towards the Vietnamese: "A man becomes trustworthy when you trust him" (ibid, 107). Again Pyle's action reverses his claims for he does not trust anyone. Douglas Kerr sees that "there is a strong sense of illegibility to Vietnam and its people" (2006 133). Meanwhile, Fowler disdains American liberals' attempts to introduce into Asia their conceptual model of democracy and freedom. "I have been in India, Pyle, and I know the harm liberals do" (Greene1964, 121). While the Vietnamese are killed either in battle fields or by bombs in the streets, the Americans made sure that there must be no American casualties during the bombing, they never even cared about any English, or French citizens as the scene shows.

Fowler considers Americans as egocentric opportunists, comments Davis (1956), denouncing that they let the French do the dying "while they clean up commercially". The Communist Vietminh is enemy in this war; Fowler is in touch with them, and he expects them to win the war. But this meaningless war slaughters only innocent harmless women and children. As an impartial watcher and detached from the current events, he criticises the American liberals' attempts to introduce their model concepts of democracy and freedom into Asia.

#### **4.2. The Reception of the novel**

Any piece of literature is not universal, declares Jauss, and cannot have the same "impact on readers of all eras" (Guerin 2005, 356). Transactional theorists observe that "different readers come up with different acceptable interpretations" as the text supplies a "range of acceptable meanings, that is, a range of meanings for which textual support is available" (Tyson 2008, 174). *The Quiet American* has received much warmth in England within its publication in 1955, but, in American critics "rallied against the book" as if some sort of

metaphorical violence were being done to their country,” states Katie Roiphe (2003). This American attitude to the novel, explains Bacevich, is attributed to the notion that since the nineteenth century till now the “Americans are fortunate in being able to draw on a rich home grown tradition of observers who have devoted themselves to puncturing Washington’s conceit and delighting in its folly” (2000). So, they are deluded into false sentiments and beliefs.

Surveying some of American responses to the book, one would come across the *News Week* critic who claimed that Greene “apparently resented passing on the world leadership to the Americans”, and attacked Greene further by attributing the content of the book to the bitter feeling the author still had “about difficulties he’d had in getting a visa to come to America” (Nolan 2003). Later that year, “the magazine published dark innuendos about the book’s appeal to the Kremlin”. Another “vitriolic review” came from A.J. Liebling in *The New Yorker* describing the novel as “nasty little plastic bomb” (Roiphe 2003).

Correspondingly Robert Gorham Davis, in his review to the book in the *New York Times* (11March 1956), accused Greene of employing his “characters less as individuals than as representatives of their nations or political factions”. He adds that America is the principal concern as the title of the book suggests. The notion is “that America is a crassly materialistic and “innocent” nation with no understanding of other peoples”. Their representatives’ interference in other countries’ affairs brings nothing but suffering. And Asians should work out their own destinies by their own, “even when this means the victory of communism”.

Davis also analyses Pyle’s character saying: “There is nothing self-interested in his motives for the villainy which Greene has concocted for his role. He is working for the O.S.S. “or whatever his gang are called,” and is convinced that in intriguing with the dissident General Thé he is moving

effectively to create a "Third Force" against both the French Colonials and the Communists" (1956). Fowler (Greene) considers Pyle an inexperienced because his knowledge is from books and lectures "and his writers and lecturers made a fool of him" (Greene 1964, 31). So, to Fowler the Third Force is nothing but political abstraction Pyle has got out of books. The Americans were also annoyed, Davis argues, because "Fowler is [easily] permitted to triumph in his debates with the Americans." The book has no real debate since "no experienced and intelligent anti-Communist is represented there," either because Greene must have felt that such men do not exist or that they do not serve his present purposes".

The two previous opinions evidently proves how the text is a particular and personal event for the reader, as Rosenblatt states, and how the reader's mind and personality habitually illuminates particular pattern of symbols on the printed pages. Afterwards, American writers, more than once, offered praise and admiration for the novel, and appreciated Greene's craft; they also saw "his anti – Americanism mild compared to the real thing" (Taylor 1980). Pretty many appreciate the author and his work because of the prophetic implication and amount of truthfulness it carries which eventually proved to be correct.

Some Americans 'Symbolised' their subjective reaction to Greene's text, influenced already by their accumulated knowledge, past literature as well as their mood. They actually interpreted the meaning of their own symbolization – the meaning of the conceptual experience they created in response to the text. They 'resymbolised' it in the process of interpretation. So the real text seems to disappear during the evaluation for it turned to "the text in [their] mind[s]" (Tyson 2008, 178). For instance, the novel caught the interest of filmmakers twice; the original movie version came out in 1958, and it was produced and directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz. In order to make the film "more flattering to Americans," the

producer has altered the plot "so completely" (Roiphe 2003). Greene had the chance only to see the first version of his book. The director's reworking his novel enraged Greene effectively, so he commented:

The most extreme changes I have seen in any of mine...; one could almost believe that the film was made deliberately to attack the book and the author, but the book was based on a closer knowledge of the Indochina war than the American director possessed, and I am vain enough to believe that the book will survive a few years longer than Mr. Mankiewicz' incoherent picture (qtd. in Geist 278).

Meanwhile, Bosley Crowther reviewed the movie on its second day of opening (February 6, 1958), and he wrote that "Mankiewicz has a better opinion of the title character in Graham Greene's "*The Quiet American*" than the British novelist had". Crowther described Pyle's depiction in the novel as "a rather officious diplomatic type, meddling much more than was healthy in Vietnamese politics," while in Mankiewicz's movie, he is "a much less unpleasant American than the one represented by Mr. Greene" (*New York Times*, 11 March, 1956). In fact, Mankiewicz transported it into a decidedly patriotic film.

Another adaptation of the novel was directed by Phillip Noyce and appeared in 2002. But Miramax delayed the release of the film by a year. Apparently some test audiences responded negatively to the movie considering it to be anti-American as it was screened soon after Sept. 11 (Roiphe 2003). Noyce's movie had turned Pyle to be the real hero of the story. Apparently, the two versions were far much away from the real book.

Greene's book attacks upon the murderous simplicity of American foreign policy by presenting Americans with no bad motive; but simply having no idea "what the whole affair's about" (Greene 1964, 31). However, this noble kind version is not fairly attainable since innocence, whether real or feigned, causes problems. It is not only the Vietnamese and other



nationalities in the novel that are deceived by that policy, but even the American nation itself.

### 4.3. The Novel's Significance Today

Pyle stands for all enthusiastic young people who were stuffed with theories taught in their universities, then sent abroad to apply what they learned. They "enter war with the sense of adventure and innocence shaped by cultural myths", but the real experiences they got in combat "forever destroy their naïveté and lead them to crucial insights about human nature and war" (Herzog 1992). Pyle is a symbol of American purpose and patriotism—and dangerous naïveté. Fowler describes him saying: "I never knew a man who had better motives for all the trouble he caused." He also adds:

He was as incapable of imagining pain or danger to himself as he was incapable of conceiving the pain he might cause others....Yet he was sincere in his way: it was coincidence that the sacrifices were all paid by others..."( Greene 1964, 74).

The simplistic belief that the world could be fixed with good intentions is not quite true, since the attempt to put things right usually succeed in killing innocent people. While admitting guilt allows the blind to see, the feeling of righteousness brings blindness. Truthfully, young soldiers in Vietnam were systematically misled about what they were doing there, thrown in the mid of a hostile of people whom they were told they were rescuing.

Americans went to Vietnam carrying their technology and progress that were used only for their own service; we see Pyle living in one of "those main streets which French continually subdivided in honour of their generals", a secured American Legation a place by its own. "Even their lavatories were air-conditioned," Fowler comments (ibid, 192). Meanwhile the Vietnamese were starving, suffering and leading a very primitive life. The technology and 'aid' presented to them by

the United States came in the form of bomb bicycles or street bombs which took the lives of those innocents.

Pyle is a fervent believer in the dreamy political ideology, the Third Force; he is absolutely confident in his ability to bring change and democracy through defeating both the French and the Communist Viet Minh. He covertly finances General Thé, the commander of a "Third Force" militia. Together they "hatch a plot to advance the prospects of the Third Force involving the use of concealed explosives" (Buckley 90). The intended target is a military parade, yet due to Pyle's unskillfulness, the explosion kills hundreds of innocent civilians in downtown Saigon:

"A woman sat on the ground with what was left of her baby in her lap; with a kind of modesty she had covered it with her straw peasant hat. She was still and silent, and what struck me most in the square was the silence.... The legless torso at the edge of the garden still twitched, like a chicken which has lost its head.... (Greene 1964, 212)

Pyle commented on the scene saying: "It's awful" for he never sensed the damage and misery he caused to 'others' who were mere objects to achieve American politics' schemes: "A two-hundred- pound bomb does not discriminate. How many dead colonels justify a child's or a trishaw driver's death when you are building a national democratic front?" exclaims Fowler (ibid, 214). So, he distributed death among innocent people, blinded with the high motives, but suddenly

[he] looked at the wet on his shoes and said in a sick voice, 'What's that?' "Blood,' I said. 'Haven't you ever seen it before?'... He was seeing a real war for the first time.... 'You've got the Third Force and National Democracy all over your right shoe.'" (ibid)

This dreadful reality has shocked Pyle indeed for he was about to faint, but "What's the good?" He will always be innocent and blameless; the innocent are always "guiltless", because Pyle is

armoured by his good intentions and his ignorance, comments Fowler. Afterwards, Pyle calms down he calls the civilians who were killed during the explosion "war casualties". He feels pity for them but justifies saying that one cannot always hit his target, and that they died in the "right cause.... In a way you could say they died for democracy" (ibid, 234). Yet, consequently this same democracy leads to his fateful death.

Certain Americans resymbolized *The Quiet American* while reading the novel. Let us take President George W. Bush for instance and scrutinize his reaction to the novel.

Reviewing Kevin Buckley's "The Graham Greene Argument" shows that Bush in August 2007 has referred to the book in his speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. First, he "seemed "to miss the point of the 1955 novel and what it uncannily foretold" for he denied the interference of the United States in Vietnam before the time of writing the novel; he stated that it was written "long before the United States had entered the war" (89). But the truth is that the United States "was already underwriting close to 80 percent of the French cost of the war". Bush controverts this reality though it has become evidently clear to the whole world. Also, Bush mentions the main character, Alden Pyle whom he seems to have high regard to, as Buckley argues, for he appreciatively quotes in his speech: "I never knew a man who had better motives for all the trouble he caused" (89). Buckley believes that choosing "a literary hero provides a revealing if inadvertent window into the president's character," (90) hence, he attempts to find some similarity between the two.

In the wake of 9/11, George W. Bush stated that Americans are "good" while the others are "evil". He virtually "misinterpret[s] the problem at hand, and underestimate[s] the complexity, and costs entailed in trying to solve it" (Bacevich 2000). He solved the problem through invading Iraq. This asserts Buckley opinion concerning the "obvious parallels" between them. Both had no notion of "what the whole affair's

about" (Greene 1964, 32). Bush is Just like Pyle who was given "money and York Harding's books on the East and said 'Go ahead. Win the East for Democracy.' He never saw anything he hadn't heard in a lecture hall, and his writers and his lecturers made a fool of him" (ibid). He is just like Pyle who had no bad intention or desire for killing; Pyle couldn't see "a dead body he couldn't even see the wounds" (ibid, 32). Pyle also was

Determined... to do good, not to any individual person but to a country, a continent, a world. Well, he was in his element now with the whole universe to improve (ibid, 12).

Pyle turned to be a patriotic hero for many Americans. This probably justifies Bush's reference to Pyle in support for his course in Iraq. Washington had its justification for inventing Iraq all with good intention and in the name of democracy.

But, decision makers in Washington one way or another manage to evade responsibility. Policymakers always feel guiltless and are eventually rewarded along the way. Authorized people usually "assign responsibility for any sins to soldiers who in doing Washington's bidding became sources of embarrassment" (Bacevich 2000). Their hands are not stained with blood since they let the soldiers do *their* dirty work of killing the innocents. Those soldiers' compensation, writes Greene, "includes the guilt of murder in the pay-envelope," (Greene 1964, 63) and when they return home overburdened with the sense of personal guilt.

All the images of suffering Vietnamese depicted in *The Quiet American* are typically found in countries that were subject to the United States invasion. Bad conditions of life, diseases caused by raids, and the vivid scene of bombing are common scenes in Baghdad today.

What the United States did in Iraq is the message to the whole world as an American politician had recently proclaimed:

The mission begins in Baghdad, but it does not end there ... we stand at the cusp of a new era ... it is clearly about more than Iraq. It is more even than the future of the

Middle East and the war on terror. It is about what sort of role the United States intends to play in the twenty – first century (The War over Iraq qtd. InZize2004).

The novel evokes a lot of sorrowful memories, and bitter experiences of innocent people who paid and still paying their lives and properties a cost for Washington's dreams of wealth and domination. All the images of suffering Vietnamese depicted in *The Quiet American* are typically found in these invaded countries in the name of democracy. Bad conditions of life, diseases caused by Air Force raids, and the vivid scene of bombing are common scenes in these countries.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The researcher has attempted to prove that nothing could entirely turn a literary text into an intentional object. *The Quiet American* has encountered vain attempts to twist its author's intention, and to insert other interpretation to it. However, it managed to carry its ideological implications and political meanings. Some Americans read it with the lenses of a precise "horizon of expectation" since the title of the book suggests that America is its principal concern. The social and political world evidently affected their interpretation. They interpreted the meaning through 'resymbolization,' and twisted Pyle's character to a patriotic literary hero; a symbol to encourage military troops to fight wars which they have nothing to do with them. However, the book was commonly read and accepted by the Americans in the decade following its publication. Many Americans now read the novel without changing its meaning for it became identical with the Greene's intention. The general notion that America is a source of the world's evils has now a common place even in the works of American novelists.

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