

# The Postwar World in Graham Greene's Novels

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**Nika Maria Bastaja**

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Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Sveučilišni prijediplomski studij Anglistike (dvopredmetni)

The Postwar World in Graham Greene's Novels

Završni rad

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Zadar, 2023.



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Zadar, 2023.

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## 1. Introduction

*Postwar* is a term that refers to a period after the conclusion of a war. It is often characterized by a prevailing sense of exhaustion, whereas nations that were participating in the conflict are now concentrated on recovery and re-establishment of order. In the context of this paper, the term postwar denotes the period after the Second World War, and rather than solely representing a historical time frame, it also relates to the global condition and the state of the human mind. As stated by Gill Plain, it is a concept liminal in nature that means neither peace nor war. Additionally, the *postwar* also represents a sense of displacement, where the act of writing is postponed, and emotions are reflected upon in the “aftermath of immediate danger” (14).

The devastating nature of the Second World War had a great impact on British society. Numerous people lost their lives either by actively participating in the war as members of military service or as victims of German air bombing. Furthermore, the environment experienced detrimental consequences due to the bombing, with larger cities, being the primary targets, suffering the most. Such highly stressful experiences have left a profound impact on the human psyche. Consequently, after the war was over, Steve Padley argues that people started demanding political reform and the betterment of living conditions (47). It was necessary to both restore the ravaged world and reconstruct many of the fundamental values that had once defined it.

As Padley says, the overall mood of the period was that of exhaustion which was present in both physical and psychological sense; there was a shortage of necessities, and it took years for people to come to terms with experienced traumatic events. In addition, British literature experienced withdrawal during the early years of the postwar period, and writers avoided

immediate engagement with questions of war (48). Despite initial reluctance, many writers were actively engaged in writing war fiction during the subsequent decades. The newly emerged fragmented world resulting from the Second World War, as well as the fear and anxiety ignited by the Cold War were, according to Padley, adapted into “the self-questioning, fragmentary nature of postmodern narrative strategies” (50). Naturally, not all British writers engaged with war-related themes, but no matter whether issues from the past were addressed or not, the two world wars have greatly influenced all of them, which is evident in the emergence of new and diverse literary movements, voices, and styles throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

In addition to the internal damage and economic struggles that Britain endured, a problem regarding its role in the world emerged. Britain experienced a decline in its imperial status, which led to the acknowledgment of the independence of former colonies during the decolonization process (Padley 1-2). Moreover, Britain was not alone in this, as many other European countries faced the same. Britain had to accept that its position as a powerful world nation was slowly but surely diminishing. This new reorganization of the world order, which has left a profound impact on the overall economic situation of the country, has inspired numerous literary responses. Many British writers tried to capture the mood of decline that followed the post-imperial period.

Another significant aspect that characterized the postwar period was the beginning of the Cold War. The competitive development of nuclear weapons by two global superpowers, the USA and the USSR, created an atmosphere of anxiety that affected many countries caught in the crossfire. However, Padley states that the impact of the Cold War on literature was evident more subtly and indirectly (20), meaning that the engagement with historical events and problems that were present during that period was less frequent. The world was still in the process of recovery from the Second World War, and even though peace had seemed to be

within grasp, new dangers threatened to shatter it yet again. An apprehension that the world might finally face its end was present among people, and such an atmosphere contributed to the further development of spy fiction.

In a world attempting to recover from the devastations caused during two world wars, many longstanding convictions were subjected to reevaluation. Among those were questions of religion, morality, culture, politics, and societal values in general (Padley 41). Especially questioned was religion and its ideals. The drastically changed world, where humanity's darkest aspects came to light, no longer had room for consoling fairytales. Particularly because of its restraining elements which people no longer wanted to endure. As a result, Christianity's role and significance in culture and society decreased, and it was no longer as influential as it used to be. According to Padley, this new phenomenon was reflected in literature as well, as there were not many writers who incorporated religion in their works nor particularly addressed its declining influence (42).

From what is mentioned above, it is evident that a great deal of postwar literature encompasses themes of war and its aftermath, as well as dying imperialism and many other political issues that shaped the previous century. Amidst these contexts, many writers explored questions of good and evil, morality, and the purpose of life, while some of them also included religion as a means to investigate the depths of the human psyche. Among those writers was Graham Greene who is recognized as one of the best British novelists of the last century.

Graham Greene's writing career lasted for more than six decades, starting in the mid-1920s, and continuing until the 1980s (Brennan ix), which means that it spanned the periods before, during, and after the Second World War. Accordingly, his literary works often explore various themes that correspond to the historical circumstances of the time. Since the majority of his well-known works were created after the Second World War, Greene is often classified as a postwar writer. Furthermore, the three of his novels that will be analyzed in this paper were



also produced during the same period: *The End of the Affair* (1951), *Our Man in Havana* (1958), and *A Burnt-Out Case* (1961). What these novels have in common are settings in politically uncertain environments, characters experiencing inner conflicts that are reflected in their outside world, and motifs of Catholicism that are a significant feature of Greene's writing. Even though many of his writings touch upon religious matters, Greene refused the assigned title that labeled him as a Catholic writer and described himself as "a novelist who happens to be a Catholic" (Couto 1). Additionally, he feared being labeled as a political writer, so he avoided dedicating himself to any specific ideology (Brennan ix). Nevertheless, the fact remains that religion and politics are important themes he engaged with. By incorporating them into his narratives, Greene provides readers with an insight into the atmosphere of the period in which the particular novel was written.

The first novel that I am going to analyze here is *The End of the Affair*. It follows a complex love affair between Maurice Bendrix and Sarah Miles which takes place in London during the Second World War. This setting was appropriate for exploring weightier aspects of human emotions, specifically love and hate, and even more complicated human relationships. Additionally, the novel deals with questions of faith in a world devoid of hope. The second novel, *Our Man in Havana*, follows the story of James Wormold, an ordinary man who becomes entangled in the rather extraordinary world of espionage. The novel is set in Cuba during the Cold War which is a suitable backdrop for a spy novel. Through the humorous and slightly tragic Wormold's adventures, Greene introduces us to the political climate of pre-revolutionary Cuba. Finally, *A Burnt-Out Case* is set in Belgian Congo shortly before its declaration of independence. It follows the journey of the main protagonist Query, who in his attempt to escape the burdens of life, isolates himself in a small African village, notoriously known for its leprosarium. Being a widely known church architect, Query seeks a remote place for his retirement. The isolation, disease, and hints of resistance prevalent in the story's setting mirror

Query's internal condition. The novel explores themes of emotional aridity, spirituality, and human bonds.

In the analysis of *The End of the Affair*, I will focus on exploring potential correlations between wartime circumstances and the characters' inner state. I will also refer to religious aspects which feature prominently in this novel. While examining *Our Man in Havana*, I will analyze Greene's satirical representation of the British Secret Service through which we are introduced to the atmosphere of Cold-war Cuba. And lastly, in my analysis of *A Burnt-Out Case*, I will examine the impact of European colonialism and the complexities of relationships between people of different cultural backgrounds.

## 2. Graham Greene's postwar world

### 2.1 *The End of the Affair*

*The End of the Affair*, published in 1951, deals with the exploration of various political and philosophical themes amidst a complex love affair. As stated by Malcolm Bradbury it is “a theological detective story” (290) set against the backdrop of the Second World War. Jerod R. Hollyfield argues that despite being set during wartime, the main focus of *The End of the Affair* is not on soldiers directly involved with war, but on characters whose involvement with it is more indirect due to their socioeconomic status. Belonging to the professional class, they earned their living as civil servants or directly benefited from its authority, as was the case for Bendrix (75). As a result, war is not the novel's central theme, but is still an important aspect as it profoundly influences the characters' lives. By setting wartime London as the backdrop for the novel, Greene creates a suitable atmosphere for exploring questions of faith, morality, and human emotions.

The narration in the novel is not of a continuous chronological path. As Ronald G. Walker states, the entire sequence of events covers a period of almost seven years, starting with the beginning of the love affair between Bendrix and Sarah in 1939 and continuing until the development of a deeper connection between Bendrix and Henry after Sarah's death in 1946 (224). According to Michael G. Brennan, shifts in time perspectives enrich the visual components of the novel. Thus, Bendrix's thoughts are presented in a disorienting and fragmented manner which mirrors his war-affected surroundings (87). The constant flow of time backward and forward provides us with Bendrix's memories of past events, including horrors brought about by the German bombing.

While reminiscing about the time spent with Sarah during their affair, Bendrix places key events within a temporal context and describes the political situation of the time. In this way, he adds historical context and simultaneously provides us with his perspectives on wartime events. For example, on one occasion he recalled a big argument that broke out between them in May 1940 and said that "Germany by this time had invaded the Low Countries" (*The End* 57). A sense of doom could be felt in the air, but to him, the ongoing war was a helping hand in their affair as they were given more opportunity to spend time together. Here we can notice Bendrix's unusual perspective on war, in which he appears to treat his own safety and life rather lightly. In addition, we can find several instances where the word 'death' lacks the weight it usually carries. It was not feared and was sometimes regarded as a desired outcome: "Death never mattered at those times – in the early days I even used to pray for it" (*The End* 70). The impact of war on the human state of mind could be seen as the underlying cause of this phenomenon. The Second World War ravaged the world, took away numerous lives, and left cities in ruins. People were worried and anxious, whereas Bendrix and Sarah found distraction from all horrors in their affair. Their whole world revolved around each other, and nothing else mattered. This remained the case until they directly experienced the dangers that war brings.

The affair ended on the first night of attacks with V-1 bombs in June 1944, as Bendrix's apartment was hit while he was there with Sarah. Bendrix ended up injured as the front door had fallen over him. After a few minutes of unconsciousness, he pulled himself out and found Sarah praying on her knees. Thinking that Bendrix was dead, Sarah, in her helplessness, turned to God for help and promised to break all ties with Bendrix in exchange for his life. Due to such an outcome, as Brennan says, Bendrix emotionally responded to air raids differently than before (88). Initially, the air raids did not concern him as much since he was, as previously mentioned, preoccupied with their relationship. However, his lack of caution during the onset of the bombing resulted in both injury and parting with Sarah. As Hollyfield says, Bendrix acknowledges that the world around him has changed, but those changes were not induced by experiencing a near-fatal incident, but because of Sarah's decision to completely sever ties with him (77). By reading Sarah's diary, we get an insight into her perception of the same night which, in her eyes, represented a transition between their previous intimacy and an inevitable future separation (Brennan 89). Before the accident, Sarah had a similar view as Bendrix on the war events and death. In her eyes, nothing really mattered as long as they were able to be together. However, after experiencing fear of losing her loved one, and believing in the miraculous nature of his survival, her stance has changed. God, in whom she did not previously believe, saved her lover and she felt obligated to keep her promise to Him.

The end of Bendrix and Sarah's love affair is an important part of the novel as it presents the war's devastating nature which can break people apart as easily as it can bring them together. Additionally, it is a turning point after which religion turns into one of the novel's main concerns. Sarah was determined to keep her vow but was miserable. The Second World War eventually came to an end, but the peace in the outside world did not correspond to what she felt on the inside: "I suppose they were happy because this was peace and there were no more bombs. I said to Henry, 'I don't like the peace'" (*The End* 105). Whether it was divine

intervention or simply war's doing the two lovers were separated, and Sarah's psychological trauma prevented her from acting in accordance with her desires. The battle which took place in the outside world seemed to relocate itself inside her mind, and despite her finding solitude in faith, her death could be ascribed to the same.

As Sarah eventually accepted God as an existing being and immersed herself in faith, she enabled Him to become a new protagonist in the story. Suspecting that Sarah had a new lover, Bendrix hired a spy to follow her. He was surprised to find out that the mysterious lover was actually God. This discovery marks the plot twist after which all events were ascribed to God's doing. The former adulteress takes on characteristics of a saint, and after her death, more miraculous events occurred. By witnessing unexplained healings that were connected to her, Bendrix was forced to accept God's existence. Ultimately, *The End of the Affair* adopts a more open approach to religious matters, as faith was represented as a constituting part of an individual journey, rather than a fixed absolute.

Amidst the world suffering from war's destructive power, Greene explored human capacity for complex feelings such as love and hate. The world was no longer a safe place and it seemed to be deprived of God's mercy to whom all sufferings were ascribed. As Brennan noted, the word 'hate' was used in the novel roughly one hundred times (89). Hate was the force that drove Bendrix toward self-destructive behavior and it corresponded with the hatred between the conflicted sides in the Second World War. But the underlying cause for Bendrix's hatred was insecurity. He felt insecure in his relationship with Sarah and was doubtful of the sincerity of her claimed love. Additionally, life without her was empty and meaningless and he was roaming through life clutching onto what was left of their relationship – his feelings of hate and pain. Furthermore, in alignment with his inner state, a pervasive sense of insecurity filled the world the characters lived in. Thus, we can conclude that wartime London served as the appropriate background for the exploration of profound human emotions.

## 2.2 *Our Man in Havana*

*Our Man in Havana*, published in 1958, is Greene's satirical espionage novel. It is set in Havana, the capital city of Cuba during the Cold War period, or to be precise, as Peter Hulme argues, approximately a year after the novel was published (187). The world which was still recovering from the consequences of the Second World War, now experienced new anxieties owing to the escalating tension between Eastern and Western Bloc. The novel follows the story of James Wormold - an ordinary vacuum cleaner salesman who got recruited by the British Secret Service to work as their agent. Considering the setting and the main protagonist's job description, the first impression that a reader might get is that *Our Man in Havana* deals with serious political matters in Cuba during the Cold War. However, while the novel does address political issues of that era, the emphasis is on satirizing espionage as a means of gathering confidential information. According to Hulme, Greene classified the novel as "entertainment", stressing that it was not intended for discussing matters related to Cuba, but to mock the Secret Service (186). It seems that Cuba functions as the appropriate background for an espionage novel, since a few years after the novel's publication, the island experienced one of the Cold War's culminating points on its own territory – the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The fictional world of this novel thrives on crime and is characterized by a violent atmosphere. Havana is described as a place where "the sexual exchange was not only the chief commerce of the city, but the whole *raison d'être* of a man's life" (*Our Man* 58). Murders happen frequently, impacting both ordinary people and criminals alike. Moreover, the presence of police brutality is also significant, as it is embodied in the character of Captain Segura whose bad reputation is based on his torturing prisoners, as well as possessing a cigarette case made of human skin. It is no wonder that Wormold perceives Havana as "a city to visit, not a city to live in" (*Our Man* 54). In addition to the already complex inner political situation, the danger of nuclear annihilation also contributes to the pessimistic atmosphere. Cuba, among many other

countries, found itself caught between the political rivalry of the two world's superpowers. Consequently, there was growing apprehension among people. Greene comically depicted the Cold War threats and their impact on people's psyche and by doing so he rendered the world's state absurd. He achieved this comical effect through the conversation between Wormold and Dr. Hasselbacher, as Wormold expressed his concern about a newly obtained vacuum cleaner called "an Atomic Pile Cleaner" (*Our Man* 4). He was afraid that customers might disapprove of the product's name, and his concern was justified as he did not manage to sell even one.

Still, it is important to emphasize that Greene's main objective was not to portray the world's state during the Cold War period but to mock the British Secret Service and the way it operates. As Judith Adamson suggests, the novel presents an extraordinary Cold War setting where spies engage in fabricated missions, resorting to irrational actions as if they were participating in a game with imaginary figures (144). Wormold's contribution to the Secret Service was based on providing fabricated information, as he was neither in a position to gather the valuable intel that they required nor was he willing to assist such a suspicious organization. The Secret Service accepted and acted upon his reports without previous verification which highlighted their ineptitude, and the entire organization is being laughed at in front of our eyes. The whole endeavor took an interesting and unexpected turn as Wormold's invented agents and reports suddenly appeared to become real.

In one of his reports, Wormold fabricated the existence of a suspicious military installation in Cuba's former province Oriente whose drawings were based on the Atomic Pile. The British Secret Service, accepting his report unquestionably, decides to act upon it. The terrifying drawings significantly worried them: "I believe we may be on to something so big that the H-bomb will become a conventional weapon" (*Our Man* 84). As the British Secret Service acts on Wormold's fictional reports, the situation in Cuba becomes increasingly complex. Wormold demonstrated a certain naivety in assuming that he could get away with his

deception without causing a commotion. As he took things too far by inventing a new weapon that threatened British interests, he consequently experienced accumulating pressure from his superiors. Their pressure made him delve even deeper into his deception, inventing even more stories and agents. The outcome was that his inventions seemingly came to life. Wormold becomes involved in suspicious activities, and as a result, he not only puts his own life at risk but also endangers the lives of people around him. At this point, *Our Man in Havana*, intended to be a comedy, takes on more serious characteristics. While the novel's espionage is fictional, it mirrors the actual possible consequences of deception when international politics is in question. Dangers lurking in the shadows of pre-revolutionary Cuba now emerge into the open.

Wormold survives the attempted assassination during lunch of the European Traders' Association, where he was invited to make a speech. Knowing ahead of what awaits him, he deliberately participated in the meeting, feeling safer by staying close to Carter - another Englishman. However, the same Carter in whom Wormold found a sense of familiarity and safety, turned out to be a murderer. He killed one of Wormold's fabricated agents - an innocent man who had nothing to do with the whole affair. He also killed his one and only friend - Dr Hasselbacher and was now intent on killing Wormold too. Despite the presence of police brutality and numerous mentions of Captain Segura torturing prisoners, it is interesting that, as Hulme argues, all the murders in the novel are committed by Englishmen. This resulted in the shattering of the notion of "English kinship and security", which Greene was eager to challenge (207). Carter killed these people out of duty: "There's no enmity, Wormold. You got too dangerous, that was all. We are only private soldiers, you and I" (*Our Man* 224). However, the act of murder on Wormold's part was performed for different reasons. Wormold did not possess a sense of duty towards his country, nor did he follow any particular ideology that he wanted to protect. His engagement with the Secret Service, the fabrication of reports, as well as the



murder of Carter are all closely linked to his personal reasons. Initially to secure his daughter's future and later to avenge his friend's death and protect the people that he cared about.

In *Our Man in Havana*, Greene highlighted the absurdity that characterizes both spy organizations and the involvement of external forces in the politics of foreign nations. He also critically examined the lengths a person is willing to go when it comes to the loyalty to their country. This can lead them to blindly follow orders from above without questioning the rightness of their actions, let alone the possible negative consequences. In the end, Greene's hero is neither good nor bad. Just as other characters engaged in wrongdoings by fulfilling their duties out of loyalty to their country, Wormold's actions, motivated by different ideals, are equally morally grey. Perhaps the difference between the two opposing sides is best explained by Beatrice, Wormold's secretary:

What do you mean by his country? A flag someone invented two hundred years ago? ... Oh, I forgot. There's something greater than one's country, isn't there? You taught us that with your League of Nations and your Atlantic Pact, NATO and UNO and SEATO. But they don't mean any more to most of us than all the other letters, U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. And we don't believe you any more when you say you want peace and justice and freedom. What kind of freedom? You want your careers.  
(*Our Man* 239)

Ultimately, even though *Our Man in Havana* was written with the intention of ridiculing postwar spy organizations in the form of a comedy, the novel's setting in a Third-World country during a politically unstable period lends it a more profound touch. The satirical portrayal of espionage, comments on the world's politics, and captivating adventure dealing with matters of life and death make the novel suitable for both casual reading and a more serious analysis of the postwar world.

### 2.3 *A Burnt-Out Case*

*A Burnt-Out Case* published in 1961, is a novel set in Belgian Congo, a former Belgian colony in Central Africa today known as The Democratic Republic of Congo. According to J. P. Kulshrestha, Greene went to a leprosarium in Belgian Congo in 1959, a visit documented in the *Congo Journal* from which many aspects of the setting, experience, and medical knowledge acquired at the leprosarium were transferred into the novel (132). In *A Burnt-Out Case*, Greene explores themes of spirituality, isolation, and relationship dynamics between characters of different cultural backgrounds. All of this is done by placing the story in an African colony shortly before it declared independence. As a result, it successfully captures the decaying mood present during a period of Europe's declining influence in former African colonies.

*A Burnt-Out Case* describes relationships between characters that Maria Couto categorized as *colons*, intermediaries, and African natives (127). Greene thus explores the social, spiritual, and political aspects of a colonial society. The term *colon* refers to “Europeans who make a living in non-European societies”, while intermediaries are people who mediate between the present cultures which allows the *colon* to sustain their livelihood while the intermediary gains any possible advantages from the arrangement (Couto 116). In the novel, the *colon* is represented by the European ruling elite from the regional capital Luc. Among them are Rycker, who can be considered as the novel's main antagonist, and his wife Marie. What is more, the *colon* is introduced at the very beginning by mentioning the Otraco company. It is a company that offers services such as the delivery and sale of goods and is known for charging higher prices, causing dissatisfaction among its customers. The intermediary here is the missionary; it mediates between the European ruling elite and Africans from the village (Couto 129). The missionary has an important role as he strives for the betterment of living conditions in the village, which is apparent from its partnership with Doctor Colin whose sole ambition is to eradicate leprosy. Couto argues that when it comes to interactions between the African and

the *colon*, it is portrayed as only existing within the activities of the mission (130). Furthermore, the only prominent African character is Deo Gratias whom we come to know through his interactions with Querry. African people in this novel are briefly mentioned and are placed on the margins, so to speak, as opposed to the European characters.

As Beatriz Valverde Jiménez suggests, the novel's societal structure serves as a metaphor for the imposing dominance of European civilization over African one. Greene uses it to depict the impact of colonialism on the native population, critiquing the European colonialist system (114). The relationship between Europeans and Africans is marked by a significant imbalance in power dynamics. This is evident in the employment of African men as servants, where they are regarded as their 'boys' (*A Burnt-Out* 18). The term 'boy' is a racial slur used to refer to young black men. It does not only suggest their age but also the possibility of them being "stupid and arrogant" (Barber). It is used to represent black men as subordinate, and thus its usage is quite problematic. However, we can notice that relationships between the two culturally and racially different communities is not solely based on emphasizing their differences. While some Europeans separate themselves from the locals by encouraging social stratification, there are also individuals who recognize the authenticity of African culture. This demonstrates the presence of goodness within humanity despite its numerous shortcomings.

According to Jiménez, Greene critically examines the impact of colonization firstly through the perspectives of Doctor Colin and Querry, who on several occasions express their critical attitude toward the presence of Europeans on the African continent. Additionally, Greene's critique is manifested through the portrayal of European characters who uphold the hegemonic system in a negative light (115). Dr. Colin's critique is of particular importance because he directly challenged the impact of colonialism. While unpacking a new apparatus for treating patients at home, he explained to Querry why he opted for this location over the dispensary:

It only needed someone, in malice or ignorance, to suggest that the new machines were intended to torture the patients and some fools would break into the dispensary and destroy them. Yet in our century you could hardly call them fools. Hola Camp, Sharpeville, and Algiers had justified all possible belief in European cruelty (*A Burnt-Out* 49).

What we witness here is the fear of the unfamiliar that native people have, motivated by negative experiences of abuse that they have endured. Even small circulating rumors could ignite their fear. However, if we consider the cause of their mistrust, we can see this as a logical outcome.

Regarding another way in which Greene criticizes colonization, the negative portrayal of Europeans is manifested through Rycker, Father Thomas, and Parkinson. As Jiménez says, Rycker and Father Thomas have lived in the colony for a longer period but are nevertheless firmly attached to Western customs and feel disconnected from the native culture (116). Believing their way of life is better and superior to other lifestyles, they make no effort to learn about the other culture and try instead to impose their ideals on the locals. This in turn sets them apart from the rest of the community and makes them suffer from loneliness. Parkinson, on the other hand, is intent on reinforcing stereotypical images of Africa despite being aware of their inaccuracy. He chooses to support such false views due to chasing recognition, whereas the truth does not matter to him. He is unable to attract as many readers with genuine information as he can with fabricated rumors. The harmful impact of Parkinson's stereotypical representation of Africa manifests in igniting people's perception of an exotic and adventurous place filled with suffering. People lack knowledge about the African continent and, according to Jiménez, perceive the local population as “the Other” (121). The locals thus remain marginalized and underestimated in the eyes of the West.

Together with the negative aspects of European colonization of Africa, Greene portrays the positive using characters with different ambitions than those mentioned above. These are Doctor Colin and the priests in the village. Priests have a significant role throughout the novel as they seem to contribute to the development of African regions: “The support of the leprosy was the responsibility of the Order; the doctor’s salary and the cost of medicine were paid by the State” (*A Burnt-Out* 17). In correspondence with their great responsibility, they take on various roles that span from educating the local population to engaging in construction projects throughout the village. What is more, the priests’ attitudes toward religious matters are also unusual. As stated by Jiménez, they work closely together with Doctor Colin who considers himself an atheist. Additionally, they accept the natives’ interpretation of Christianity which is described as the blending of beliefs in Jesus and Nzambe and nevertheless consider them valid members of the Christian community (119). As we have seen in numerous parts of the novel, the priests are more concerned with their duty of helping the African community than with spreading the word of God. Consequently, they do not interfere in people’s relationships, turning a blind eye to situations that would normally be condemned by Christian morals: “The fathers were too busy to bother themselves with what the Church considered sin” (*A Burnt-Out* 149). Such attitudes are not always welcome as we come across disapproval. Father Thomas, for instance, disagrees with the way his colleagues operate, emphasizing the lack of fulfilling their religious duties which he believes should be their primary focus. He is afraid of losing his faith, and this attitude alienates him from the rest of the community.

Despite the priests not being primarily focused on the spiritual aspects of their duties, *A Burnt-Out Case* is still considered a religious novel. Suffering from emotional numbness, Query, the main protagonist, tries to escape the burdens of life by traveling to a godforsaken area in Central Africa. This isolated world filled with suffering and disease matches his inner state of mind. However, through relationships that he established there, Query slowly learns to

appreciate life. In the end, according to Doctor Colin's belief, he was cured of his state of disinterest, but the absurd nature of his death makes his journey to recovery seem absurd as well. As Greene explained, the novel was written as “an attempt to give dramatic expression to various types of belief, half-belief, and non-belief” (qtd. in Couto 63).

In *A Burnt-Out Case* Greene demonstrates Africa from the European point of view. African people and their culture are regarded as the Other and, as stated by Couto, through the contact between two different communities, Greene grapples with historical biases and unlearning of the same which enables him to connect with fundamental aspects of human existence (118). Furthermore, Greene's representation of Africa in *A Burnt-Out Case* is rather complex as the novel deals with many serious questions regarding the political, economic, and spiritual aspects of the African colony at the brink of gaining independence. It also provides us with the complexity of human relationships, especially between people of different races. We can argue that this novel shows the primary focus of European colonizers: the exploitation of their colonies. By eventually losing their power and position in the world after the Second World War, many colonizing countries had to give up their overseas territories. Such was the case with the Belgian Congo portrayed in this novel, as it gained independence only a year after Greene visited the country in 1959.

### 3. Conclusion

The period following the Second World War, known as the postwar period, was characterized by substantial transformations that affected both the landscapes and societies worldwide. Old certainties no longer existed, and the establishment of new norms was needed. As Britain experienced numerous internal and external changes that significantly affected the country, many postwar writers attempted to capture the atmosphere by exploring various

aspects of the newly shaped world. Among them was Graham Greene, one of the best British novelists of the twentieth century.

In this paper, I have attempted to analyze Greene's three novels *The End of the Affair*, *Our Man in Havana*, and *A Burnt-Out Case* in the light of the historical, political, and cultural context of the world they portray. The novels were all written long after the conclusion of the Second World War and each of them successfully portrays the ruinous state of the world their characters inhabit. Despite belonging to postwar fiction, *The End of the Affair* is set in wartime London. Following the love affair between Maurice Bendrix and Sarah Miles, Greene explored themes of human relationships, emotions, and faith in a world experiencing the destructive power of war. The turbulent dynamics of the characters' relationships, as well as the complexities of their emotions, correlate with the state of their war-affected world. In *Our Man in Havana*, Greene satirized the British Secret Service by setting the narrative in Cuba during the Cold War. The result was a light-hearted work of fiction that, despite its tone, did not fail to include the political issues that defined its setting. In *A Burnt-Out Case*, the isolated village in Central Africa filled with disease served as a suitable background for the journey of the emotionally burnt-out main protagonist, Querry. Following his journey, Greene captured the decaying mood that accompanied the decline of European colonialism. Additionally, he portrayed the power dynamics between people of different races and cultural backgrounds, providing many problematic aspects that I addressed in this paper.

The three novels discussed here demonstrate the way Graham Greene perceived the postwar era. It is a world in a ruinous state, characterized by uncertainty, suspicion, and an emphasized fragility of human life. Each of the novels explores issues typical for the war and postwar period, including the devastating nature of war, the ambiance of fading imperialism, and the uncertainties and absurdities of the Cold War era. We have also seen how Greene often

delved into religious and philosophical questions, making his fiction not only captivating but also thought-provoking.



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## 5. The Postwar World in Graham Greene's Novels: Summary and key words

This final paper sets out to analyze the portrayals of the postwar world in the novels *The End of the Affair* (1951), *Our Man in Havana* (1958), and *A Burnt-Out Case* (1961) written by Graham Greene. The paper analyses wartime London, the aftermath of the Second World War and how the everyday lives of people changed in *The End of the Affair*, the atmosphere of the Cold War in *Our Man in Havana*, and the weakening of colonial power and the state of emotional aridity in *A Burnt-Out Case*.

Key words: Graham Greene, postwar, Cold War, faith, *The End of the Affair*, *Our Man in Havana*, *A Burnt-Out Case*

## 6. Poslijeratni svijet u romanima Grahama Greenea: Sažetak i ključne riječi

Ovaj završni rad nastoji istražiti prikaz poslijeratnog svijeta u romanima *The End of the Affair* (1951), *Our Man in Havana* (1958) i *A Burnt-Out Case* (1961) autora Grahama Greenea. Rad analizira ratni London, posljedice Drugog svjetskog rata i kako se svakodnevni život ljudi promijenio u *The End of the Affair*, zatim hladnoratovsku atmosferu u *Our Man in Havana*, te slabljenje kolonijalne vlasti i stanje emocionalne ispraznosti u *A Burnt-Out Case*.

Ključne riječi: Graham Greene, poslijeratni, Hladni rat, vjera, *The End of the Affair*, *Our Man in Havana*, *A Burnt-Out Case*