

CHAPTER V

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Graham Greene is a major contemporary writer who made valuable experiments with novel as a genre. Though he was a great critic and playwright, his reputation chiefly rests on his novels. Fear, pity, violence, pursuit, man's search for salvation and God's love for man are the recurring themes of his novels. Greene's obsession is with evil existing in this God-forsaken world, but still there is a hope of redemption. But Greene's fictionalization of real life situations is very sympathetic. He tries to explore weaknesses, limitations as well as potentialities of the modern man who is neither good, nor bad but good and bad. In keeping with Catholic doctrine Greene believes that man's spiritual degradation is due to the loss of faith in God, in human values and he needs divine grace. He speaks of the loss of religious sense. Violence characterizes his novels - sometimes external, sometimes internal. He even wrote thrillers with murder, suicide and betrayal as their ingredients. But he makes the use of the detective technique in his serious novels also. He is a skilled novelist in the craftsmanship of fiction, the plots of the novels are well structured, the characterization well defined and he chose settings for his novels to accord with the theme of the novels. His settings are cosmopolitan. His sympathetic approach reduces the sharpness of the situations in his novels. An acute observation, extremely intense style and

the sensitivity to atmosphere are his assets as a novelist.

The Power and the Glory, set in the primitive landscape of Mexico of The Lawless Roads during a time of political strife and religious persecution during the nineteen twenties, shows Greene's skill in combining the detective technique with the religious theme. The novel symbolizes the struggle between the state and the church represented by the lieutenant and the priest. The priest, though he has some nobler traits in his personality, has some evil in him and shows a strong desire to overcome it. Religion is banned in the state but he does not surrender to the state and he is wanted by the police. The novel handles a pursuit theme and the three meetings between the lieutenant and the priest are symmetrically arranged. Finally the priest is arrested by the lieutenant but still he feels some vacuum. At the deeper level the novel handles the theme of salvation and assures the promise that religion will continue to be a great force which is symbolized by the arrival of another priest. Such a serious, religious thought is fused with the detective technique. The novelist makes skilful use of suspense, melodrama, and tension which are the prerequisites of the detective novel. With the use of monologue and dreams which reflect the introspection of the characters, Greene shows the self detection of the characters. The plot construction and the characterization are intricate. The novel is the best example of Greene's artistry in bringing together the serious and the detective. The detective

novel is given a psychological and a rational dimension.

The novel, A Burnt-Out Case, springs from Greene's visit to Mexico. The novel is set in a very different background, at a leproserie. The novel is social in tone and indirectly points out the deadening influence of the civilization which makes even a successful man like Querry a spiritual leper. Though he flies away from this type of life, he is pursued by the representatives of the society and finally Querry is misunderstood by Rycker and is killed by him when the erection of the roof tree is going on. Querry thus becomes a part of the Christian myth. The keynote of the novel is mystery and it is aroused through the reactions of the characters towards Querry. The novel is social and religious. It fuses together the detective technique and the serious theme. The novelist attempts to detect the evil in religion, society and man himself. To explore this, the novelist uses dreams, allegories, images which intensify the effect of the detective elements.

The Human Factor is the superb example of Greene's skill in combining the serious theme with the detective technique. The novel is based on the life in the secret service field. But it is serious in tone as the secret service field is used as a background to throw light on the malpractices in the contemporary world. The spiritual degradation of the workers is brought to light along with the inefficiency and irresponsibility of the

officers. The novel is structured as a detective novel. It appeals to curiosity. The interest is well sustained and the plot is complicated but well managed. The characters are within the purpose of the author but still maintain their identity. The novel gives full scope to all the elements of the detective novel: tension, dramatic effects, suspense, mystery, horror. The novel is full of irony and cutting remarks which intensify the effect of the detective elements.

The handling of the detective technique shows Greene's similarity in one aspect or the other with his predecessors; still he is distinct from all of them because he gives the detective novel an intellectual glamour, psychological depth and social and moral questioning. His explanation of every action is akin to Vidocq's technique, his rational explanation of the puzzle - without making it an analytical argument reminds us of Doyle. He shows close affinity with De Quincey as in The Human Factor the mystery is explained by the criminal himself. The art of characterization reminds us of Charles Dickens who made his characters play the proposed role but still maintained their identity. As a detective novelist, he once again reminds us of Chesterton as he believes that criminals are human beings, both good and bad. Like Chesterton he gives more weightage to character portrayal. Dorothy Sayers tried to bridge the gap between the detective novel and the literary novel. Greene's

novels also are the examples of the combination of the detective and the literary elements. But Greene differs from Sayers in his purpose. His main interest is not to write purely detective novels but to use this technique to make his presentation entertaining.

The contemporary practitioners in this genre include Margot Bennet who writes at her best with wit and elegance, Edward Grierson whose best work stems directly from Iles, Shelley Smith, Patrick Hamilton, John Bringham and several Americans among whom Patrica Highsmith deserves mention. They prove that though the trend of the detective hero has gone, still it is compensated by what has been gained in characterization, in psychological analysis and realistic approach. The genre has not yet exhausted its vitality or capacity to surprise. The Detection Club of London, The Mystery Writers of America, Crime Writers' Association in England and America exist to maintain and improve the standards of plot construction, characterization, technical accuracy and these clubs and associations inspire the writers of the detective novel to become their members.