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นางสาวเปรมวดี แยมเหล็ก

006997

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A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE NOVELS OF GRAHAM GREENE

Miss Premvadee Yampeka

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for the Degree of Master of Arts.

T. Nilanidhi

.....
Dean of the Graduate School

Thesis Committee

[Signature] Chairman
[Signature]
[Signature]
[Signature]

Thesis Supervisor

Mr. D.D. Lawson

หัวข้อวิทยานิพนธ์

การศึกษาแนวโน้มของแกรฮัม กรีน ในเชิงวิจารณ์

ชื่อ

นางสาวเปรมวดี แยมเพกา แผนกวิชา ภาษาอังกฤษ

ปีการศึกษา

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บทคัดย่อ



แกรฮัม กรีน เป็นนักเขียนคนสำคัญคนหนึ่งในศตวรรษที่ยี่สิบ งานของเขาเป็นที่นิยมอ่านกันอย่างกว้างขวาง เขาสนใจสังคมและปัญหาของปัจเจกบุคคลในสังคมในสมัยปัจจุบัน ภูมิหลังของงานของเขานั้น ส่วนมากได้แก่ประเทศที่มีความวุ่นวายทางการเมืองและสังคม เป็นคนว่า เวียดนาม สเปซในสมัยสงครามกลางเมือง เม็กซิโกในสมัยปฏิวัติ ออสเตรเลียหลังสงครามโลกครั้งที่สอง นอกจากนี้ กรีนยังสนใจบุคลิกภาพของมนุษย์และความสามารถของมนุษย์ในการที่จะทำดีและทำชั่วอีกด้วย วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ที่จะศึกษาแนวความคิดที่สำคัญของแกรฮัม กรีน และศึกษานวนิยายของเขาในเชิงวิจารณ์

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Name Miss Premvadee Yampeka
 Department ^{of} English

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ABSTRACT

Graham Greene is one of the most widely read twentieth century serious writers. He is concerned with society and with the problems of individuals in society in the present age. The backgrounds to his novels include many of the major areas of political and social turmoil of this century, for example : Vietnam, Spain during the Civil War, Europe during the Depression, and Revolutionary Latin America. Greene is especially interested in the personality of man and in his capacity for good and evil. The purpose of this thesis is to make a critical study of Greene's novels and their major themes.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a critical study of the novels of Graham Greene. It is clear that Graham Greene is essentially an original writer ; there are, however, certain significant influences on him. Therefore, in the first chapter the thesis will trace these influences on the writer. Then, a study will be made of his themes and his characters. As he is a Catholic writer whose religious belief deeply colours his work, it is also essential to study why he becomes a Catholic and how Catholicism has affected his work. The final chapter will be a study of his techniques.

The main reason that the writer of this thesis undertook this study of the novels of Graham Greene is the fact that he is a Catholic writer whose religious belief influences his work. It was felt that such a study would provide a useful mental stimulus and contrast for a Buddhist student.

A further aspect of Graham Greene that is of particular interest is his reaction to the more unpleasant aspects of the modern world. He says that life is miserable because evil is walking the world and because human nature is not black and white but black and grey.

Seeing the world as a horrible place, Greene realizes that his function as a writer is an important one, and he realizes that his responsibility is a serious one. Graham Greene wrote to Elizabeth Bowen and V.S. Pritchett :

First: I would say there are certain human duties I owe in common with the greengrocer or the clerk - that of supporting my family if I have a family, of not robbing the poor, the widow or the orphan, of dying if the authorities demand it (it is the only way to remain independent ; the conscientious objector is forced to become a teacher in order to justify himself).

These are our primitive duties as human beings
 I would say that if we do less than these,
 we are so much the less human beings and there-
 fore so much the less likely to be artists.
 But are there any special duties I owe to my
 fellow victims bound for the Loire? I would
 like to imagine there are none, but I fear there
 are at least two duties the novelists owe - to
 tell the truth as he sees it and to accept no
 special privileges from the state.¹

By "truth" Greene means that the novelist has to describe accurately, and that the authenticity of his observations depends on the validity of the emotion he is describing.² As a Catholic he maintains that he has to write about good as well as evil and it is the responsibility of the artist to awaken sympathetic comprehension not only for the evil, but ^{also} for the "smug, complacent, successful characters."³

Greene also says that "Sooner or later the strenuous note of social responsibility, of Marxism, of the greatest material good of the greatest number must die in the ear, and then perhaps certain memories will come back, of long purposeless discussions in the moonlight about life and art..."⁴ For Greene the writer "just as much as the Christian Church, is the defender of the individual."⁵ Greene's

¹Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene, and V.S. Pritchett, Why Do I Write? (London, 1948), pp. 29 - 30.

²A.A. DeVitis, Graham Greene (New York : 1964), p. 40.

³Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene, and V.S. Pritchett, op. cit. p. 48.

⁴Ibid., p. 49.

⁵Ibid., p. 49.

own answer to Fascism and Communism is his Roman Catholicism. And it is his Roman Catholicism that informs his novels. Rex Warner concurs with Greene's analysis of the function of the artist in society:

This is what may be called the political task of literature to hold the mirror up to nature, to show men how they live and what is meant by their own words and manners, to investigate everything under the sun, to retain the tradition of the past, and to explore the future, to instruct, to criticize, to delight, to create and to reveal. In these activities, as in all others, the writer may be greatly helped or greatly hindered by the society in which he lives. The more he can co-operate with this society, the happier, as a rule, he will be. Yet, though his work is conditioned by his social group, it is not determined by it. And there is a sense in which it is true to say that his work must be, whether he is conscious of it or not, always disruptive of any state organization. For his loyalties as a writer are to something wider and deeper than any state can be.⁶

Graham Greene believes that the way out of "the waste land" is belief in God. He insists on the doctrines of his church as a possible answer to the power and violence that characterize the political ideologies of our times. His personal convictions are matters of individual belief; yet what he says has universal meaning.

⁶Rex Warner, "Freedom in Literary and Artistic Creation," in Freedom and Culture (New York, 1951), pp. 210 - 11.