GREM GRINNING “THE QUIET AMERICAN” ROMANIDA BEG‘UBORLIK, ARALASHMASLIK VA ISHONCHSIZ HIKOYACHI MUAMMOSI

3-sho‘ba. Adabiyotshunoslik, badiiy matn tahlili va adabiy ta’limning zamonaviy yo‘nalishlari

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Annotatsiya

Maqolada ingliz yozuvchisi Grem Grinning 1955-yilda nashr etilgan “The Quiet American” (“Sokin amerikalik”) romanida beg‘uborlik (innocence), voqealarga aralashmaslik (non-involvement) va ishonchsiz hikoyachi muammolari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda roman hikoyachisi – ingliz jurnalisti Tomas Fauler o‘zini “hech bir tomonni olmaydigan” kuzatuvchi sifatida ko‘rsatishi, ammo voqealar rivojida uning shaxsiy manfaati, rashki va axloqiy tanlovi qanday ochilib borishi narratologik va germenevtik usullar asosida yoritiladi. Amerikalik Olden Paylning kitobiy, nazariy “Sharq” tasavvuri, uning ezgu niyatlari zo‘ravonlikka olib kelishi hamda vyetnamlik qiz Fuong obrazi orqali “ovozsiz Sharq” muammosi E. Saidning sharqshunoslik konsepsiyasi bilan bog‘liq holda ko‘rib chiqiladi. Tahlil natijasida romanda beg‘uborlik axloqiy fazilat emas, balki xavfli ko‘rlik sifatida talqin etilishi, aralashmaslik esa o‘zi ham oqibatlarga ega bo‘lgan pozitsiya ekani asoslab beriladi. Shuningdek, romanning retrospektiv, iqrornomaga o‘xshash tuzilishi hikoyachining o‘zini oqlash strategiyasi sifatida talqin qilinadi va uning axloqiy mazmuni hikoyachi

aytgan gaplar bilan voqealar ko‘rsatgan haqiqat o‘rtasidagi tafovutda yuzaga kelishi ko‘rsatiladi. Maqola so‘ngida asarni oliy ta’limda ingliz adabiyotini o‘qitishda qo‘llash bo‘yicha tavsiyalar beriladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: Grem Grin, “The Quiet American”, beg‘uborlik, aralashmaslik, ishonchsiz hikoyachi, sharqshunoslik, axloqiy tanlov, siyosiy roman.

НЕВИННОСТЬ, НЕВМЕШАТЕЛЬСТВО И НЕНАДЁЖНЫЙ РАССКАЗЧИК В РОМАНЕ ГРЭМА ГРИНА «THE QUIET AMERICAN»

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Аннотация

В статье анализируются проблемы невинности (innocence), невмешательства (non-involvement) и ненадёжного рассказчика в романе английского писателя Грэма Грина «The Quiet American» («Тихий американец»), опубликованном в 1955 году. На основе нарратологического и герменевтического методов рассматривается, как рассказчик романа, английский журналист Томас Фаулер, представляет себя наблюдателем, который «не принимает ничьей стороны», и как по ходу повествования раскрываются его личный интерес, ревность и нравственный выбор. Книжное, теоретическое представление американца Олдена Пайла о «Востоке»,

превращение его благих намерений в насилие, а также проблема «безмолвного Востока», воплощённая в образе вьетнамской девушки Фуонг, исследуются в связи с концепцией ориентализма Э. Саида. В результате анализа обосновывается, что невинность трактуется в романе не как нравственное достоинство, а как опасная слепота, а невмешательство само оказывается позицией, имеющей последствия. Ретроспективная, исповедальная структура романа интерпретируется как стратегия самооправдания рассказчика, а его нравственный смысл возникает в разрыве между словами Фаулера и тем, что показывают события. В заключение даются рекомендации по использованию романа при преподавании английской литературы в вузе.

Ключевые слова: Грэм Грин, «Тихий американец», невинность, невмешательство, ненадёжный рассказчик, ориентализм, нравственный выбор, политический роман.

"INNOCENCE IS LIKE A DUMB LEPER": INNOCENCE, NON-INVOLVEMENT AND THE UNRELIABLE NARRATOR IN GRAHAM GREENE'S THE QUIET AMERICAN

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Abstract

This article examines the problems of innocence, non-involvement and narrative unreliability in Graham Greene's novel The Quiet American (1955). Using narratological and hermeneutic methods, the study traces how the narrator, the

English journalist Thomas Fowler, presents himself as a detached observer who "does not take sides", and how the narrative gradually exposes the personal interest, jealousy and moral choice behind that pose. The American Alden Pyle's bookish, theoretical vision of "the East", the transformation of his good intentions into violence, and the problem of the "silent East" embodied in the Vietnamese woman Phuong are discussed in relation to Edward Said's concept of Orientalism. The analysis argues that the novel presents innocence not as a moral virtue but as a dangerous form of blindness, and that non-involvement is itself a position with consequences. The article concludes with practical recommendations for teaching the novel in university courses on English literature and literary text analysis.

Keywords: Graham Greene, The Quiet American, innocence, non-involvement, unreliable narrator, Orientalism, moral choice, political novel.

Introduction

Graham Greene (1904–1991) wrote *The Quiet American* between 1952 and 1955, drawing on the years he spent in Indochina as a correspondent during the French war against the Viet Minh (Sherry, 1994). Published in 1955, the novel anticipated with remarkable accuracy the logic of the later American involvement in Vietnam, and for that reason it has often been read as a political prophecy. Yet the book is far more than a political pamphlet. Its moral force comes from the way it is told: the story of the young American Alden Pyle is narrated, after Pyle's death, by Thomas Fowler, an ageing English reporter who has lost his lover Phuong to Pyle and who, as the reader discovers only near the end, has helped to arrange Pyle's murder.

Greene's dedication to the novel insists that "this is a story and not a piece of history", and the epigraphs he chose – from Arthur Hugh Clough ("action / Is a most dangerous thing") and Byron ("For killing bodies, and for saving souls, / All propagated with the best intentions") – announce the two central themes: the danger of action undertaken with good intentions, and the temptation to avoid action altogether

(Greene, 1955). The present article investigates how these themes are embodied in the novel's narrative structure.

The **aim** of the study is to show that the novel's treatment of innocence and non-involvement cannot be separated from the unreliability of its narrator. The **objectives** are: (1) to analyse Fowler's creed of non-involvement and its collapse; (2) to interpret Pyle's "innocence" as a form of ideological blindness; (3) to consider Phuong as a figure of the silenced East; (4) to examine the retrospective structure of the narrative as a strategy of self-justification; and (5) to suggest ways of using the novel in university literature teaching.

Materials and Methods

The material of the study is the full text of *The Quiet American* (Greene, 1955). The methodological framework combines W. C. Booth's concept of the unreliable narrator, whose norms diverge from those of the implied author (Booth, 1961), J. Phelan's rhetorical approach to character narration, which distinguishes misreporting, misreading and misregarding (Phelan, 2005), and E. Said's theory of Orientalism as a Western discourse that represents the East rather than allowing it to speak (Said, 1978). Biographical and critical studies of Greene (Lodge, 1966; Sherry, 1994) and the author's own account of the novel's genesis (Greene, 1980) were also consulted. The methods applied are close reading, narratological analysis and contextual interpretation.

Results and Discussion

From the first chapter Fowler defines himself through a refusal. When the French police inspector Vigot questions him about Pyle's death, he answers: "I'm not involved. Not involved", and explains that this "had been an article of my creed. The human condition being what it was, let them fight, let them love, let them murder, I would not be involved" (Greene, 1955). He prefers the title of "reporter" to that of "correspondent" precisely because a reporter only records: "I wrote what I saw: I took no action – even an opinion is a kind of action." Later, during the night spent with Pyle

in a watch-tower, he repeats: “I’m a reporter. I’m not *engagé*... I don’t take sides. I’ll be still reporting, whoever wins.”

The novel systematically undermines this position. Fowler’s detachment is first shown to be emotionally false: his long arguments with Pyle about politics are inseparable from his fear of losing Phuong. It is then shown to be morally untenable. After the bomb explosion in the square, which Fowler believes Pyle helped to organise, Fowler sees a mother with “what was left of her baby in her lap” and Pyle looking at “the wet on his shoes”: “‘What’s that?’ ‘Blood,’ I said. ‘Haven’t you ever seen it before?’ He said, ‘I must get them cleaned before I see the Minister’” (Greene, 1955). Shortly afterwards the Communist agent Mr. Heng asks for Fowler’s help, and Fowler recalls the words of the French pilot Captain Trouin: “Sooner or later... one has to take sides. If one is to remain human.” By agreeing to invite Pyle to dinner and, if Pyle accepts, to “take a book to your window as though you want to catch the light”, Fowler becomes an accomplice in Pyle’s death. The reporter who claimed that even an opinion is an action ends by performing the most decisive action in the book.

If Fowler represents the illusion of non-involvement, Pyle represents the danger of involvement guided by abstraction. Pyle arrives in Saigon with his arms full of books on the Far East, above all the works of the fictional political theorist York Harding, who “wrote that what the East needed was a Third Force” (Greene, 1955). Fowler sums up the consequences in his outburst to Vigot: “They killed him because he was too innocent to live. He was young and ignorant and silly and he got involved... He never saw anything he hadn’t heard in a lecture-hall... When he saw a dead body he couldn’t even see the wounds.”

Greene’s most memorable image of innocence comes when Fowler instinctively follows Pyle into a brothel to protect him: “Innocence always calls mutely for protection when we would be so much wiser to guard ourselves against it: innocence is like a dumb leper who has lost his bell, wandering the world, meaning no harm”

(Greene, 1955). The simile reverses the traditional moral value of innocence. The leper is not guilty, but he is contagious; he means no harm, but without his bell he cannot warn others of the danger he carries. Pyle's innocence is precisely of this kind: sincere, well-meaning and lethal. After the explosion he says of the victims: "They were only war casualties... It was a pity, but you can't always hit your target", and adds: "In a way you could say they died for Democracy." Fowler's earlier remark – "God save us always from the innocent and the good" – thus acquires its full weight. As D. Lodge observes, Greene's fiction repeatedly tests conventional virtues by placing them in extreme situations where their consequences become visible (Lodge, 1966).

Between the two men stands Phuong, whose name, Fowler tells us at the very beginning, "means Phoenix, but nothing nowadays is fabulous and nothing rises from its ashes" (Greene, 1955). Phuong is presented almost entirely through the desires of the two Westerners. Fowler describes her through images of birds, fragility and opium; Pyle wants to "protect" her by marriage and a respectable American life. In one revealing scene Pyle proposes to her through Fowler, who is forced to act as interpreter, and the woman being discussed becomes the least audible person in the room.

In E. Said's terms, Phuong is an example of the Orient as represented rather than self-representing (Said, 1978). Both men claim to know what she needs, and both read her silence as a confirmation of their own views. Significantly, the novel does not resolve this problem by giving Phuong a voice of her own; instead, it makes the reader increasingly aware of how little the narrator actually knows about her. Fowler admits that "one never knows another human being", and the last chapter, in which Phuong happily returns to him and talks about skyscrapers and the Empire State Building, leaves open whether her choices reflect love, pragmatism or simple survival. The figure of Phuong thus mirrors the larger political situation: Vietnam itself is the object of rival Western projects, while the voices of the Vietnamese remain at the margins of the narrative.

The novel begins after Pyle's death and then moves back in time, so that the reader receives the whole story through the retrospective consciousness of a man who has something to hide. This structure turns the novel into an implicit confession. In Phelan's terms, Fowler is not unreliable in reporting events – his descriptions of Saigon, the battle at Phat Diem and the explosion in the square are precise – but he is unreliable in regarding and evaluating them (Phelan, 2005). He insists that his decision to betray Pyle is motivated by the deaths of civilians, yet he himself raises the suspicion that jealousy played a part. The table below summarises the tension between Fowler's stated and implied motives.

Episode	Fowler's stated position	What the narrative suggests
Questioning by Vigot (Part One)	"I'm not involved. Not involved."	He is already involved: he has given the signal that led to Pyle's death.
Night in the watch-tower	"I'm a reporter... I don't take sides."	His political arguments are entangled with his rivalry over Phuong.
Letter to his wife about divorce	Presents himself as honest with Phuong.	He misrepresents his wife's refusal; Pyle later accuses him of "faked evidence".
Meeting with Mr. Heng	Acts to stop further civilian deaths.	Pyle's removal also returns Phuong to him.
Final chapter	"Everything had gone right with me since he had died."	"...how I wished there existed someone to whom I could say that I was sorry."

Table 1. Fowler's stated positions and the implied meaning of key episodes

The final sentence of the novel is the key to this structure. Having received the telegram that allows him to marry Phuong, Fowler reflects: "Everything had gone right with me since he had died, but how I wished there existed someone to whom I could say that I was sorry" (Greene, 1955). The confession is addressed to no one; Fowler, who declares that "God exists only for leader-writers", has no confessor, and the

reader is placed in that empty position. W. C. Booth notes that the effect of an unreliable narrator depends on the reader's recognition of a gap between the narrator's values and those of the implied author (Booth, 1961). In *The Quiet American* that gap is the space in which the moral judgement of the novel takes place: Fowler condemns Pyle's innocence, but the narrative also condemns Fowler's detachment and its convenient end.

In his memoir Greene recalled the Indochina experiences from which the novel grew, which helps to explain why its political observations are so concrete (Greene, 1980). It is important, however, that the novel does not simply set a wise Englishman against a naive American. Both men damage those around them; the difference is that Pyle acts out of abstract principle, while Fowler acts out of a mixture of conscience and self-interest that he can never fully disentangle.

The Quiet American is a productive text for university courses in English literature and literary text analysis. Its moderate length, clear plot and accessible language make it suitable for upper-intermediate and advanced learners, while its narrative complexity supports the development of critical reading skills. Several tasks may be recommended. First, students can compare Fowler's statements about himself with his actions, compiling a table similar to Table 1, which trains them to identify narrative unreliability. Second, a close reading of the "dumb leper" simile and the epigraphs from Clough and Byron allows students to discuss how imagery carries ethical meaning. Third, the absence of Phuong's own voice can be explored through a creative writing task in which students retell a key scene from her point of view and then discuss the limits of such an exercise. Finally, the novel can be compared with its two film adaptations (1958 and 2002), which treat the political message very differently, and with Vietnamese and Uzbek texts about war, encouraging intercultural discussion.

Conclusion

The analysis leads to the following conclusions. First, in *The Quiet American* innocence is presented not as a virtue but as a dangerous blindness: Pyle's good intentions, shaped by books rather than experience, lead directly to the death of civilians. Second, the novel exposes non-involvement as an illusion; Fowler's creed of detachment collapses under the pressure of events, and the narrator who claims that even an opinion is an action finally becomes an accomplice to murder. Third, the figure of Phuong reveals how the East is represented and spoken for by Western characters, a problem the novel makes visible without resolving. Fourth, the retrospective, confessional structure of the narrative turns Fowler into an unreliable narrator whose self-justification the reader must evaluate, so that the moral meaning of the novel is produced in the gap between what Fowler says and what the story shows. These features make the novel a valuable text both for literary scholarship and for developing critical reading skills in English literature courses. Further research may compare Greene's treatment of the Vietnam theme with later American war fiction and with Uzbek prose about war.

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