

“I’ll still be reporting, whoever wins”:

Journalism and the Media in Graham Greene’s *Stamboul Train*, *It’s a Battlefield*, and *The Quiet American*

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Abstract

This is an examination of Graham Greene's use and characterization of journalists in three of his novels. Greene uses journalist characters as vehicles to critique the practice of journalism and the media in three novels in particular: *Stamboul Train* (1932), *It's a Battlefield* (1934), and *The Quiet American* (1955). This study examines the influence and manifestation of journalism and, more broadly, the mass media in these three novels. Through an analysis of Greene's journalist protagonists, I investigate the complex relationship between writer and subject in his novels, his portrayal of the mass media, and the various themes attached to Greene's conception of journalism and the role of the journalist in society. In these novels, Greene critiques the function of journalism in society, the responsibility of the journalist in a democratic society, and the misuse of this power by journalists and editors alike. Observing and participating in the world, Greene's journalist protagonists find themselves in situations where they must choose between involvement and neutrality, attachment and detachment, and, often, damnation and salvation. As a renowned journalist himself, Greene travelled to troubled places to report on revolution, social change, individual and collective suffering, thereby experiencing situations both physically dangerous and morally disturbing. I argue that Greene ultimately adopts a less stringent view of journalistic observation, understanding that knowledge itself is an interpretive achievement. His observations in this regard are crucial to an understanding of Greene and increasingly important in a media dominated world where the role of the journalist is increasingly critical.

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Introduction

Graham Greene uses journalists as vehicles to critique the practice of journalism and the media in three of his novels in particular: *Stamboul Train* (1932), *It's a Battlefield* (1934), and *The Quiet American* (1955). This study examines the influence and manifestation of journalism and, more broadly, the mass media in these novels. Through an analysis of Greene's journalist protagonists, this thesis investigates the complex relationship between writer and subject in his novels, his portrayal of the mass media, and the themes attached to the role of the journalist in society. Greene critiques, in these novels, the place of journalism in the architecture of democracy. There is also a sociological dimension to the use of journalists in Greene's fiction, as he examines the broader power structures attached to the media and the often damaging effect journalists can have on the pursuit of social justice. Greene's novels feature an array of journalists, and his fiction shows an insider's knowledge of news gathering and dissemination that is unmatched in twentieth-century literature.

Greene's first stable job was as sub-editor with the *Nottingham Journal* in November 1925, from which he moved rapidly to *The London Times*. Despite a bad experience in Nottingham, Greene could "think of no better career for a young novelist than to be for some years a sub-editor of a conservative newspaper: a writer with a sprawling style is unlikely to emerge from such an apprenticeship" (*Conversations* 23). For the rest of his life, through habitual journalistic travel, Greene took on reporting assignments for a variety of publications, providing newspapers and magazines with dispatches from around the world. Like other contemporary novelists who travelled a great deal, especially Evelyn Waugh, George Orwell, and Joseph Conrad, Greene chose journalism to earn a living while doing something he liked very much: writing. Unlike these other novelists, however, Greene did not give up on the craft

when he became a recognized fiction writer but rather used his reporting adventures as a springboard to writing more journalistic fiction. Even in the years of his greatest literary output, his reportage matched his production as a novelist. Greene felt that if you call yourself a writer by trade, then you write – and not necessarily to express yourself but maybe to escape from yourself.¹

As a result of his wide-ranging experience he formed a forward-thinking conception of journalism and the media that manifested itself in his fiction. Not surprisingly, then, journalists are at the heart of Greene’s fiction. However, there exists no extended study of the manifestation of Greene’s complex journalistic imagination in his fiction, nor has any critic or biographer traced the development of his views on the media, so paramount to his worldview. Few attempts have been made to explain his “entertainments” – Greene’s own brand of thrillers – in terms of media-awareness. Judith Adamson observes in her introduction to *Reflections*, a collection of Greene’s essays and articles, that “Greene the reporter and Greene the novelist are the same man” (xvi).² Greene was, according to the dictates of his political whims and the contingencies of his finances, both a literary journalist and a non-literary one at various points in his life. Travelling to such diverse countries as Mexico, Sierra Leone, French Guinea, Liberia, the Congo, Kenya, Vietnam, Malaysia, Israel, Cuba, Argentina, Panama, and Nicaragua, Greene filed hundreds of dispatches on the political situations in these countries for a variety of publications, including *Time*, *The Spectator*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Observer*, *The Guardian*,

¹ Greene alluded to this in an interesting foreword he wrote to a book on hotelkeeping, *Pavilions by the Sea*, written by his friend Tom Laughton (brother of the great actor Charles Laughton). “Rashly I encouraged him to write a book, rashly, because the hackneyed phrase ‘everyone has one book inside him’ is deceptive and totally untrue. Everyone has the material in his memories for many books, but that is not the same thing at all. We write sometimes to escape those memories” (3).

² Only two collections of Greene’s journalism exist. Judith Adamson, *Reflections*, Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1990, is the most comprehensive collection of Greene’s journalistic writing, spanning his entire career. Ian Thomson, *Articles of Faith: The Collected Tablet Journalism of Graham Greene 1936-1987*, London: Signal Books, 2006, is an exhaustive collection of Greene’s writing for *The Tablet*, the British Catholic journal that provided him with a forum for his works-in-progress and his religious views.

and *Life*. He often set his novels in these countries: eighteen of his twenty-six novels have a non-English setting. His dispatches cover myriad topics: he reviewed films, reported on war, and reflected on political situations; he wrote humour, opinion, and straight reportage. He held such prestigious posts as Editor of the *Oxford Journal*, literary editor of *The Spectator*, and subeditor of *The London Times*. His over one thousand letters to the press, compiled in *Yours etc.*, show, according to Christopher Hawtree, “an ambiguous attitude to the press,” which goes as far back as *The School House Gazette*, “in whose pages he tried to publish a ‘coloured drawing of a piece of shit’ under the guise of a cigar” (4).

The discipline of journalism forced Greene to cross borders that were aesthetic and political as well as geographic. Greene’s “double life as novelist-reporter,” (Couto 21) and the theoretical and ethical framework of his writing gradually developed from his early journeys to Ireland and Liberia to his later travels to Mexico, Panama, and Vietnam. His youthful search for adventure grew into a restless curiosity that made him one of last century’s most notable travellers. “The distance achieved by Greene’s [writing],” observes Couto, “germinated into the critical detachment that allowed clear, unencumbered observation” (39). The quick sympathy for the less fortunate matured into the political consciousness that gave moral urgency to his fiction. As Adamson observes, “travelling, watching, recording - these were the means of moving outside one’s class and cultural experience” (*Dangerous Edge* 50). Greene’s journalistic vision also changed in the process. In his early journalism, he tried to circumvent the subjective by using individual incidents to comment on the historical whole. Facts, he felt, should not be used “to support a private judgement but to convey an appearance” (*Conversations* 45). A journalist committed to objective reporting, Greene went to great lengths to ensure that the world he constructed was “carefully and accurately described” (76). As Adamson says, “Greene’s ability

to describe what he saw was admirable, and he has always insisted that the function of a reporter, which title he prefers to journalist, is to do just that, to describe as vividly as possible what he witnesses” (43).

Being a journalist/reporter early in his career, Greene said in his last recorded interview, “[provided] much better training to be a novelist because you cut words, alter headlines, and change words” (MacArthur 1).³ Greene himself concedes that he was “never really... a professional journalist” but an “amateur journalist,” a position that allowed him to be “closer to the writer than the professional journalist, because [the amateur] is entirely free in his movements and opinions” (*Conversations* 67). Partially because of this freedom to go where he pleased, Greene’s recollections of his journalistic career show contentment, a rare state of mind of a habitually restless writer with a low boredom threshold.⁴ “I was happy on *The Times*,” Greene noted in *A Sort of Life* (124). His first full-time job of any significance, five months after he had graduated from Oxford, was as an evening subeditor with the *Nottingham Journal*, a post he held from November 1925 to February 1926. He then moved to *The Times* in March 1926. In *Ways of Escape*, Greene contrasts the valuable experience gained here with his previous job at Nottingham where he was “earning nothing and learning very little” (129). At *The Times*, he recalls spending “amusing and exacting hours learning lessons valuable to his own craft... removing clichés of reporters... compressing a story without ruining its effects” (129).

Early in his career, Greene’s views on journalism are removed from the critical engagement that his fiction gives to the profession: “It’s a pity that [the U.K] does not have special departments to prepare journalists at our universities,” he observed on a visit to Moscow

³ John R. MacArthur was the last to interview Greene, then 86, shortly before his death in April, 1991. He recounts Greene’s scathing take on American intervention in Panama and the Gulf War in an article in *The Phoenix* in 2006.

⁴ In *The Art of Graham Greene*, New York: Russell and Russell, 1963, Kenneth Allot and Miriam Farris note that Greene is “continually saying that happiness is an unusual and anxious routine nearer the disappointing ‘natural’ state of man” (15).

University, and advised young journalists aspiring to be writers to carry on with journalism until they became financially secure, citing his own example of quitting *The Times* as something that kept him in debt to his publisher for ten years (Hawtree 2). From his many pronouncements on journalists and journalism, it appears that his expectations of the profession were almost impossibly high. A journalist had to be “faithful to the notion of respecting the truth and mustn’t on any account set out with preconceived ideas of giving his allegiance to the paper which employs him,” Greene confided to Marie-Francoise Allain during one of their 1983 interview sessions (82).

But Greene’s suspicion of the popular in journalism was short-lived and supplanted by an unwavering belief that reporting served an important social function. He came to believe that honest observation, the “[weaving] of exact stories together,” could create an accurate image of the whole (Allain 142). For Greene, the power of the press, when wielded correctly, overcame his early dismissal of its shortcomings and he came to believe strongly in honest recording and, to a degree, journalistic objectivity. Up until *The Quiet American*, his journalists, in their various roles, watch and criticize but do not move against what they condemn. The early journalist protagonists are always presented in extreme situations to accentuate the critical nature of their profession. Greene valorized “the writer” as an important yet dispassionate observer of events, and believed, like many committed to twentieth-century positivism, in the possibilities of the attainment of a pure, fact-driven objectivity. In a 1957 interview on the theme of the relationship between the writer and the social discords of his time, Greene disclosed that, if he were to write a novel on the situation in Kenya, for instance, despite his personal sympathies for the Mau Mau, the hero and villain of such a novel might well turn out to have their roles reversed (*Conversations* 79). For Greene, writing functioned as the art of democracy, and, as an artist, he

claimed to write “from the point of view of the white square as well as the black” (*Why do I Write?* 27).⁵ This is because he felt “that a writer’s function is not to change things but to give them expression” (28). Adamson observes:

As a reporter Greene claimed to observe all sides of a situation honestly... Perhaps he thought there was safety in a position of neutrality – an observer can neither betray nor be betrayed – or perhaps it was an intellectual trick [to hide] his inability to make broad political sense of what he saw... Nevertheless, as a reporter he was faithful to the notion of respecting the truth. He did not analyse what he saw but used fragments of it, description of incidents, bits of detail and information, which he assembled in a way that gave the whole a significance which the parts individually did not possess (Adamson 197).

Instead of getting involved in the politics of the left, Greene, guided by a strong belief in the power of the writing, took up the task of dispassionately recording the facts of the political realities he witnessed in the belief that honest observation itself would identify social problems and warn people of the necessity for action.

If Greene’s position as a neutral reporter/observer allowed him to live with, but not resolve, the contradictions in his own thinking, it nevertheless put him in a position to advocate for the underdog (198). With this “detached point of view,” Greene was able to travel to the world’s trouble spots, internationalizing his liberal point of view. In Kenya, for instance, his sympathy was for the Kikuyu who were caught up in the ravages of colonialism. In Cuba and Panama, he followed the path of socialism, and on a 1938 trip to Mexico he observed the effects

⁵ One inescapable aspect of Greene’s background as a writer was that he came from an intensely literary family with a penchant for recording their experiences in books. His first cousin twice removed on his mother’s side was Robert Louis Stevenson and a contemporary cousin was Christopher Isherwood. It is not entirely surprising, then, that he would be drawn into carrying on the writing tradition: the instinct to publish seemed deeply rooted in the Greene families.

of a campaign of forced anti-Catholic secularisation.⁶ Ian Thomson's compliments to Greene's journalistic writing in Mexico in his introduction to *Articles of Faith*, a collection of Greene's writing for the *The Tablet*, are typical of the critical response to the powerful journalism Greene produced there: "The controlled understatement and scrupulous, unsparing lucidity of Greene's journalism is still impressive, as it unforgettably portrays the aftermath of the anti-religious revolution begun by President Calles" (iv). The only criticism of Greene's early journalistic writing was that his desire to see things for himself and his early concern for the underdog showed a lack of interest in broad political context (*The Dangerous Edge* 16).

However, from Greene's willing involvement with the Ministry of Information, the notorious propaganda agency famously satirized by Orwell as the "Ministry of Truth," we know that he was not averse to choosing sides in an ideological struggle, even though such choosing of sides must invariably undermine the objectivist ideal. And while Greene's "best writing" certainly and consistently critiques non-objective writing, and periodically levels specific criticisms of propaganda, some critics have pointed out that Greene's more political novels must themselves be conceived of as a kind of propaganda, articulating an ambivalent yet unyielding position on one side of a particular battle. The war-time writing of Greene's *oeuvre* represents a significant departure from the climate of moral ambiguity that has emerged as the most salient feature of "Greenland."⁷

⁶ Greene sometimes felt that there was too much of a critical tendency to see his career in the same way: that is, that he lived the life he did – amorously, adventurously – to provide the material substance of his novels. To which he would always retort: if only writing were that easy. Certainly he would visit the places that he knew were to provide the settings of his novels, but that was simply for the sake of accuracy of physical detail and perhaps as compensation for what he called his short memory and his lack of visual imagination.

⁷ For instance, in the pre-war pamphlet *Why Do I Write*, Greene observed that an author should never write on behalf of the state: "I would like to imagine there are none but I fear there are at least two duties the novelist owes – to tell the truth as he sees it and to accept no special privileges from the state . . . By truth, I mean accuracy – it is largely a matter of style. One privilege he can claim, in common perhaps with his fellow human beings, but possibly with greater safety, is that of disloyalty" (43).

Rather than engaging in the impartial dissemination of objectively-realized information (as Greene so often remarked was his goal as a writer), some of Greene's later novels espouse overt political messages, marking an important change in the author's work from disengagement to involvement, from literary journalism to a form of literary propaganda. Greene would eventually concede that "politics are in the air we breath" (11), even writing in his memoir *Getting to Know the General*, "If one takes a side, one takes a side, come what may" (23). And he emerged from his wide and deliberate travel with "an oeuvre that nails down, interprets and orders his experience into a reflection on the connection between faith and action, the private conscience, and the public act, man the individual and man the citizen" (Couto 67).

This is not to say that Greene's journalists are perfect. Minty from *England Made Me*, and Fred Hale from *Brighton Rock*, both conform to the stereotype of the opportunistic but somewhat absurd newsperson. In his journalistic novels, especially *Stamboul Train*, Greene often battles with culturally elitist sympathies, derived partly from the high modernist tradition of Conrad, Eliot, and Woolf, and indicates, at least on the surface, his distrust of the effect of mass media. This suspicion of the press, such a common characteristic of Greene's protagonists, is succinctly expressed by Dr. Bellows, the man who runs the Entrenatiano Language Centre in *The Confidential Agent*, when he spurns an evening paper, saying, "I never read the daily press" (125).

Greene's early journalists, like him, reflect a media in the 1930s and 1940s that believed steadfastly in the empirical approach. The doctrine of journalistic objectivity, a North American invention of newspapers and journalism associations, was taken up in the 1920s. Although the "objective" or "matter of fact" report went back to the seventeenth century, objective reporting in the early part of the twentieth century was "stricter, more methodical, and more professional"

than ever before (Ward 216). This strict positivism in reporting marks a similar shift in science towards a stricter, “pure” objectivity. Greene’s early journalist characters’ beliefs correspond to those who widely believed that objectivity should be the guiding principle in journalism.

By mid-century, however, defenders of objectivity faced scepticism about universal methods, pure facts, and a rational public sphere. Press theorist Theodore Peterson, in the 1950s, wrote that objectivity was “a fetish” (Ward 36). The fatal error of journalistic objectivity came in the nineteenth century when “journalists started explaining their objectivity in terms of a recording of events ... allegedly devoid of the reporter’s interpretation, values, or perspective” (262). The evolution of the journalist in Greene’s fiction reflects this change in common thinking about the concept. In *The Quiet American*, Greene uses the word *engagé* for the first time in his writings, and after many years of advocating the necessary political neutrality of writers, he produces a journalist-narrator, Thomas Fowler, who is forced to take political action. Despite a credo of non-involvement, Fowler’s detachment from politics erodes as the novel progresses and he realizes that, although “the responsibilities of the West” mean nothing to him, it is impossible to avoid individual responsibility if at the same time he is to “remain human” (166).

While writing was clearly Greene’s vocation, he pursued a number of other professions with varying degrees of success at different phases of his life, from spying to publishing to film script writing. As an author whose work compels biographical criticism, Greene has been scrutinized closely for the ways his professions have shaped his fiction. For example, Leopoldo Durán has written two books on the doctors and priests in Greene’s fiction, and a substantial volume of literature exists on Greene’s film work, the influence of cinema on his fiction remaining one of the most prolific areas of Greene studies. The same can be said of his espionage work, and Greene himself provided several analogies between spying and creative

fiction in his fiction, critical writing and autobiographies. The spy Jim Wormold in *Our Man in Havana*, for instance, can be viewed as a type of writer who swaps stories for money (Chakrabarti 23). In contrast, Greene's work as a journalist has received less attention than it deserves. To cite an example, the first volume of Norman Sherry's authorized biography deals with Greene's early career in journalism only in passing and the focal point of the biographer's inquiry remains Greene's relationship with his fiancée, Vivien. Moreover, the fictional representations of journalists and the media in Greene's fiction have never been the subject of a full-length academic study.

Greene studies are an especially deep critical field, which, as Baldrige notes, "makes it especially incumbent upon anyone taking up the subject at this point to justify his enterprise" (5). Baldrige's own study does well in this regard, as do the many other valuable full-length studies of Greene, which have been a wealth of information, both critically and biographically, for the present study. In terms of literary criticism that deals with the influence of journalism on the novel, works of this nature dealing with Joseph Conrad, Mark Twain, Gabriel García Márquez, and Evelyn Waugh have been instrumental in helping me understand how to situate this study between the journalistic and the literary. General studies of Greene by Roger Sharrock, Grahame Smith, Paul O'Prey, Miriam Farris and Kenneth Allott, Peter Wolfe, and books on specific themes such as those produced by Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan, Brian Thomas, Robert Pendleton, Brian Diemert, and others, have served Greene studies and the present study well. However, as Carolyn Scott notes in her review of R.H. Miller's *Understanding Graham Greene*, while "Greene is one of the most interpreted and discussed authors in 20th century British Literature... much of that criticism remains redundant," and there is "a surprising uniformity in evaluations of Greene" (41).

Despite his widespread journalistic achievements and commentary on the profession, critics and biographers often reduce Greene's journalism to a footnote in his diverse career. Commentary on Greene's journalist characters and the influence and manifestation of the media in his novels receives only passing mention in Greene studies, finding a place in introductions to volumes of his journalistic writing, a small number of doctoral dissertations, and in the few critical discussions of his non-fiction. The only focused work on Greene's journalists is Chakrabarti's dissertation from Reading University, which focuses the role of the Greene's characters in the manipulation of the press. Chakrabarti raises several salient points about Greene's use of journalist and, in many ways, the present study simply expands on this examination. Duncan McMonagle's discussion of the motif of the journalist causing damage in *The Quiet American* in his dissertation from Carleton University also links Greene with journalism, but stops short of offering insight into how journalism and the media function in Greene's works. Perhaps the most insightful discussion of Greene's use of journalists and journalism appears in a 500 word editorial in the Cebu *Sun Star*, a Philippine daily newspaper marking the 10th anniversary of Greene's death, which notes that his use of journalists "[sinks] the Fourth Estate deeper into... the heart of the matter" (1).

Cates Baldrige, in *Graham Greene's Fictions: The Virtues of Extremity*, observes that "Graham Greene will be remembered as a novelist, not as a dramatist, essayist, or journalist" (5). Judith Adamson's *The Dangerous Edge*, the most detailed work on Greene's journalistic career and the transformation of his reportage into his novels, is the only work thus far to discuss at length the author's beliefs in the politics of writing and reporting. Adamson's insight about the parallels between Bendrix, the novelist-narrator of *The End of the Affair*, and Fowler of *The Quiet American* (104-110), and her observation that Greene's empirical method of reportage was

an illusion from the first was, in many ways, the inspiration for this study. Adamson's analysis, however, provides little mention of the pervasiveness of media in Greene's fiction, where some of the most striking debates about politics, writing, and the function of the journalist in society take place. The same can be said of Maria Couto's *Graham Greene: On the Frontier*, an admirable and authoritative account of politics and religion in the novels, which does not mention the influence of Greene's many journalist characters and the manifestation of his attitudes towards the profession in almost all of his fiction.

The link between the journalistic elements of Greene's biography and his literary texts is not perfectly clear. Can we really posit a linkage, beyond the circumstantial evidence provided by biography and a few themes in Greene's *oeuvre*, between his journalism and his literary work? What are the textual traces left in narrative fiction by its century long association with journalism? And how do they differ from the more recent traces left in an author's writing by his or her journalistic work?

Similarities between journalism and the modern novel abound. Anibal Gonzalez, commenting on the linkages between the journalism and fiction of Gabriel García Márquez, writes:

Journalism and the modern novel have been interacting with and interpreting each other since their respective origins in the seventeenth and eighteenth century... The modern novel arose with the picaresque and *Don Quixote* in the midst of the Renaissance dilemma of distinguishing history from fiction. Journalism is derived from a textual amalgam that unhierarchically encompasses news items, essays, and narrative prose. (62)

From this time, both genres have shared a similar conception of knowledge and representation: that which was explicitly formulated by English empiricism and which emphasizes the role of

the senses, particularly sight, in the acquisition of knowledge. The novel itself is a radically mimetic genre that tends to imitate other genres and sub-genres such as the letter, the historical chronicle, legal depositions, and journalistic articles (Ward 79). The novel has also moved closer to journalism in the twentieth century, explicitly invoking the form and the rhetoric of specific journalistic genres, such as the essay on manners, the society chronicle, the interview, and the crime story. Also, as cinema and electronic mass media have risen in importance, as G. Stuart Adam observes, “written journalism has increasingly become a literary genre of sorts, and the distance between journalism and literature has grown correspondingly smaller” (7).

If it is, as Gonzalez contends, “impossible to distinguish journalism from literature by appealing to absolute formal or stylistic criteria,” then what are we to do with the huge mass of journalistic texts produced by an author like Greene? If what one believes to be a stylistic or rhetorical borrowing from journalism is already a long-established element of modern prose writing, what sense does it make to posit any meaningful relationship between an author’s journalism and fiction? One could consider, as Judith Adamson does in *The Dangerous Edge*, Greene’s journalism a kind of archive, a source of information about how Greene developed certain themes, as well as an index to his intellectual background and preferences. And this strategy holds up except that Greene’s journalism was not always a product of his own loyalties as he was often assigned to write certain stories. Moreover, tracing the origin of one of Greene’s stories to a specific event that he covered (Vietnam, for instance) has merely anecdotal value if not connected to a broader literary problematic. Nevertheless, as Gonzalez asserts, “positivistic scholarship has its place in the scheme of criticism and cannot be ruled out” (63). In this connection, this study will explore the relationship between Greene and journalism from a variety of perspectives. I will investigate the way in which Greene’s journalistic writing, the

profession, and its practitioners are thematized, parodied, or otherwise self-consciously placed in the foreground of the author's literary texts.

Much of Greene's fiction turns around verifiable facts, set in identifiable geographical locations (even where the locales are left unnamed, as in *Power and the Glory*), frozen in the coordinates of recorded history. Literal, one-to-one representation and reportage form the heart of Greene's narrative matter. As a reporter-essayist Greene concentrated on what he saw and, if he could, extrapolated his ideas into fiction (Adamson 30). A study of Greene's technique of reportage, and the way he employs journalists in his fiction, particularly in the secular novels, demonstrates his powers of observation. His journalists are portrayed not as mere recorders of facts or chroniclers of day-to-day events but as subjective authors who manufacture news and order reality to suit their own purposes.

Greene's secular novels bristle with mention of journalists, newspapers, reports, radio bulletins, and film screenings. His first political thriller set in modern times, *The Name of Action*, which he later suppressed, is a prototype for the "entertainment" novels that would follow. Greene's first novel to feature a journalist and the print media, it hints at the conflict between popular and serious writing that would become a staple in his later works. Chase, a young idealist journalist who foreshadows *The Quiet American's* Alden Pyle, believes everything that he reads, a point driven home when he falls in love with a woman after seeing a picture of her in *The Tatler* (8). Newspapers, journalism, and pamphleteering all function as disseminators of information in the novel. The media in the novel play the role of "agents provocateur... unmistakable signs of modernity gnawing at the woodwork of the self-declared serious novel" (Chakrabarti 63).

For all the posturing of Greene's journalist-characters, the author "is still a press ally under deep cover" (*Sun Star* 1). He "contends that the selective perception and dissemination of filtered views is anathema to the journalistic dilemma of covering the truth while engaged in a gray duty to do good, not to any individual person but to a country, a continent, a world" (1). Indeed, journalism in Greene's novels is a demystifying practice, not only at the social level (as in the cliché of the valiant journalist exposing government corruption), but also at the textual level. The attempt to narrate "journalistically," by making use of immediacy, novelty, and the glorification of the trivial that are consistently identified with the journalistic discourse, lays bare the ideologies with which literature has tried to give itself the authority and power that is usually associated with other social discourses. Journalism, then, in Greene's novels is used to deal with the everyday, the ordinary, and even the excremental. The profession's emphasis on empirical details and its belief in its own veracity mock the abstract and totalizing impulse of literary language.

Almost all of Greene's novels cast a journalist in some form. Some of his most memorable characters have backgrounds in journalism, including Arthur Rowe from *The Ministry of Fear*, whose "proper work was journalism but that had ceased two years ago" (16). Although it is not made clear why Rowe's career ended, it is said that it might be the result of his wife's mercy killing. Minty and his superior, Hammersten, from *England Made Me*, Chant from *Rumour at Nightfall*, Parkinson from *A Burnt Out Case*, and Victor (Jim) Baxter from *The Captain and the Enemy* are some of the most prominent of Greene's journalists. Minty and Hammersten form an early contrast in the context of this study. In opposition to Minty's youthful naivety, Hammersten, a former teacher of languages, considers himself an intellectual among journalists, representing the "most respected of Swedish papers" and tells his editor, Krogh, that

“it is only we older men who pursue Truth... amid the distractions of a not very *distingué* profession” (106).

However, although *The Name of Action* and the vast collection of journalists in Greene’s later works have much that is of interest in terms of his journalistic themes, this study analyzes Greene’s use of journalists, journalism, and the media in three novels that have a journalist as a central character: *Stamboul Train*, *It’s a Battlefield*, and *The Quiet American*. These texts are dictated by journalists in novels who double as author figures. Mabel Warren, Jim Conder, and, more obviously, Thomas Fowler, take over the function of the writer, either partly or wholly, in the novels in which they appear. As Chakrabarti has noted, the presence of journalists in Greene’s novels is somewhat analogous to the spider Minty has trapped underneath his tooth-glass in *England Made Me*: “caught in the web of fiction [they] have spun [themselves]” (9).

Mabel Warren and Jim Conder do not involve themselves in the philosophy of the profession and are nonchalant about the way they go about collecting news. They often find themselves in situations where they are forced to choose a side despite being part of a profession which emphasizes objectivity. However, in each instance, they retreat from conflict and attempt to regain a sceptical distance from their subject. Characterized by a deep Platonic scepticism about the world, each of their characters’ practical philosophies is defined by detachment and rationality. Like Fowler, they are recording instruments. However, without a basis for formulating an alternative ethic, these observers, like Greene for many years, do not act against what they condemn.

Chapter One discusses *Stamboul Train*, the first novel by Greene to feature a journalist as a major character. Hawtree observes that Greene’s novels contain many journalists “for whom glory of a sort is the motive but scarcely describes their methods” (6). *Stamboul Train’s*

protagonist, Mabel Warren, a compendium of journalistic truisms, illustrates this observation.

Greene fuses the image of the dog with that of the journalist, portraying Warren as a newshound who untiringly searches for the scoop. The image of the dog and the vulture is a recurring motif in Greene's journalist characters, illustrating a broad association of the hunger for news with physical appetite among readers as well as journalists. Warren, for instance, portrays her public as "hungry for its lion's steak" (79).

A reporter for the fictional publication *The Clarion*, Warren's career is a hazy shamble of "getting up at all hours, interviewing brothel keepers, the mothers of murdered children, 'covering' this and 'covering' that" (36). 'Dizzy' Mabel is never sober in the entire length of the novel, which spans three days and two nights. She conforms to the association of journalism with alcohol, a connection made often in popular lore. So concerned with her "exclusive" story, Warren begins to care less and less about maintaining an objective distance and reporting neutrally. Paralleled with Warren is popular novelist Quin Savory, Greene's celebrated mockery of J.B. Priestley. Through Warren and Savory, *Stamboul Train* explores the changing culture of literacy and mass culture, enacting the conflict and competition between journalism and mass literature, and investigating the rise of the popular press and the debate of its function in the body politic in the 1930s. *Stamboul Train*, then, is important as an entry point into the study, as it is Greene's first attempt at fielding a journalist in such a prominent role. Much of Mabel Warren is retained in Greene's future journalists; indeed, the role and limits of newspapers, specifically, and the popular press, generally, is fleshed out more thoroughly in the two other novels in this study.

The press and its principal representative in the novel, Jim Conder, function as instruments of control and law enforcement in *It's a Battlefield*, the focus of Chapter Two. The

novel shows clear evidence of Greene's fascination with the disreputable world of 1930s journalism, and the Conradian world where mud and grime and even the bleak London weather "find their objective correlative in Greene's 'rubbishy sheets' of 'soiled paper'" (Chakrabarti 122). Conder, a crime reporter with the formidable reputation of "a man who knows the secrets of Scotland Yard," becomes a double agent who reports to the police as well as his newspaper about Communist party meetings (39). Like *Stamboul Train*, *It's a Battlefield* is filled with communications and media technology, the chatter of telephones and newspaper stories cabled by wire. In this shady world, ideas of surveillance, watching, supervision, and spying become central to the novel and assume added significance from Conder's point of view. He describes the chief reporter's room as "sound proof boxes," piled one on top of the other and next to each other – and the moment he closes the door behind him "all the typewriters in the adjacent room became silent, the keys dropped silently as feathers" (19). Greene's vivid portrait of the newsroom reveals a mechanical, industrialized assembly line. Indeed, the newspaper office becomes the ultimate dystopia where news and opinion are fragmented and dehumanized to an extent that the raw materials and the news gathering process have little or no resemblance to the finished product of the newspaper.

Chapter Three focuses on the most striking example of Greene's volatile journalist, Thomas Fowler, the narrator of *The Quiet American*. In the novel, Greene uses the word *engagé* for the first time in his writings, and, after many years of advocating the necessary political neutrality of writers, he produces a journalist-narrator forced to take political action. Despite a credo of non-involvement, Fowler's detachment from politics erodes as the novel progresses and he realizes that, although "the responsibilities of the West" mean nothing to him, it is impossible to avoid individual responsibility if at the same time one is to "remain human" (125). Fowler

portrays himself as neutral and objective despite an unacknowledged longing for involvement. A significant change, then, can be noticed in *The Quiet American*. Not only does Greene make the correspondent the narrator of the story, but the novel suggests a far more serious engagement on the part of its author with the contradictions inherent in the claims of direct, transparent, factual reportage. Through Fowler, Greene stresses that the conservative notion of journalistic objectivity, articulated in newspaper codes of conduct in the first half of the twentieth century, is indefensible philosophically and no longer a viable ethical guide for writers. Changes in press ownership, growing political censorship, and an individual rejection of objectivity in writing, must surely lie behind Greene's employing such a narrator.

Re-assessing *The Quiet American* on the verge of Greene's birth centenary, novelist Zadie Smith thinks of Greene as "the greatest journalist that ever was" but at the same time articulates the need to defend him "from the taint of journalism" (1). Smith has intuitively grasped the root of the problem where journalism and literature are often seen as opposing ends of a spectrum of values. This study focuses on an understanding of Greene as a serious writer, concerned, above all, with the aesthetics of his craft. Several critics have noted that his fictional world draws on the reality of his journalistic experience to "mediate between thought and existence" (Couto 45). However, no studies thus far have examined how Greene's inside knowledge of the journalism, developed during his stay at *The Times* and throughout his travels, affected his fiction, significantly altering his perception of the world, his narrative style, and leading him to field a diverse number of intriguing journalists, scribes, and hacks. As Smith observes,

The hope [Greene] offers us is of the kind that only close observers can give. He defends us with details, and the details fight the good fight against big, featureless, impersonal

ideas. ... If more journalists could report as well as Greene bringing us the explosion in the square, how long could we retain the stomach to fight the wars we do? The devil is in the details for Greene, but redemption is also there. The accretion of perfectly rendered, everyday detail makes us feel human, beats away the statisticians, tolls us back to ourselves. How many journalists can write reportage - or anything else - like this? (3)

Greene's journalistic imagination forms a major part of his fiction. As a journalist seeking to record public issues dispassionately, Adamson observes, "Greene became an important political conscience" (12) and an influential and under-recognized journalist with a body of work that contributes greatly to both journalism and literature.

Chapter One

“Our public can’t wait”: Journalism and the Reader in *Stamboul Train*

“A petty reason perhaps why novelists more and more try to keep a distance from journalists is that novelists are trying to write the truth and journalists are trying to write fiction.”

“All that we can easily recognise as our experience in a novel is mere reporting: it has a place but an unimportant one. . . . Perhaps a novelist has a greater ability to forget than other men – he has to forget or become sterile. What he forgets is the compost of the imagination.”

Graham Greene, *Conversations* (1981)

“In fiction, the writer’s voice matters; in reporting, the writer’s authority matters. We read fiction to fortify our psyches, and in the pleasure that that fortification may give us, temperament holds sway. We read journalism – or most of us still do, anyway – to try to learn about the external world in which our psyches have to struggle along, and the quality we most need in our informant is some measure of trustworthiness.”

John Hersey, “The Legend on the License,” *The Yale Review* (1986)

Stamboul Train marks Graham Greene’s debut as a writer of contemporary thrillers, the genre in which he was to achieve his best work over the following decade. After *Rumour at Nightfall*, which he later suppressed, it is his first novel to feature a journalist, Mabel Warren, as one of the major characters. Although the novel marks the entry point of many of the markers and motifs of Greene’s journalistic aesthetic, including the association of journalists with alcohol and the conflict of engagement with journalistic objectivity, the subject that pervades the novel is the growing role of journalism in the body politic. Aptly set on a train, where newspapers and

popular writing were typically consumed at a voracious rate, *Stamboul Train* embodies and reflects the debate about the place of popular writing in culture and exemplifies Greene's grappling with the changing culture of literacy and the rapid expansion of the reading public.

Mabel Warren, whom Paul O'Prey calls "a journalist with little regard for the truth" (23), enters the novel in the second part when the Orient Express reaches Cologne and is interspersed in the narrative until her exit at Subotica. Not surprisingly, Warren is cast against popular novelist Quin Savory, Greene's satire of J.B. Priestley.⁸ Through these characters, the novel explores the rise of the popular press and the debate of its function throughout the 1930s like few other contemporary novels. Although Greene was, as Graham Smith notes, "not wholly out of tune with popular, commercial... aspects of modern culture," and was not on board with the anti-commercialism of T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Ezra Pound, he had some serious reservations about the effect of journalistic writing on the "public mind," as he called it (*Why Do I Write?* 34).

Stamboul Train, then, can be read as a reflection on journalism at a time when its social importance was growing rapidly and it was intimately connected to the growth of democratic and urban culture in the city, the creative centre of the craft (Adam 7). Greene's critique of the enterprise of news is put alongside other influential cultural forms in *Stamboul Train*. This chapter serves as a starting point in the discussion of Greene's more 'journalistic' novels. It begins with a contextual overview of the place of journalism and popular writing in the 1930s, before considering the reader in *Stamboul Train*, a character study of Mabel Warren, and

⁸ J.B. Priestley, according to Norman Sherry, "had read a review copy of the novel which had been sent to the *Evening Standard*, and had concluded that the popular novelist, Mr. Savory, in the novel was based on him." Priestley required changes to be made to the novel or he would sue. Greene was told by Heinemann that they would "prefer to lose Greene than Priestley" and so Greene "had to share in the cost of the changes" (435). A more detailed discussion can be found in Norman Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene, Volume Two: 1939-1955*, "The Book Society and the J.B. Priestley Affair," London: Random House, 1989, 426-444. I discuss Greene's relationship with Priestley further in Chapter Three.

concludes with a critical analysis of the relationship between Warren and popular novelist Quin Savory.

Journalism and literature have long had a contentious yet collaborative relationship. Since their inception in the late seventeenth century, newspapers as we know them today have helped shape literature in Britain (Ward 23). The “sometimes desultory but continuous process of collaboration” between literature and journalism, however, has also been perpetually problematic (26). F.R. Leavis continued a relentless tirade through the pages of *Scrutiny* against what he perceived to be journalistic “whipper-snappers” of Fleet Street. Philip Howard, profiling Walter Allen for *The Times*, summarizes the view of the literati towards the journalist: “Those who can, write. Those who can’t, practise English Literature at universities, those who can’t write the higher (or the lower), journalism” (qtd. in Ward 4). George Bernard Shaw was aghast to find out that the new literacy brought on by the Education Act of 1871 had changed the character of the reading public, to the effect that publishers were unwilling to take on his new novel *Immaturity*. He mused: “The Education Act of 1871 was producing readers who had never before bought books, nor could have read them if they had... I, as a belated intellectual, went under completely” (4).

The sheer number of literates produced by the Education Act resulted in the exponential growth of newspapers and popular fiction (Ward 156). Alfred Harmsworth, later Lord Northcliffe, established the *Daily Mirror* in 1903, the “first daily newspaper for gentlewomen” and staffed exclusively by women. The *Daily Mail*, another of Northcliffe’s papers, proclaimed itself to be “the busy man’s daily journal” (158). First appearing in May 1896, the *Daily Mail* drew the battle lines between what we now distinguish as the opinionated broadsheets and the frenzied tabloids. John Carey comments on the way the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror*

represented “an alternative culture... [bypassing] the intellectual and [making] him redundant” (22). More importantly, perhaps, Carey observes, “it took over the function of providing the public with fiction, thus dispensing with the need for novelists” (5). Although not technically tabloids in form, “papers from Lord Northcliffe’s stable were well on their way to becoming tabloids as far as their contents were concerned” (7). In 1933, Arthur Christiansen, one of the pioneers of newspaper design and layout, took over the editorship of the *Daily Express* and gave form to modern news layout, complete with clean headlines, and sensational, condensed news reporting (8). By 1939, the *Daily Express* sold two and a half million copies a day. This number contrasts sharply with the *Times* circulation figure of 30,000 in 1848 (Engel 16).

The emergence of popular fiction was a direct consequence of mass literacy, aided to a great extent by the technology that enabled cheaper paper and imprints. The nature of literacy changed significantly and irreversibly. While a notion of highbrow and lowbrow literature had emerged by the mid-nineteenth century, the term “popular literature” emerged in the first quarter of the twentieth-century. The need for a new term gives us a fair idea of how radical and significant the hiatus between the two kinds of literature was. “Tales of high adventure, hushed romance and breathtaking intrigue, set against the gigantic and exotic map of the Empire,” according to Demoor, “offers clues as to why *Heart of Darkness*... was serialised in three parts before being published as a book” (12). The format of published fiction changed and the price plummeted. By 1900, three volume novels of the Victorian era were replaced by the single volume, six shilling novel (7). In 1935, Allen Lane established Penguin Books, intending to sell fiction at six pennies each (8).

The changing culture of literacy and the overturning of the established hierarchy of the world of letters (triggered by the rapid expansion of the reading public) resulted in two broad

types of intellectuals with very contrasting attitudes towards the popular press. The first type was comfortable with the change, perhaps even a product of it, and embraced the popular press wholeheartedly (Ward 125). The other followed in the tradition of Matthew Arnold and was suspicious of the mass appetite for printed matter, sneering at the aspiration of the masses and fulminating at the popular press. Shaw and Thomas Hardy, two of the “keepers of Britain’s cultural distinction, the intellectuals, [were critical of] the production of literature and its wholesale prices,” according to Demoor (7). Also prominent among these critics of democratic literature were F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and James Joyce (9). The last two writers equated the output of this literature factory and newspaper machinery with bodily filth and human excreta, Pound in *Cantos* and Joyce in *Ulysses*. Matthew Kibble draws attention to the way the *Daily Mail* became “synonymous with perverting language and culture during and after the First World War among a coterie of writers and critics,” led largely by Pound, whose polemical attack in *Cantos* portrayed Lords Northcliffe and Beaverbrook wallowing in their own excreta (65).

The effect of elitist mistrust of mass-education and the commercialization of culture towards the later half of the nineteenth-century figures prominently in the fiction of the time. Carey views George Gissing as “the earliest English writer to formulate the intellectual’s case against mass culture” (56). Gissing continued to make the case for the ill effects of a democracy-driven culture in the late nineteenth century, and was particularly critical of the commercialization of literature in newspapers and popular magazines. For instance, Gissing’s protagonist in *In the Year of Jubilee*, Luckworth Crewe, attempts to transform a quiet seaside village into a “hideous brand-new resort of noisy hordes” and unveils a grand plan of swamping every inch of available space with billboards and placards (4). He sets up a telling contrast

between the aims and intellectual aspirations of the novelist Edward Reardon and the journalist Jasper Milvain, who deliberately set out to cater for the burgeoning market of the 'quarter-educated' churned out by the thousands by 'Board Schools' in *New Grub Street*.

Literature from the 1930s is replete with references to the addictive nature of newspapers and mass media. "Popular culture, it was widely agreed, was dope; newspapers, films, radio, as well as popular novels and jazz musicians were all . . . 'dopin the workers'," notes Valentine Cunningham in *Reading After Theory*. Aldous Huxley in his futuristic dystopia *Brave New World* satirizes the world of mass media, calling the cinema 'feelies' - making his disgust for the superficial and sensory, almost tactile entertainment provided by cinema amply evident. Readership of newspapers, moreover, reflects the class stratification, with the elite preferring the *Hourly Radio* and the common masses content with the *Delta Mirror*. In his essay "Writers and Readers" Huxley observed that "most people choose their daily paper . . . not for its opinions, but for its enterprisingness" (105).

Kebble argues that much of this attitude stems from a particular reading of *Ulysses*, where "newspapers are . . . strongly associated with bodily waste and abjection throughout" (23). By equating the act of writing for popular newspapers to the production of filth, these writers were also characterizing journalism as a vastly inferior sort of writing, a kind of left-over language from which every element of culture has been extracted. There were exceptions to this attitude, and Kebble points out Walter Benjamin, who "uses the newspaper as an example of the explosive revolution of the word which might see the "pretentious, universal gesture of the book supplanted by ephemeral avant-garde forms such as placards, leaflets and newspaper articles" (27).

But perhaps the strongest indictment of journalism and the rise of mass media can be found in Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop: A Novel about Journalists*. Professional journalism, for Waugh, was reprehensible and in *Scoop* he subjects the profession to an exaggerated satiric irony. Waugh gives vent to the intellectual elite's perception of the world of sensational mass media. He captures the hilarious but slimy and opportunistic world of journalism where jobs are had by connections, foreign editors such as Mr. Salter sigh for "the carefree days when he had edited the Woman's page" (14), and William Boot, who writes a column on country life and has never before been to the city, is mistakenly sent to Ishamealia to cover the war. When Boot meets Corker, a correspondent for the news agency UN, Corker is quick to take him under his tutelage:

You know you've got a lot to learn about journalism... News is what a chap who doesn't care much about anything wants to read. And it's only news until he's read it. After that it's dead. We're paid to supply news. If someone else has sent a story before us, our story isn't news. Of course, there's colour. Colour is just a lot of bull's eye about nothing. It's easy to write and easy to read but it costs too much in cabling. (66)

The purpose of his novel, Waugh wrote, was "to expose the pretensions of foreign correspondents . . . to be heroes, statesmen and diplomats" (Beaty 120).

Although the novel is more complex than Waugh admits here, his statement points to what he considers the egregiously fraudulent aspects of journalism. He, indeed, "had found journalism neither exciting nor intellectually stimulating" (120). Whereas he saw its only justifiable function to gather factually reliable information, he discovered that news was often misused to enhance reputations and promote biased opinions. Although imaginative novelists might with impunity transform fact into fiction, journalists, Waugh believed, had no business

taking such liberties; and those characters who pervert their calling in his novel are sharply condemned. Many of Waugh's criticisms of the contradictory and romantic nature of news find space in Greene's novels, especially through Mabel Warren in *Stamboul Train*, who, as a seasoned and cynical reporter, parallels Corker in many ways.

Unlike Waugh's, though, and much like his refusal to contribute to "Authors Take Sides on the Spanish Civil War," a questionnaire circulated by the *Left Review*, Greene's position on journalism and the popular vis-à-vis high culture is difficult to ascertain. As his career clearly shows, he was attracted to the ready cash, thrills, and escape from boredom that journalism offered. In addition, he put his own first-hand experience of the trade to new uses in his fiction, most importantly in recycling his reportage in his fiction. By the time Greene came to writing, the world of printed matter was carved into two warring factions: one camped in the newspaper offices of Fleet Street and the other in the universities (Demoor 2). What Greene inherited was a schism that became increasingly evident by the end of the nineteenth-century between the grubby mass-circulating daily and the "pristine" world of literature defended stoutly by the intelligentsia.

Greene's reaction to his growing readership was much different from that of his contemporaries. Instead of rejecting the popular, he in many ways refashioned it, attempting to write novels that appealed to a wide audience without sacrificing the art of his craft. Over the course of his life, he would apply the epithet "entertainment" to eight novels.⁹ Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris note that "The entertainment can be distinguished from the novel by the comparative lack of development of characters, by the wilful use of interesting background for

⁹ These novels are *A Gun for Sale* (1936), *The Confidential Agent* (1939), *The Ministry of Fear* (1943), *The Third Man* and *The Fallen Idol* (published together in 1950), *Loser Takes All* (1956), and *Our Man in Havana* (1958). The term was also applied retrospectively to *Stamboul Train* (1932). Greene also considered using the epithet for *The Quiet American* but decided against it.

its own sake, and, more particularly perhaps, by the freedom Greene allows himself in linking up the various sections of the narrative by coincidences and improbabilities” (78-79). One of the most curious coincidences of Greene homing in on “entertainment” to write more accessible fiction in 1936 is that it follows Lane’s establishing of Penguin Books in 1935 with the express intention of selling cheap paperbacks. Although there is no causal connection between the two, the close proximity suggests that both Greene and Lane were reacting to a growing readership for accessible fiction. His writing of entertainments can be reasonably linked to his financial status. Hawtree rightly observes that Greene was always on the lookout for ways of earning money by those products of the pen that come more readily than a novel.

Greene’s entertainments were, as he told Simon Raven and Martin Shuttleworth of the *Paris Review* in 1953, “distinct from the novels because as the name implies they do not carry a message” (24). Over time, though, he admitted that his “novels and entertainments resembled each other more and more” (Allain 81). Once Greene established in his mind that, as Chakrabarti observes, “compulsive page-turners and . . . more serious, critically acclaimed novels were not mutually exclusive entities, there was little need to promote the novel/entertainment binary” (44). Greene’s entertainments also became identified with the genre of the thriller. Michael Denning confidently credits Greene with creating the English spy thriller “in his ‘entertainments’ of the 1930s” (214). Denning observes that Greene’s adoption of the word “entertainment” undermines and problematises the “neat structure of separate categories of writers obliging the publisher’s two-fold aim of educating and entertaining” (168).

Despite defining and in many ways branding the literary/entertainment genre with complicated thrillers and detective stories, Greene was not whole-heartedly for the “popular” and often expressed his discontent with its effect on the public consciousness. In *Why Do I Write?*, an

“exchange of views” pamphlet written by Greene, Elizabeth Bowen, and V.S. Pritchett, for instance, he insisted that the “watered down” writing of the popular novel was having detrimental affects on the “public mind”:

We already see the effect of the popular novel on popular thought. Every time a phrase like ‘I stood above the bottomless gulf’ or ‘going downstairs, I got into a taxi’ passes into the mind uncriticised, it muddles the stream of thought. (34)

Greene’s criticism of the popular was extended to newspapers as well. Although he often remarked that newspapers and journalism served an important democratic function, he also believed that their rise in popularity in the 1930s and the corresponding role they played in shaping people’s worldview had negative societal effects.

This is the broad biographical and cultural context against which the present chapter analyzes Greene’s *Stamboul Train*: a self-reflexive novel bordering on the metatextual, which, as a popular novel that analyzes the popular itself, is at the same time its own subject and object. Greene himself was struggling with the idea of the “popular” at this point in his career, a dilemma that is enacted and engrained in the novel. Although his fascination with the role of the popular press in the body politic is demonstrated most thoroughly through Quin Savory, the popular novelist in *Stamboul Train*, the role of newspapers and journalism does not escape Greene’s analysis. Journalism in *Stamboul Train* provides Greene with a way to disseminate the facts of his fictitious world. Newspapers and their readers act as effective props, infusing reality, and standing in for what Demoor calls “the endless shower of atoms, the ceaseless and undifferentiated sequence of Mondays and Tuesdays that make up the lives of the readers” (49) . Through the journalist Mabel Warren, the novel explores the changing mass culture, enacting the conflict and competition between journalism and mass literature and exploring the role of

newspapers and journalists in shaping the reader's worldview. In the process of analyzing the function of the popular press in one of Greene's earliest novels, this chapter demonstrates an early example of Greene's journalistic aesthetic and fleshes out his analysis of the popular press in *Stamboul Train*.

In Act II of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Gwendolen tells Cicely of her diary, "One should always have something sensational to read on the train." *Stamboul Train*, which would certainly fit with Gwendolen's categorization, invites closer attention because it is part of the business of passing long hours of railway travel and is also about a long train journey, illustrating, as Couto observes, "a sense of movement in prose" (39). Spurred by the voracious appetite of the neo-literates, beneficiaries of the Education Act of the 1870s, and the early beginnings of commuter culture, detective novels and thrillers, often serialized in publications like the *Strand Magazine*, sensational news in the form of the tabloids and romance novels in cheap paperbacks "did brisk business around railway travel" (Ward 156). Not only did commuter travel provide the perfect opportunity to read newspapers and "penny dreadfuls," the rapidly expanding railway network "could now carry newspapers and fiction to all corners of Britain" (159).

Like Hitchcock's *The Lady Vanishes*, Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*, Von Sternberg's *Shanghai Express*, Balcon's *Rome Express*, and the Russian *Turksib*, *Stamboul Train* is located in a moving train, the main function of which is, as O'Prey notes, a structural one, reminiscent of many of Conrad's closed settings on board ships (22). The novel's primary subject, a train journey, is reflected in its narrative technique. Being almost wholly located in a moving train is an effective literary device which reveals character, mood and incident in

glimpses and flashes. Couto observes, “As the train speeds on to its destination and the narrative to its close, one has a sense of human lives being borne along to an inexorable destiny” (39).

The railway adds a further element of urban anonymity to this state of limbo; each journey and every station offers an opportunity for congregation and dispersal of unidentified masses of people: “The journey [in *Stamboul Train*] provides an opportunity to bring together in an accidental fashion a broad range of characters who in some way illustrate the statements Greene is making about contemporary society” (O’Prey 23). Travel itself suggests a state of indeterminateness between origin and destination. Carleton Myatt, the young Jewish businessman travelling with his “mind burdened with figures and strategies to outwit the associates he is going to meet” (19), is aware of the seclusion of the setting, but not of its dramatic possibilities:

In the train, however fast it travelled, the passengers were compulsorily at rest; useless between the walls of glass to feel emotion, useless to try follow any activity except of the mind; and that activity could be followed without fear of interruption. The world was beating now on Eckman and Stein, telegrams were arriving, men were interrupting the thread of their thoughts with speech, women were holding dinner parties. But in the rushing reverberating express noise was so regular that it was equivalent of silence, movement was so continuous that after a while the mind accepted it as stillness. Only outside the train was violence of action possible, and the train would contain him safely with his plans for three days. (20)

Into this world of “rest,” however, Greene introduces many of the products of popular culture: masses of newspapers, magazines, and cheap novels, which are juxtaposed with the otherwise

serene nature of the train, suggesting that these objects of the modern media have a disruptive, dehumanizing effect.

The train setting illustrates, then, the pervasiveness of the press in Greene's representative society where newspapers and other sundry reading materials reflect the class and professional identity of the characters who consume them. As Myatt prepares to board the Orient Express at Ostend, he notices Mr Opie, "an old clergyman... Mr. Opie soon leans out to buy "Le Tempts de Londres... from the vendors on the platform, using French full of copybook phrases, used with gusto and inaccurately" (9). His choice of reading popular newspapers mirrors his preferred class of travel. He thinks it "unnecessary to travel first class" as long as one gets a sleeper and waxes eloquent about "the remarkable comfort" of second class carriages (8). Coral Musker reads *Woman and Beauty* and *Home Notes* assiduously to achieve her objective of being "mistaken for a lady" (19). One of the first things Mabel Warren notices when she enters Czinner's compartment to sift through his luggage is a "morning paper that [he] must have bought a minute or two ago at Wurzburg station" (63). Warren's indeterminate status, Musker's ambition to be mistaken for a lady, and Quin Savory's popular fiction aspiring to be taken as serious literature – all of these find an echo in the framing narrative. Attempts to classify and categorize people according to their class of origin or religious affiliation is an extension of the debate of literary classification and hierarchies germane to the novel.

The omnipresence of the press in this society is matched by the appetite for its consumption by the reading public. Warren calls her audience "the murmuring and approving multitude," suggesting an acute awareness of whom she is writing for. Significantly, every time Janet Pardoe steps into the novel, either in the company of Warren or Savory, and later, even Carleton Myatt, the scene is set in a restaurant or a dining car. Her association with food and sex

equates her with the voracious readers Warren describes. Tactile and gustatory images in the novel are as prevalent as images of eating and drinking. On her way out of Savory's compartment, in response to his plea to see a proof of the interview before it is printed, Warren tells him: "We are not a weekly paper. Our public can't wait. Hungry, you know, for its lion's steak. No time for proofs. People in London will be reading the interview while they eat breakfast tomorrow" (62). It is a vivid picture of the reading public that Warren presents at the end of her interview with Savory: masses with gargantuan appetite for the written word, people who cannot wait to have their fill of words along with the breakfast they eat, words that journalists strive against time to supply ceaselessly. The name "Savory" itself suggests a kind of palatable fare with which the author plies his readers.

The impact of newspapers and journalism is especially apparent in Czinner's paranoia over his story being made public. As he prepares to face trial upon arrival in Belgrade, he rehearses for his own moment of greatness with a shrewd and calculating eye on media: "The Press will be there, Czinner thought, and saw the journalists' box as it had been at the Kamnetz trial full of men scribbling" (123). Though Czinner initially denies Warren an interview, he is no less interested in playing to the press gallery and exploiting its reach as the journalist wants to exercise her power. His adversarial attitude towards the press is further revealed later in the novel when he is absorbed in his own thoughts: "I am a Socialist; the word mouthed by politicians on innumerable platforms, printed in bad type on bad paper in endless newspapers..." (132). Quite tellingly, Czinner soon chances upon Grunlich trying to steal money from his suitcase, and Grunlich, a shrewd judge of character, tells him that he is also a socialist on the run because of "a political offence... an affair of a newspaper" (134).

The journalists' distortion of facts is often reinforced by "twisted phraseology," as Beaty calls it (123); and in a novel that focuses on those whose professional tool is language, the manner in which journalists speak and write assumes considerable importance. Waugh emphasized the function of style by describing his own writing "not as investigation of character, but as an exercise in the use of language" (125) The most conspicuous barbarism is "telegraphese, which reduces idiomatic expression to pidgin by the omission of expendable words and the creation of unnatural compounds" (124). In this jargon, "We have received news from you" to take an example from *Scoop*, becomes "News exyou received" (126). In *Stamboul Train*, Warren frequently dictates stories from phones, compressing large amounts of information and sending them to her editor. Such scorn for linguistic art further symbolizes the journalist as having a vulgar disrespect for the order and standards of civilized life, for in Greene's view corruption of language indicates debasement of thought.

Concerns about sales figures combine neatly with Warren's anxiety about the number of words that must be "hammered out" (43) to satisfy a vast and gluttonous readership. For the journalist, Savory's attributes are limited to his popularity, the number of copies he sells: "Sold a hundred thousand copies. *The Great Gay Round*. Two hundred characters. The Cockney Genius," Warren remarks about Savory (37). Savory's popular novels and Warren's daily newspaper, with impressive sales figures, share one characteristic with a popular tourist destination like Bruges: all three are "to be stared at, talked of, trafficked over" (12). The novel reveals repulsion with the sense of vulgarity and filth associated with mass-produced words. Looking through Czinner's luggage, Warren admits to herself that "the cheapest rag in England would not stand for this" (63). Her illegitimate means seems to taint the end, polluting the very words of her report.

Such negative connotations notwithstanding, the power that such words wield is reinforced in various ways throughout the novel. Readers of newspapers and popular literature are represented as consumers rather than readers, actively involved in ingesting and clamouring for the words before them. There is a strong sense of the readers being dependent on the thrills provided by daily newspapers such as Warren's aptly named *The Clarion*. Even Warren is not free from their control: she exits the novel with her eye fixed on making the front page (145). Earlier, she reveals that she had not met her subject Savory, "but his face was well-known to her from photographs in the *Tatler*, cartoons in the *New Yorker*, pencil drawings in the *Mercury*" (65-66). It is ironic that Warren depends on a secondary order of reality, the make-believe world of newspapers and popular magazines, to give meaning to her world. She is trapped in this alternative world, as much its victim as its creator, having to appeal to its complex signifiers to find her way about in its maze of meanings. Warren is portrayed, then, as a blend of opposites, an amalgam of varied, and often contradictory, personal traits.

Warren sees Dr. Richard Czinner, a powerful political renegade who escaped dramatically during his trial in Belgrade, boarding the train at Vienna. True to her journalistic nature, she decides to pursue "the best story she has ever been after" and is unable to let go of what she perceives as "an exclusive bill page story... a story which *The Times* correspondent himself would give a year to know" (42). At once Warren parodies and embodies codes governing media conduct in the thirties. Her conversation is filled with trite observations about men, morality, and mores, all compressed into digestible news bites. Her career is a hazy shambling of "getting up at all hours, interviewing brothel keepers, the mothers of murdered children, 'covering' this and 'covering' that" (36). Warren typifies the professional who is transformed and moulded by her job. The language of journalism pervades her speech and

thoughts, news reports condition her emotional responses, and she is unable to think without the reference frame of journalism and newspapers. The metaphors of the outsider, the aberrant, and the newshound are applied to Warren with unfailing regularity, as Greene casts her as an intruder, an outsider in the narrative, pursuing her prey with the same desperate determination the other outsider, the criminal Grunlich, employs to escape his pursuers.

Greene's position on journalism in the text is made more complex when Warren's dubious and disreputable character is considered. The first references to her in the novel link her with the stereotypical association of journalism with alcohol, a connection made so often in popular lore, highbrow fiction and even books on journalists by journalists. It has become, as Chakrabarti observes, "a mythic gold standard, sufficient for *Private Eye* to name its representative denizen of the Fleet Street pubs, 'Lunchtime O'Booze'" (34). Warren's partner Janet Pardoe "[doesn't mind] Mabel being drunk" (34); Warren "drinks up" her gin, rises from her chair, "sways a little," and attempts to refute Pardoe, saying, "You say I'm drunk. I am drunk. But I'm going to be drunker" (35). "When the paper wants sob stuff," Warren thinks, they "send Dizzy Mabel" (35).

Almost all of the journalists in Greene's fiction are heavy drinkers: Philstrom and Hammarsten in *England Made Me* always have a drink in their hand, Fowler in *The Quiet American* drinks and is addicted to opium, Parkinson is constantly "bloated from beer" in *A Burnt Out Case*, and Fred Hale, who gives out prizes for the *Daily Messenger* in *Brighton Rock*, "drank too much" and has an "enlarged liver" according to the inspector giving his post-mortem (94). Philip Knightley's ground-setting work *From Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist and Myth Maker* is littered with anecdotes of beer-guzzling, whiskey-swilling hacks who risk their lives on obscure war fronts to put the news into next morning's

paper half way across the globe (5). Howard Good, in his work on journalist motifs in fiction, identifies the journalist as drunk as the most frequent character in the portrayal of the press: “From the 1920s through the 1990s, the journalist has been identifiable in Hollywood films as much by the drink in his hand as by the cynical gleam in his eye.” (12). The portrayal of drinking journalists, which has included “every imaginable construction from heroic to evil, is connected with changing public attitudes to drinking, he argues: “Whether the journalist is a saint or sinner or a combination of both depends on whether drinking is defined as a normal social activity, an insidious addiction, or a moral evil” (20).

However, in Warren’s case, despite her prodigious drinking, her grip on circumstances remains remarkably firm; alcohol does not inhibit her ability to do her job and, in a way, she is a vehicle for Greene to discuss the more democratic aspects of journalism as it relates to public consciousness. She comes across as a tough journalist who knows her job and does not hesitate to employ every trick in her trade to succeed. She tells Pardoe that *The Clarion* has asked her “for a quarter of a column” on Quin Savory and is sufficiently well-versed in the practice and policies of her paper to point out that “they’ll cut it down to a couple of sticks in London” and that Savory has “chosen the wrong time” to travel; had he travelled during the “silly season he would have got a column among the mermaids and the sea-horses” (42). Warren’s “dogged pursuit” of the story and her hubristic faith in her abilities as a reporter have an ominous undertone. Her assertion that she has “never failed” to secure a story or an interview has an almost demonic truth, buttressed by her resolve to “make him speak... somehow” (54). Later, she thinks of “nailing Czinner once and for all to the bill page of the paper, an exclusive crucifixion” (59).

The language of journalism pervades Warren's narrative. She tells the story she covered on Czinner in Belgrade in an intriguing way. Recounting the story to Czinner, she narrates in much the same manner she would have reported the story for the *Clarion* (78). This style of narration is a deceptive journalistic strategy, a subterfuge, designed to give Czinner a false sense of security and coax some indiscreet comment or admission at the opportune moment. Warren updates Czinner on news from Belgrade, the home from which she knows he has been exiled, employing reportage to get her story - to generate more reportage. Her narration, in turn, is framed in the third person and weaves in and out of the conversation she has with Czinner. The ploy seems to work, as Czinner, despite his best efforts to cut short the conversation, is unable to do so: "He knew that he ought to interrupt the drunken dangerous woman opposite him, but he could not say a word, while she gave him news of Belgrade, the kind of news which his friends in their weekly coded letters never gave him" (79). Warren's narrative exercises enough power over Czinner for him to be unable to escape it, a situation not unlike that of a newspaper reader.

Greene routinely uses animalistic descriptors for Warren. The manner in which she circles her story and swoops in at the right moment is a classic journalistic ploy to prise open a difficult interviewee. Making her way to corner Czinner, she thinks, "It was not everyone, she thought with pride, who would have been capable of seizing the moment as she had done when drunk" (43). This symbolism is extended to include the image of a bird of prey or scavenger, an association Warren shares with Minty in *England Made Me* and Conder in *It's a Battlefield*, whose name suggests a condor, the huge South American scavenger bird. Most frequently, though, the image of the hound is associated with Warren. When she sights Czinner, "her nose was on a scent," (39) and later, "her nose held yet the genuine aroma of the hunt" (42). When Czinner refuses to give in and admit he is the famous political dissident, Warren "with her head

aching, the smell of gin in her nostrils, growls at him, closing her great teeth on her lower lip in an effort at self-control” (47). The words “prying, pushing, scraping” (63) draw attention to the invasive and intrusive nature of Warren’s job and the image of the journalist as a hound.

With a ready marketing ploy trumpeting her newspaper – “public opinion is just another name for *The Clarion*” – Warren tries to coax Czinner to divulge his plans, unaware that the political dissidents in Belgrade had staged an abortive coup even before Czinner’s arrival. This is an uncharacteristic slip up by the worldly-wise reporter, significantly revealed to her through a report in German newspaper that Czinner hands over to her. What Warren says about being on Czinner’s side reveals the squalid underbelly of newspaper coverage, something that in today’s media lingo would be termed a ‘spin’ generated by the paper on behalf of a favoured source. Warren is anticipating a news event, almost willing it to happen, by offering liberal inducements. So concerned is she with her ‘exclusive’ splattered all over the middle page that she begins to care less and less about maintaining an objective distance and reporting neutrally. In that sense, the world of Warren and *the Clarion* is not unlike that of William Boot and the *Megalopolitan* in *Scoop*.

The core insubstantiality of Warren’s character is expressed most powerfully in her impotent passion for Janet Pardoe:

Mabel Warren could love her with the same passion until death, with satiety, had no means save her lips to express her love, was faced by the fact that she gave no enjoyment and gained herself no more than an embittered sense of insufficiency. (45)

With her blend of savoir faire and blind spots, Warren echoes the blind seer of Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, transformed in Greek mythology to a woman for a part of his long lifetime and whose wisdom is of little use to him or others. Given to self-loathing and vanity in equal measure, she

frequently seeks out mirrors to compose her sense of self amidst the confusing fluidity of personae: “In a mirror on the opposite wall Miss Warren saw her own image, red, tousled, very shoddy, sitting beside another and far more familiar image, slim, dark, and beautiful” (36). Warren, on the other hand, is, as Couto observes, “a man trapped in a woman’s body” (92). Her “common and shrewd mind” (58) is full of knowledge of the most trivial stories that she uses effectively to relate to a world outside the Orient Express, but in the end her efforts do not advance her standing. The novel thus portrays journalism as a cursed profession that propagates blind, ineffective knowledge.

Although Warren boards the train in order to interview Dr. Czinner, her official assignment is to report on Quin Savory, “The Cockney Genius” (36). Her interview with him is one of the highlights of the novel. In the encounter, Warren’s journalism and his popular literature are pitted against each other. In the interview, we witness a dialogue between “Savory’s pompous words” and Warren’s “deceptive action” (123). While the interview is, on the surface, a journalistic episode, it also puts forward the case of the popular novelist and becomes an enactment of the conflict between journalism and popular fiction.

Warren’s approach to the Savory interview is remarkably different from her ploy of “snaring” Czinner; she simply bursts in and demands an interview. Savory is dependent on the media for publicity and, because his is a more routine story, she stands to gain very little from it. Her decision to be ‘masterful’ and do away with niceties stems from her own consciousness of the power she wields over him. The Savory interview (66-70) is as incisive a satire of journalistic methods and mores as William Boot’s missives with his massive trunk in Ishmalia in Waugh’s *Scoop*. Warren is interested and engaged, all the while drafting a story on Czinner. Unlike Waugh’s relatively straightforward caricature of journalists and journalism, Greene’s portrayal

of Warren, even at its most ridiculous, is ambiguous, aided in great measure by a determined pursuit of her quarries and her immense, almost picaresque ingenuity.

The obsession with sales success of Savory and Warren is a recurring theme in the interview. He tells her, “One can ‘ave that [integrity] and yet sell one thousand copies,” to which the journalist replies, “Do you think we should sell two million copies if we told the truth” (68). She quickly takes up her mantle as a guardian of public morals: “‘Health,’ she said, ‘That’s your mission? None of this ‘adults only’ stuff. They give you as school prizes” (69). Warren thinks, “I’ll put that in about healthy traditions... the public will like it, [the editor] will like it” (70). Once again, the concerns of the popular novelist and of the journalist are seen to merge especially when it comes to their intuitive knowledge of what their “public want.” Greene stressed the artist’s need to know his audience. From that perspective, Warren and Savory are Greene’s endorsements of that gumption. However, when Warren thinks of her penchant for journalistic prophecies, the similarity between her methods and Savory’s becomes evident:

Take an expression in the present, a line of ill-health, a tone of voice, a gesture, no more illuminating to the average unobservant person than the lines and circles in a Baedeker, and fit them to what you know of the man’s surroundings, his friends and furniture, the house he lived in, and one saw the future, his shabby waiting fate. (129)

A deep-rooted envy soon comes out in the open when Warren observes Mr. Opie. The clergyman’s “attitude changed to one of respectful attention” the moment he hears the name of the novelist: “Poor mutt, she thought, to be impressed by a 100,000 sale, we sell two million... twenty times as many people will have heard of Dr. Czinner tomorrow” (66).

However, this hollow boast is also an admission of the ephemeral quality of her triumph. The twenty times sales figure camouflages the fact that her story will be very short-lived news,

probably reserved only for “tomorrow,” with Warren’s name as a mere footnote, a byline, whereas Savory’s name will continue to attract “respectful attention.” The jealous hatred she bears towards him is made explicit later: “It was not that she hated him, but that she hated any overpowering success, whether it meant the sale of a hundred thousand copies or the attainment of three hundred miles an hour, which made her an interviewer and a man the condescending interviewed.” An acute awareness of the imbalance of power, opportunity and success preys constantly on Warren’s mind, a feeling whose rancour she can only sublimate by turning it into misanthropic jealousy and hatred. That hatred for men is a prime motivator is evident: “When there was a choice between love of a woman and hate of a man, her mind could cherish only one emotion, for her love might be a subject of laughter, but no one ever mocked her hatred” (114).

Embedded in the verbal thrust of Mabel Warren’s interview of Savory is interesting information about the hierarchy of genres of writing in the 1930s. *Stamboul Train* is an embodiment of a great debate between genres, formats, and media and a site where constituencies of newspapers and popular fiction are seen locked in a turf war, vying for the minds of readers. The effect of this competition, for Greene, was troubling from a literary standpoint, as sensationalist writing was occupying a greater space in the public sphere. In this connection, Greene’s use of Mabel Warren embodies and reflects the ongoing debate about the function of journalism and journalists in the body politic and culture. The novel is dominated by the journalist and the popular novelist, with the two types of popular writing, yellow journalism and popular fiction constantly vying for prominence. Here, *Stamboul Train* explores the culture war between journalism and popular literature like few other novels. There are times in the novel when fact and fiction blend seamlessly together to create an alternative order of reality in fiction. At others, the omniscient narrative attempts to reveal the defining characteristics of each by

distancing itself from both. In the process, Greene subtly obscures the generic identity of *Stamboul Train*, complicating the taxonomy of writing.

Chapter Two

Trapped in the Tale: Journalism and the Mass Media in *It's a Battlefield*

“In great empires the people who live in the capital and in the provinces remote from the scene of action, feel, many of them, scarce any inconveniency from the war; but enjoy, at their ease, the amusement of reading in the newspaper the exploits of their own fleets and armies.”

Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776)

“We shudder at the brutality of the way a butcher uses the knife; ah, but this is nothing at all compared to the most dreadful recklessness and callousness with which a journalist, addressing himself to the whole country, if possible, uses untruth.”

Søren Kierkegaard, *Journals* (1849)

“It did not seem fair to Conder that the products of his brain should be condemned to the same cycle as his body. Something should be left. His body must decay, but some permanent echo should remain of the defective bathroom, the child with whooping cough. He began to write . . .”

Graham Greene, *It's a Battlefield* (1934)

Graham Greene's 1934 novel *It's a Battlefield* resembles *Stamboul Train* in many ways. Published in the same decade, both novels are set in immediately identifiable surroundings and, as Paul O'Prey observes, show little signs of what would subsequently become the author's trademark Catholic angst: monumental clashes of good and evil where each side has enough of the other's characteristics to complicate matters beyond redemption (61). The transcontinental train of the first novel is transformed into Greene's version of 1930s London. Class distinctions and professional affiliation play an equally determining role in both novels; characters from

Stamboul Train seem to leap off its pages and continue their fictional lives in another guise and another name in *It's a Battlefield*. The self-absorbed revolutionary Dr. Czinner becomes Mr. Surrogate, the pompous Communist leader, Coral Musker casts aside her middle-class prudishness and is recast as Kay Rimmer, Milly Drover's attractive, sensualist sister who "lives for the moment." The shrewd and scheming journalist Mabel Warren becomes Conder, a journalist with the formidable reputation of "a man who knows the secrets of Scotland Yard," and who becomes a double agent reporting to the police as well as his newspaper about Communist party meetings (82).

However, while *Stamboul Train* is an ambiguous portrayal of the press landscape in the 1930s, fascinating as an introduction to Greene's more journalistic fiction, *It's a Battlefield* provides a deeper analysis of the function of media in society. Keith Williams dubs the novel "typical of a transitional moment of thirties ecriture" (11) and Grahame Smith adds that it "marks a decisive change of direction in Greene's career" (116). Greene once remarked that "Media is just a word that has come to mean bad journalism" and the negative portrayal of *It's a Battlefield* certainly adheres to this observation. The novel reads as an information dystopia, a scathing account, similar to Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, of the effects of the intrusive, exploitive journalistic enterprise. In this damaged, seedy world, the newspaper office becomes a flawed space where news and opinion is fragmented and dehumanized to the extent that the raw materials and the news gathering process have little or no resemblance to the finished product of the newspaper. It is an isolating experience for newsperson and newsreader alike, as they attempt to understand a complex world through the gaze of a biased and unaccountable news media. In *It's a Battlefield*, then, Greene continues to refine the more media-driven elements of his fiction, building on his curiosity about the function of the press from *Stamboul Train* but far more

critical of the ability of newspapers to shape perception and play a determining role in social justice.

From the chatter of telephones and the commotion of newsboys in the streets, to messages cabled by wire, media of all kinds saturate *It's a Battlefield*. On his way out to meet the private secretary to the Cabinet Minister to discuss the Drover case, the Assistant Commissioner walks “down long passages lined with little glass cells” where “telephone bells rang” and “electric buzzers whirred like cicadas” (1). This description sets the tone of urban chaos and confusion which permeates the remainder of the novel. London is at once made familiar and alien, a notion reinforced by Greene’s use of “cicadas” – a foreign insect found only in tropic and temperate zones. The city is remote, inaccessible and mysterious like “the eastern forests” (2). Greene, an up-and-coming film critic for *The Spectator* when the novel was published, also adds film to the “jungle of technological devices” that infuse the novel. London, for instance, grinds to a halt as “the Queen goes to a talkie” (59).

News headlines, another device used by Greene to show the omnipresence of the media, act as determining agents in the novel, especially when seen through the eyes of the Assistant Commissioner. When he is walking the streets early in the novel he sees two newspaper vendors advertising the “Drover Appeal Result” and “Busman’s Appeal: Result.” The posters allow him an “opportunity for investigation” and he asks the vendor whether “any particular interest had been shown in the news that night” (2). On top of the stream of headlines that come at the Assistant Commissioner, the opening chapter ends with headlines from the “evening papers going to press for the last edition: “The Streatham Rape and Murder,” “Disarmament Conference Adjourns,” “Mr. MacDonald flies to Lossiemouth,” “Family of Insured Couple Draw \$10,000. Insure Today” (19). He stops outside a building where “women were coming out of the

offices and is reminded of “an agitation recently in the Sunday press over brothels in London” as a result of which “the police were playing particular attention to a certain flat.” This interplay between the press and the arms of law and the instruments of justice is an alarming sign for Greene.

The recurring use of headlines in the novel and the repeated intrusion of the private lives of citizens into the public sphere introduce into Greene’s novel what Marshall McLuhan called “a brand new world of allatonce-ness” of modern media, swamping readers and viewers of mass media with information and perspectives that disorient, destabilise and alienate. Keith Williams observes that “a crucial aspect of our ineluctable media-dependence might be termed else-awareness... the individual’s consciousness of elsewhere, of diverse events simultaneously unfolding outside his/her immediate access (84). In his essay “The Storyteller,” Walter Benjamin describes a shift from lived experience toward the experience of reading about life in the newspaper as a fact of modernity. Lost is the storyteller’s community of listeners, for the newsreader is an isolated individual reading other people’s stories told by the journalist. The newspaper’s information confronts storytelling in a “menacing” way, interfering with people’s ability to communicate: “Every morning brings us the news of the globe, and yet we are poor in noteworthy stories” (82).

In *It’s a Battlefield* journalism mystifies the relation between speaker and speech in new and unexpected ways. Even if written words are often indistinguishable from spoken words, print distorts speech through what journalists refer to as the “transcription effect,” the newspaper’s elimination of nonverbal accompaniment to words (for instance, charisma, expression, tone, gesture, and gaze). The voice of journalism, then, has a disembodied quality of its own, an abstraction of which Conder is suspicious throughout the novel and which Joseph Conrad, as

Rubery observes, criticized as the “atmosphereless, perspectiveless” or disembodied voice of journalism. In this way, Rubery reads Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* as a novel about the reembodiment of speech, or the attribution of voice to a specific individual. And the same can be said of Greene’s *It’s a Battlefield*, a novel which primarily deals with the process of cultural and personal disassociation in which the media plays a more substantial role.

The similarities between Conrad’s portrayal of the media and Greene’s are notable.¹⁰ Cedric Watts has persuasively shown the similarities between *It’s a Battlefield* and Conrad’s *The Secret Agent*, demonstrating that “Greenland, that seedy, corrupt, territory, has clear affinities with the base, murky world of Conrad’s novel of political crime and espionage, of double agents and sordid circumstances” (321). Lynne Cheney convincingly argues the structural similarities between Conrad’s novel and Greene’s. Significantly, Cheney attracts our attention to the detective story element that is at the core of both novels and the media’s role in helping ‘solve the mystery’: “In *The Secret Agent* we get the newspaper account, an eyewitness account and Verloc’s version of the event, but not the explosion itself. Similarly, we do not see the murder of [Arthur Coney] ... but we hear the private secretary’s account of it and listen in on Milly’s memory of the day” (124).

The “seedy” worlds of Greene and Conrad are similar in their use of communications technology and surveillance. For instance, Mr. Verloc of *The Secret Agent*, who sells “titles hinting at impropriety,” tells his spy masters at the foreign embassy that he keeps a shop of “stationery, newspapers”. Ossipon the anarchist reads out the news of the blast, which has claimed the life of Stevie, from a newspaper that is a “good sized, rosy sheet, as if flushed by the

¹⁰ Greene’s debt to Conrad’s novel has been remarked upon and discussed by a number of critics, among them Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris (87-89), Norman Sherry (457), and Lynne Cheney.

warmth of its own convictions.” Having read the sensational report, written in a classic inverted pyramid style, Ossipon comments, “The rest’s mere newspaper gup” (67).

Conrad, according to Rubery, was particularly concerned with the misperception of events provided by newspapers, especially by foreign correspondents. Conrad’s particular problem was with how impersonal newspapers were. In “Poland Revisited” he even claims to have been so dissatisfied with the daily press that he was unaware of the assassination of Arch Duke Ferdinand. This dissatisfaction is reinforced in *Chance*, when Marlow says, “Is it ever the business of any pressman to understand anything? I think not” (62). Conrad was reacting to the establishment of the foreign correspondent as a legitimate profession and would “henceforth criticize newspaper for shaping misperception of events... even going as far as to distrust the very form of the newspapers” (Rubery 753). Newspapers encourage complacent and misinformed readers, Conrad observes in *Notes on Life and Letters*, “taking from men both the power to reflect and the faculty of genuine feeling; leaving them only the artificially created need of having something exciting to talk about” (141). This frustration was expressed more succinctly by Conrad when he described journalists as “rats in the typescript’s margin” (qtd. in Naipaul 226).

This Conradian dissatisfaction with the impersonal voice of news narratives is evident in *It’s a Battlefield*. Like *Chance*, which begins with Mr. Powell’s disgust at how journalists “never by any chance gave a correct version of the simplest affair,” Greene’s novel portrays the journalist as intrusive by nature. Ideas of surveillance, supervision, and spying are central to the novel and assume added significance when considered from the point of view of the journalist, Conder. The image of the “panopticon” is prevalent in the novel. Foucault defined the panopticon as “a machine for disassociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring one is

totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen” (*Discipline and Punish* 196). Adhering to this definition, Jim Drover is a misfit in this world of glass walls and contraptions; he is dubbed “a bit stupid” because “he couldn’t get it into his head at first that he couldn’t hear if he spoke through the glass” and “wanted to see an’ speak at the same time” (17). At the core of Jim Drover’s character is an inability to communicate. Despite the intricate communications system that surrounds him, the reporters lead singular, isolated lives, watched by myriad others, superiors in a pyramidal chain – they are “visible but not verifiable” (197).

These ideas induce in the characters what Foucault calls “a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic function of power” (196). The prison where Drover is being held resembles a panopticon, with its “square buildings and a tall hexagonal tower” with a glass chamber on top. Its resemblance to the Assistant Commissioner’s office, Conrad Drover’s cubicle, and the chief reporter’s “cubby-hole” is striking. The chief warden takes great pride in giving the secretary and the Assistant Commissioner a tour of the prison complex, and he explains the prison hierarchy of the blocks, A, B, C arranged in concentric circles with their names quite patently referring to sections in school. When the group comes across the place where prisoners receive visitors, the chief warden explains, “Like telephone boxes; wire on one side, glass in front. When they want to see they look through the glass, and when they want to talk they speak through the wire” (15).

The image of the panopticon is reinforced by the parallels between the factory where Kay Rimmer works and Conder’s newspaper office. In Chapter Two, Conder, the crime reporter, is introduced into the narrative. Just as he enters the Chief Reporter’s office he sees the newsroom as “sound proof boxes” piled one on top of the other and next to each other – and the moment he

closes the door behind him “all the type writers in the adjacent room became silent, the keys dropped silently as feathers” (19). The newspaper office becomes the ultimate panopticon, where journalists, the people conducting the surveillance, are themselves watched by others above them. What Conder observes from the chief reporter’s room is a veritable assembly line of news and opinion, fragmented and dehumanized to an extent that the raw materials of the news gathering process have little or no resemblance to the finished product of the newspaper. He sees leader-writers “in little studies held up for the right word, looking into dictionaries, leading public opinion.” Sub-editors sat “on long tables, and ran their blue pencils over the copy, scrawled headlines on scraps of paper, screwed the whole bunch into a metal shell, and sent it hurtling with a whine and a rattle to the composing room” (19).

Greene’s vivid portrait of the newsroom reveals a mechanical, industrialized assembly line, not very different from one at the match factory where Kay Rimmer works. Work in the factory is measured precisely by a “clock in a high tower” (22). Later we find Rimmer, moments before she seduces Surrogate in his flat, peering out at the surrounding neighbourhood and saying, “You can see what everyone’s doing” (57). Used to being observed at work and adept at evading the supervisor’s eyes to steal moment of respite, Kay is unable to resist any opportunity to see what other people are doing.

The two sections – Kay’s factory and Conder’s newsroom – are juxtaposed, emphasizing mechanized productivity under panoptical vigil fairly unambiguously. Conder opens the glass door of his cubicle and hears “the typewriters rattle like cavalry” (20) while in the match factory “the hundred and fifty girls in the machine room work with the regularity of a blood beat” (23). In both instances, the idea of regimentation and regularity are behind the apparently disparate images of “cavalry” and “blood beat.” Just as Conder watches “the rolls of newspapers wheeled

like marble monuments towards the machines, which turned and turned spitting out the *Evening News* press and folded... packing them up in piles of a hundred, spinning them down a steel incline, through a patch of darkness, into the waiting van” (19), in the match factory we witness “a hundred blue-and-white match boxes jumped from the machines on to a great moving chair which drew them with slow solemnity, as if they were small coffins in a crematorium” (23). The exact numbers of papers and match-boxes, neatly rounded off to factors of one hundred, the order and the symmetrical similarity of the two processes pared down to their minute components, are subsequently underscored by an almost ritualistic passage through darkness, marked by uncertainty and tinged with death (newspapers being loaded in waiting vans and match boxes which look like “small coffins”) that both undergo. The printing machines “spitting out” the paper, as if expelling bodily waste, find a mirror image in the match factory, chosen as a natural yet ironic parallel for newspapers.

The news editor’s denial of Conder’s exclusive near the end of the novel, which is accepted sheepishly, underlines the panoptic structure of the narrative. The denial is “relayed through the news editor,” and “blows into the ruined street over ten miles of cables” (153). The length of the cables conveys the vast information-gathering and disseminating network presented right at the start; the glass cells where telephone bells rang and electric buzzers whirred echo similar scenes which the Assistant Commissioner walks past at the beginning of the novel; the remoteness (ten miles) of the centre (the editor) to the periphery (Conder) does not interfere with the effectiveness of the panoptic order – it is maintained and enhanced, portrayed as a virtually infallible system. The anonymous “chief,” mentioned in the text but never seen, is at the centre of the panoptical narrative. He has a hand in all the stories and headlines featured in the paper, imposes order, and elicits submissions. The chief’s presence is spread throughout the novel,

infused like a leitmotif every time a copy of the *Evening News* crops up. When Conrad Drover stares casually and vacantly at the newspaper spread on the kitchen table, “His mind took the opportunity to shirk its task, wandering across the columns of type, picking up a headline here and there” (64).

The proximity of newspapers to food, however, is not casual. The Assistant Commissioner “ate, turned sideways, with his eyes on a newspaper” and “when he occasionally remarked he had a good dinner, he meant the report in the newspaper had pleased him” (21). For the Assistant Commissioner, reading newspapers while eating is not a diversion, but the object of his sitting down at dinner. For him, the newspaper is food. As Conrad Drover scans the columns of the paper, the overwhelming image is of the narrative disembowelling a newspaper’s contents and spilling them across the kitchen table. The association of newspapers with images of bodily wastes is more explicit when Conder watches his exclusive story disappear: “... soon it would be leader type and soon a column of print, and twenty-four hours later it would be pulp. It did not seem fair to Conder that the products of his brain should be condemned to the same cycle as his body” (87). This is a melancholic view of the entire cycle of news, but one with remarkable affinity to the ideas of the abject and the abhorred and no promise of absolution or redemption.

Conder’s arrival at the Coney household, where Milly is trying to convince Mrs. Coney to sign a petition with the hope that it will save her husband from execution, is as sudden as it is intrusive and invasive, much like Milly’s presence there. At one level Milly genuinely sympathizes with the plight of Mrs. Coney; her helplessness in “[becoming] news” echoes Milly’s own condition. In a letter to *The Times* around the same time as the novel St. John Ervine wrote:

We may feel justly more than indignation when the reporter is sent by his employers to pry into grief. In circumstances said to have “news value.” Apparently there are newspapers which are now said to be addicted to the “human note” that there is scarcely any outrage or feeling that they will not commit in their efforts to sound it. (qtd. in Ward 157)

Milly’s feeling of being “touched and felt” by “strangers” from the news media is like Ervine’s sentiments about journalists. Milly’s thinking enhances the experience, portraying it as a physical violation by the press.

The generic uncertainty and the panoptic structure Greene creates coincides with confusions of names, locales, and settings. As the secretary and the Assistant Commissioner drive to the prison where Drover is incarcerated, the secretary mistakes a girls’ school for the prison. Later, as he is given a tour of the prison, the Assistant Commissioner mistakes the execution shed for a “billiard room, gymnasium” (15). Almost identical names like “Conder” and “Conrad Drover” add to the confusing narrative in the novel, reinforcing the image of the media as a confusing yet powerful force in society.

Conder is revealed in the novel as the duplicitous journalist who carefully cultivates an aura of middle-class respectability around him by fabricating a myth of family life. He adheres to Max Weber’s description of the journalist as belonging “to a sort of pariah caste, which is always estimated by society in terms of its ethically lowest representative” (“Politics as a Vocation” 96). As he talks to his contact in Scotland Yard over the phone, he drip feeds information about his fictitious family life: “My missus likes me to be in bed by eleven... All the children send their love” (20). When he finds that there is no exciting news to be had, he urges his contact to “invent something.” His contact tries to sell him a story about Drover, but Conder cuts the visit short.

“The Chief’s not much interested in Drover,” he tells the source, and then dutifully reports back to the chief reporter that “Scotland Yard tried to give me a bromide about Drover.” He inhabits an extremely stratified world where there is a very clear chain of command, which, like Bentham’s notion of penitentiary, is so transparent as to be almost impervious.¹¹ When he reports his conversation with Scotland Yard to the chief reporter, he is sent off to the composing room after running his story by the chief sub-editor. He has to anticipate the caprices of “the Chief.” Conder telling his Scotland Yard contact that “there might be a leader in that if the chief’s had a bad lunch” is parody well suited to Waugh’s *Scoop*.

Conder displays an extraordinary combination of make-believe and self-delusion. On his way to the sub-editor’s office, he takes a lift to the floor below (though he knows “it was quicker to walk”). In the lift, Conder thinks of himself as a “captain of industry leaving his director’s room in Imperial Chemicals” (21). But the moment he steps out, he becomes “the successful journalist, the domesticated man with a devoted wife and six children to support, a taxpayer, the backbone of the country” (21). As he walks down the corridor, a man walking past him asks him about the Communists and “silently, without a smile” Conder becomes the “hidden hand,” “the revolutionary”. But even that transformation is momentary, as “Conder’s character turned and changed, and by the sub-editor’s chair he was again the able journalist, the husband and father” who is gravely concerned with the “whooping cough” of his “youngest.” Unhesitant, he fields questions about the health of his children, his wife’s condition and his new house with great aplomb. In his own vivid imagination he is occasionally the intimate of Scotland Yard or the captain of industry, at times the revolutionary, and at other, the family man, the fool. Bedevilled

¹¹ Jeremy Bentham actually coined the term panopticon in the late eighteenth century. The concept of the design is to allow the observation of prisoners without the prisoners being able to tell if they are being observed or not, thus conveying a sentiment of an invisible omniscience.

though he is by the “many impersonations of his own sad and unsatisfied brain,” it never occurs to him “as strange that they should recognize this family man as reality among all his unrealities, even when he was the genuine Conder, an unmarried man with a collection of foreign coins, who lived in a bed sitting room in Little Compton Street” (132).

Conder’s constant lying gives rise to a host of questions about the nature of journalism and journalists. What effect does this habit of, as Adamson observes, “spinning meticulous yarns” about his life have in his journalism? Conder is “not himself” after meeting Patmore outside the bar. But he has a certain solace from moments of crisis when he dons his mask as journalist. The image of his “hand on the receiver, his lips to the black orifice” is a remarkably intimate one charged with eroticism, similar to one in *Stamboul Train* where Mabel Warren “faced the black shining instrument which for ten years now had taken her best time and her best phrases” (58). Like most reporters on a regular beat, Conder has to push his story, sell it to his editor, and stress the “exclusive,” a stand alone word that draws the reader’s attention, underscoring its importance and Conder’s desperate hope that he has found one.

This reality gulf stretching between the many personae that a single character, significantly a journalist, presents, is germane to the novel’s central preoccupation with phantasmagoric, intrusive, and paranoid surveillance and the impositions of order. Conder’s many evasions become part of a strategy to maintain his sanity amidst the surveillance. What appears on the surface an innocent, somewhat pathetic series of deceptions becomes, against this context, deeply subversive activities. And Conder is subversive in more ways than one: a fly on the wall at Communist party meetings, reporting to the newspaper and the police at the same time. It is as if each of his masks provides a complete make-over and the perfect persona for one of his many activities, an alibi and cover up for his divided loyalties. He walks “away along

along a passage which flashed with distorting mirrors” (22). Caught in the warped reflections of himself, he cannot choose one of his personae over many others: “For on the threshold of enjoyment, Conder, the revolutionary or Conder, the married man, repelled him (22). Soon after, the impersonal narrator again observes that Conder’s “personalities flickered so quickly that he was himself confused, uncertain whether he was the revolutionary, the intimate or a new part this, the master spy” (47). Confusion and chameleon-like make-overs are the key to Conder’s character, just as disorder is at the heart of the narrative, arraigned against opposing forces of control and order that are imposed from without.

Conder shows up at the cafe where Jules Briton works. After he finds out that Briton knows Kay Rimmer, he thinks that he might be able to get an interview with her. But, the moment he says this, the minute his thoughts stray to his profession, “the brief exhilaration of the collector left him; he was a journalist again dissatisfied with his pay, his profession and life” (35-36). On their way to the Communist meeting where Drover’s appeal features prominently on the agenda, Jules asks Conder if he thinks Drover will hang. “One can’t tell,” Conder responds and he then considers his position, “A journalist was supposed to understand the working of the world, but Conder had spent his life in learning the incomprehensibility of those who judged and pardoned, rewarded and punished” (36). Conder struggles to match the lofty ideas he sees being bandied all around him and strives to cope with the disjunction between words and the world.

Conder’s protean nature manifests itself when he meets the Scotland Yard detective soon after attending the Communist meeting. This episode is crucial to the assessment of his role in the novel. Conder is torn between his many loyalties, especially his loyalty to the Communist Party. When asked to betray the Party, he struggles: “You are asking a great deal Patmore.... You are asking me to betray my friends” (53). There is something beyond simply the sleazy and

dishonourable in Conder's double act as a reporter and a police informer. His resolve not to betray his Communist friends melts as soon as Patmore promises "a first class sensation for your midday edition". Like Mabel Warren, Conder is swayed by such a temptation (11), saying, "You can promise that, exclusive, for certain" (12).

At one level there is a sense of an excess of news suffocating everything else in *It's a Battlefield*. Greene's use of a constant stream of headlines creates clutter and confusion in a novel already overflowing with events, people, and characters. The uniformity, redundancy, and sameness of the news, though, suggest a society over-saturated with news, an observation strengthened when we consider a piece of narration late in the novel:

In the height of a pale-blue sky an aeroplane turned and twisted, leaving a trail of smoke which hung about for a time, then blew away. It was as if the pilot had begun an advertisement and then remembered it was Sunday. Men stood in their doorways and read the *News of the World* and spat. In Wardour Street and Shaftesbury Avenue they were reading the *Sunday Express*; in the almost empty Circus Conder bought an *Observer* and, sitting on a bus-top, he read the editor's warning to Europe. 'War' splashed a whole page. (144)

The variety of news and opinion in the numerous newspapers that vie for attention in the novel create confusion and distraction. There is an overwhelming sense of a society spiralling out of control and being swamped by the sheer amount of news and hysteria. The panoptical function in *It's a Battlefield* is largely transferred to the journalism in the novel, which serves as an instrument of control in the narrative, ordering the events and eventually segregating the characters.

Greene is often remembered alongside journalist-writers such as Orwell, Waugh, Arthur Conan Doyle, Conrad, and even Mark Twain for his combination of strong journalistic and fictional writing, but studies now are just beginning to address the elements of journalism and the representation of the mass media in his writing. Greene's novels show that his interests did not simply lie with politics and religion, as a cursory glance at Greene studies would suggest, but also with the unprecedented influence of the media and, perhaps especially, sensationalist journalists. He is one of the earliest authors (save perhaps Conrad) to challenge the press for its psychological authority (not just its sub-literary status) and to begin to theorize about the influence of the emerging mass media, particularly the newspaper media, in shaping public thought. *It's a Battlefield*, more than any other Greene novel, shows the influence of newspapers and the mass media on Greene's fiction. News supplied factual sources as we see in the use of real headlines in the novel and, more importantly, intellectual provocation for this novel. Greene was aware, it seems, of the influence of journalism as a medium, a message, and a discourse influencing the way individuals see, talk about, understand, and experience world events.

Chapter Three

Taking Sides: Journalistic Objectivity in *The Quiet American*

“Flying away from the scene of the crime is a journalistic felony that can be forgiven with time only if you remind yourself that even the most observant can see only hints of a large event that is happening . . . journalism is a flawed and fleeting project.”

- David Remnick, Editor, *The New Yorker*, 2005

“If one takes a side, one takes a side, come what may.”

- Graham Greene, *Getting to Know the General* (1984)

In Greene’s 1940 homage to the writer and B.B.C broadcaster J.B Priestley – a man who had once sued him for libel over a novel in which he is satirized as the hack-writer Q.C Savory – Greene criticizes his subject for having “represented a false attitude to the crumbling, untidy, depressing world,” for having cloaked himself in “the rags” of a now outmoded “Victorian tradition” (“Lost Leader” 87), and for having set himself up, in his novels, as the spokesperson for an England that did not exist. While Greene never abandons his doubts about whether or not Priestley should be considered an important – or even a capable – novelist, even the worst of Priestley’s writerly transgressions were, for Greene, rendered trivial the moment his voice penetrated the airwaves of wartime London and he became, almost immediately, “the voice of the common people,” a leader “second only in importance to Mr. Churchill.” What, according to Greene, was so important about Priestley during the initial moments of the war, and, to an even greater extent, in the months which surrounded the disastrous Allied evacuation at Dunkirk, was

his ability to provide the English masses with something its political leaders had “always failed to give us”: “an ideology” (87). In Greene’s words, there was, at one time, a

real danger that we should fail simply for lack of a unifying idea. The ordinary man didn’t want war aims, but he did want to be told more than that he was fighting to survive. Self-preservation is not the deepest instinct: we have learnt from childhood the Christian doctrine of the greater love. Mr. Priestley gave us this ideology: he gave us the idea of the two orders, the Nazi and our own, in simple terms, as moving as poetry, and his Sunday broadcasts gave far more confidence in the future than the inclusion of a few Labour men in the Cabinet. (88)

What is perhaps most startling about this affirmation is not that it is directed at an individual for whom Greene usually felt little more than contempt, and for whom he reserved his most virulent critical attacks, but the extent to which such remarks deviate from the climate of intellectual uncertainty and moral ambiguity that has emerged as the most salient feature of what scholars have come to refer to as “Greeneland.”

Indeed, those familiar with Greene’s opus will recall his memorable cast of characters, his “Whisky Priest” and messianic Lieutenant, and his sympathetic boy-murderer, and wonder, as Brian Diemert does, exactly where there might be room in Greene’s thinking for the kind of notional binary that he celebrates in his tribute to Priestly. Yet while Diemert suggests, in his book *Graham Greene’s Thrillers and the 1930s*, that “simple ideological polarities...are never accepted in Greene’s fiction” (209), we know, from W.J West’s biography of Greene, that “our man in a crisis” was never averse to aligning himself with one side in an ideological battle. As West points out, Greene was perfectly willing, in the early stages of the Second World War, to employ his considerable talents in the production of propaganda, and he even joined the Ministry

of Information – an agency readers of Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* will have seen parodied as the “Ministry of Truth” – which was responsible for the dissemination of propaganda, the curtailment of media access and freedom, and the collation of reports from mail censors. Greene’s propagandistic writing for the MOI demonstrates his ability to suspend the objectivist ideals to which he usually clung as a means of articulating his support for a particular effort. This chapter, then, takes up Diemert’s contention that Greene’s novels avoid simple ideological polarities by examining the ways in which *The Quiet American* affirms the efficacy of thinking the world in binaries before choosing one side over another. This suspension of his earlier objectivist ideal is a result of Greene’s rethinking of the concept – a point that is driven home by a reading of the *The Quiet American* as it relates to the politics of objectivity.

If Evelyn Waugh’s *Scoop* is “a novel about journalists,” as its subtitle says, then Graham Greene’s *The Quiet American* is a novel about journalism. The novel became, Sherry notes, a “pocket-book” for American and British journalists travelling to cover the Vietnam war. It endures, as Martin F. Nolan observes in his review of Phil Noyce’s recent film adaptation, because it has “served as a journalistic guidebook, a prophecy, and even a tourist icon” (1). It is practically impossible to find any assessment of the Vietnam War (especially one that investigates the role of the press) that does not cite Greene’s novel. It is now “sold at kiosks in Ho Chi Minh City as a symbol of local colour, like *Moby Dick* on Nantucket, Massachusetts” (2). The reportage-style narrative is filled with vivid descriptions of the press landscape: meetings with anonymous informants in seedy back rooms, press conferences complete with a charade of censorship, fictional representations of some of the world’s top reporters, and reporting from dangerous locales.

But journalism is not simply background in the novel. Greene also fields a first person journalist-narrator, Thomas Fowler, whose diarized story fleshes out the entire working of gathering news from the frontline, who views himself as a mechanical and inanimate recorder of facts, and who considers the function of the journalist at length. "I am a reporter," Fowler says in one of the novel's many memorable reflections on reporting, "God exists only for leader-writers" (7). The novel is replete with mention of newspapers, journals, pornographic magazines, sex manuals, Congressional reports, paintings, and novels. Much of Greene's aesthetic, refined and developed from his early fiction, is expanded in the novel. Supplanting questions of the place of journalism in the body politic, the press as an instrument of control, and the dystopic nature of reporting, are more central questions that existed on the fringes of his earlier journalistic work. The authenticity of "facts," journalistic objectivity, and involvement form the heart of *The Quiet American*.

Here, Greene uses the word *engagé* for the first time in his writings, and after many years of advocating the necessary political neutrality of writers, he produces a journalist-narrator, Fowler, who is forced to take political action. Despite his credo of non-involvement, Fowler's detachment from politics erodes as the novel progresses and as he realizes that, although "the responsibilities of the West" mean nothing to him, it is impossible to avoid individual responsibility if at the same time he is to "remain human" (125). Fowler portrays himself as neutral and objective despite an unacknowledged longing for involvement and, over the course of the novel, experience forces him to choose a side. A significant change, then, can be noticed in *The Quiet American*. Not only does Greene make the correspondent the narrator of the story, but the novel suggests a far more serious engagement on the part of its author with the contradictions inherent in the claims of direct, transparent, neutral reportage and the necessity of

the courageous individual act. The narrative method creates the illusion of a character whose empirical experience proves to him that man is not in charge of his own destiny, and that absolute value lies beyond human reality. This fundamental change for Greene is a result of direct experience in Indo China and a reconceptualization of his philosophy of writing and journalism which began with *The End of the Affair* and is fleshed out further in *The Quiet American*. In this way, the novel can be read as a realistic assault on the concept of journalistic objectivity through Fowler, the “neutral reporter of facts” who comes to understand the shortcomings of his idealistic worldview.

For Greene, the early 1950s were “a period of great unrest” where he embarked on an “extended globe-trotting” to the more exotic trouble-spots on the geo-political map (*WE* 139). “It became a habit with me to visit troubled places, not to seek material for novels but to regain the sense of insecurity which I had enjoyed in the three blitzes on London” (*WE* 119). The restlessness of his life during this period is reflected in his work. It translates into, Brian Thomas observes, “a note of agitation and uncertainty in his [novels]... an inclination to see things from the viewpoint of the betrayer rather than that of the victim” (53). The more he travelled the more interested he became in the function of the press. As watchdog, he wrote innumerable letters to the press on a wide variety of subjects. In the 1950s alone, his letters touched on author’s freedoms, ageing, and the right of prostitutes to ply their services like anyone else in a free state (*Reflections* 115). Greene’s escapism, the rapid experience of different cultures, elicited a heightened interest in writing journalism, partly to finance his travel and fiction writing and partly to continue the detached observation that had become his journalistic forte. The journalistic method of removed observation began to become more present in Greene’s fiction as he wrote articles for various publications with an increased audacity at the beginning of the

1950s. Through the novelist-narrator Bendrix in *The End of the Affair* and Fowler in *The Quiet American*, Greene explored a first-person, reportage style narrative technique that incorporated almost verbatim accounts from articles he had published leading to criticism like that by Grahame Smith, who finds *The Quiet American* “a tired novel” mostly on account of the extended reporting (22).

More than any other novel by Greene, *The Quiet American* stems directly from its author’s experience as a journalist. As Greene himself points out, there is “more direct reportage” in this novel than in any other: “I had determined to employ again the experience gained in *The End of the Affair* in the use of a first person and the time-shift, [which justified] my choice of a journalist as the ‘I’” (Intro). He travelled to Indo-China in the winter from 1951 to 1954 and much of the narrative matter of the novel is lifted almost directly from articles he wrote for *The Listener*, the *Tablet*, *The Spectator*, *Figaro*, *The London Magazine* and *The Sunday Times*, along with sections of his Indo China journals. Despite this seemingly substantial journalistic contribution there is much debate around how much “work” Greene actually did in Vietnam, especially during his first two years in the country. His most controversial biographer, Michael Sheldon, notes:

He did very little work during [his visits to Vietnam]... by 1952 he had spent almost a total of three months in the country, but only written one major article. While foreign correspondents in Saigon were constantly facing deadlines, Greene could take his time to gather material, and could go off for brief holidays. (117)

Although Greene travelled to Vietnam for *Life* magazine, receiving \$4,000 for the journey, its editors rejected what he wrote.¹² The articles he wrote for *The Spectator*, *London Magazine* (a

¹² This article was eventually published in *Paris Match* as part of a joint piece with Raymond Cartier.

piece about opium and his experiences with the Sûreté, and the *Tablet* are taken directly from his journals.

Greene's steadfast belief in detachment and objectivity as a prerequisite to honest writing began to wane as he himself got closer to the action. Previous to his experience in Vietnam, honest observation, unencumbered by political or institutional motivation, was his method and mantra. But when he was caught up in the fighting between the French paratroops and the Viet Minh he thought, "how stupid it would be to lose a leg or be hit by shrapnel for no reason at all, in this country which is not mine, in a war which is none of my business" (qtd. in Adamson 128). By the time the character of Fowler had arrived in his consciousness he had become involved: "Vietnam had become his business" (Adamson 128). Perhaps, as Fowler speculates about himself, Greene had to have his foot thrust in the "mess of life" before he could see the pain. Hitherto he had tried to observe objectively by staying removed from the action - in Malaya and Kenya for instance. But, as Adamson observes, "when he ran up against the Americans his detachment dissolved" (129).

The parallels between Thomas Fowler, the journalist-narrator of the novel, and Greene have been noted and debated in most every major critical study of the novel. Adamson notes that though Greene

... had no intention of turning his experience in Vietnam into a novel, *The Quiet American* took hold of him and fiction merged with fact so that the book contains more direct reportage than any of his other novels. Fowler... sees and speaks what Greene saw and wrote in Vietnam. (247)

Fowler's first name, Thomas, is the name Greene chose for himself when he was baptised as a Catholic – after St. Thomas Didymus, the doubter. Fowler's description of Phat Diem begins as

Greene's does in *Paris Match*, from the bell tower of the Cathedral. The press conference where he meets Granger, the American correspondent, is the same as one Greene attended, and his description of Cao Dai in Tanyin resembles sections of Greene's *Sunday Times* articles (Sherry 324).

Fowler, too, is an experienced reporter who prefers the title of correspondent because it denotes his lack of involvement. "The job of a reporter is to expose and record," he says. Fowler's great boast at the beginning that he "has no politics" is a version of Greene's belief, noted in the introduction to this study and repeatedly stated in interviews and articles, that a writer must not take sides, must expose but not judge. "I wrote what I saw, I took no action," says Fowler, "Even an opinion is a kind of action" (23). His neutrality and disinterestedness are consistent with his claims of being an impartial, "dégagé" chronicler of events. Stuck in the watch tower, returning from the Caodaist cathedral in Tanyin, Fowler tells Pyle that he has no interest in politics: "I am a reporter. I am not *engagé*... I don't take sides. I'll still be reporting, whoever wins" (102). Fowler's radically empirical view thus offers him protection from action and engagement.

Fowler's virtues as a journalist are difficult to judge from his first-person narrative. We know that he has been assigned to Vietnam for five years and that he initially resists his paper's calls to return to London as an editor. "I don't think you have found me a bad correspondent," Fowler writes to his editor in London (73). His editor's response does not contradict Fowler's claim as he promises to "keep the chair of foreign editor warm for [him]" (172). But Fowler responds cynically, laughing that the editor "believed that I cared about the job and the paper" (173). Indeed, Fowler can be viewed as a kind of journalistic everyman. He takes justifiable pride in his profession – in his case "the desire to file a better story than the other man's" but he

admits its pitfalls (134). Like Mabel Warren, Fowler has dulled his ability to feel others' suffering, and he laments that even "Pyle could see pain when it was in front of his eyes" (35). And later, trying to think of the right way to tell Phuong about Pyle's death, he says, "Working on a newspaper, one does not learn the way to break bad news" (13). Fowler's initial inability to relate personally to the suffering and carnage around him, a prerequisite condition of most all of Greene's protagonists, comes through in his somewhat cavalier attitude to reporting: "I think it's time I had a look at the war," he informs the table casually when Pyle invites Fowler and Phuong to dinner the first time they meet (40).

Fowler also contrasts his disengaged "English" method of news collection with that of the American press, characterizing the latter as "big, noisy, boyish and middle-aged, full of sour cracks against the French" (15). Bill Granger, whom Sherry believes is based on famous American war correspondent Larry Allen, represents Fowler's worst fears of American journalists: "He was like an emblematic statue of all I thought I hated in America – as ill-designed as the Statue of Liberty and as meaningless" (37). Granger returns the compliment, calling Fowler a "Limey" (42).

A journalist who finds press conferences "wearisome," and attends them only because he has "nothing better to do," Fowler has to rely on his assistant Dominguez to get most of his job done. In some ways, Dominguez recalls the journalist Minty's understudy in *England Made Me* but is more resourceful and necessary. "He attended in my place the less important Press Conferences, kept a sensitive ear open to the tones of gossip and rumour, and took my messages to the cable-offices and the censorship," Fowler says of Dominguez (134). When his assistant becomes ill, Fowler reluctantly does his own leg-work but admits, "I was less capable than Dominguez of telling truth from falsehood" (135). Reeling from the shock at having witnessed

the blast outside the Hotel Continental in Place Garnier – a real incident that occurred in January 1952 - Fowler entrusts Dominguez to file the story.

Fowler is simultaneously proud of his profession and cynical about its practice. He believes that honest reporting is a worthwhile occupation, reserving his scorn for deskbound editorial writers who possess opinions but not facts. He confesses to Pyle, “I haven’t noticed much regard for truth in our papers” (96). Fowler rejects a promotion to foreign editor of his paper (largely because of Phuong) which would mean returning to “dreary London.” Instead, he threatens to quit: “[The editor] believed I cared about the job, about the paper” (155). But Fowler learns that there is such a thing as too many facts. Journalistic conventions of storytelling are inadequate for normal social relations, he finds. Again, wondering how to tell Phuong about Pyle’s death, he thinks, “I had no technique for telling her slowly and gently. I was a correspondent: I thought in headlines. ‘American official murdered in Saigon’” (21). But if Fowler’s newspaper prints that headline, it will be over someone else’s story because the censors would delay the telegram of his story until the French reporters had filed theirs. Even if Fowler’s story had got through, it would have been fiction. “It wouldn’t have done to cable the details of a true career... it would have damaged Anglo-American relations.” Fowler’s report on an earlier bombing, presumably for similar reasons, was “altered in the office” (142).

The covert nature of news gathering is further exposed when the reporters covering the war resort to the fictional techniques of undercover agents. Although many instances of make-believe news permeate the novel, the most prominent instance occurs when Granger tells Pyle: “Do you think I’d really go near their stinking highway? Stephen Crane could describe a war without seeing one. Why shouldn’t I?” (36). This portrayal is reminiscent of the renowned Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock in Waugh’s *Scoop*, who, while on assignment in Abyssinia, is said to have

dispatched “some of the most colourful eye-witness stuff” without ever having been near the fighting (41). Wenlock James, Hitchcock’s British counterpart, is said to have “scooped the world with an eye-witness story of the sinking of the Lusitania four hours before she was hit” (92). He is also credited with bringing about a Balkan revolution by inventing such vivid accounts of it that other reporters were afraid to refute them; and for his depiction of the war “he was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize” (91). Although Greene’s depiction is not as denigrating as Waugh’s, it is certainly as striking. Here, Granger’s admission that he creates news reflects Greene’s growing perception that the reality that journalism created for the public was subjective.

Fowler discusses what he calls “non-involvement” often but the reason for his disaffection is not, as one might expect, non-interventionist politics but cynicism about man:

Wouldn’t we all do better not trying to understand, accepting the fact that no human being will ever understand another, not a wife a husband, a lover a mistress, nor a parent a child? Perhaps that’s why men have invented God – a being capable of understanding.

Perhaps if I wanted to be understood or understand I would bamboozle myself into belief, but I am a reporter. (60)

Fowler believes that to have opinions is to interfere like York Harding, who Fowler says “is a superior sort of journalist... a diplomatic correspondent.” He gets hold of an idea and then alters every situation to fit the idea” (186). Fowler “[laughs] at anyone who spends too much time writing about what doesn’t exist – mental concepts” (38). To think one understands is dangerous. It is, as Brian Thomas observes, “tantamount to belief, and belief is blind” (82). Pyle, like Harding, never sees “anything he hasn’t heard in a lecture hall, and his writers and his lecturers made a fool of him. When he saw a dead body he couldn’t even see the wounds” (24).

From Fowler's perspective, Pyle is a classic victim, the model gullible reader of reports filed by journalists like Harding. Pyle considers Harding a "serious writer... the term excluded novelists, poets, dramatists" (16-17). Like Greene's unflattering description of the readers of popular fiction and newspapers in *Stamboul Train* awaiting their "lion's steak," Pyle, the quiet American, is in need of opinionated, subjective news to reinforce his belief in the "third force" of American democracy. Indeed, Pyle cannot separate fact from fiction, reality from fantasy. He is Fowler's foil – a man who chooses involvement over neutrality and is not guided by facts but concepts and a stubborn belief in the righteousness of his cause. Pyle and Fowler represent, as O'Prey notes, "opposite values in a dialogue between innocence and experience, ideology and doubt, idealism and realism... [Pyle] is a dangerous innocent stumbling around in a political minefield" (103).

In contrast with Pyle's belief in the conceptual, Fowler makes powerful claims for his unerring command over facts, history, and reality, and, despite his cynicism, readily reels them off to anyone interested. He recalls during his first meeting with Pyle that he had explained the network of complicated alliances of the forces of war: "I was a record always turned on for the benefit of newcomers" (18). Fowler sees himself as a mechanical and inanimate recorder of facts, a recording device, that can be "turned on or off" at will. At a critical stage in the novel, Dominguez tells Fowler that Pyle had briefed visiting Congressmen that the old colonial powers, England and France, could not do the job of establishing model democracies in Asia, and "America came in now with clean hands" (137). Fowler, however, corrects the record, citing instances of American colonization: "Hawaii, Puerto Rico... New Mexico" (137). In the watchtower, Pyle attempts to explain Eisenhower's "Domino Theory" to Fowler, who interrupts: "I know that record. Siam goes, Malaya goes... What does "go" mean?" (100). Fowler's reliance

on facts aligns him with *Stamboul Train's* Mabel Warren, who demonstrates a similar attachment and summons facts with ruthless efficiency to buttress her story or coerce sources into releasing more information.

Fowler's belief in this ideologically transparent and neutral ground is fervent enough for him to suggest to Pyle that "we've no business here" (152). For Fowler, as Adamson observes, "opinions are abstract: reportage is concrete. To presume is to be blind: to report is to remain sensitive to empirical reality" (121). So Fowler watches and his politics are based on empirical evidence. The peasants, he says, "want enough rice... They don't want to be shot at. They want one day to be much the same as another. They don't want our white skins around telling them what they want" (94). Fowler has no interest in "'isms and 'ocracies. Give me facts. A rubber planter beats his labourer – all right, I'm against him. I've seen a priest, so poor he hasn't a change of trousers, working fifteen hours a day in a cholera epidemic, eating nothing but rice and salt fish, saying his Mass with an old cup- a Wood platter. I don't believe in God and yet I'm for that priest" (94). He prefers the French to the Americans because they are dying for a cause. "They aren't leading these people on with half-lies like your politicians - and ours," he tells Pyle.

Despite being told that "one day something will happen, you will take a side," (151) until late in the novel, Fowler does not conceive that his position will waver under any circumstance or that the ebb and flow of experience will influence or change him. As a passive reporter of facts, Fowler believes that he creates a distance between himself and the war, not allowing sympathy to weaken his objective stance.

Fowler's steadfast belief in neutrality parallels notions of press impartiality in the 1940s and 1950s, when "press objectivity reached its zenith" (Ward 215). The doctrine of journalistic objectivity was taken up in the 1920s, a North American invention of newspapers and journalism

associations. Although the “objective” or “matter of fact” report went back to the seventeenth century, objective reporting in the early part of the twentieth century was “stricter, more methodical, and more professional” than ever before (216). This positivism in reporting marks a similar shift by science towards a “pure” objectivity. Fowler’s objective mantra (“I have no politics”) corresponds with that of Charles G. Ross, widely believed to be the first person to write on objectivity as a guiding principle in journalism. In *The Writing of News*, Ross comments: “News writing is objective to the last degree in the sense that the writer not allowed to editorialize... and must keep out of the story” (20).

Indeed, Fowler can be viewed as the most developed of a series of Greene’s characters who have a steadfast belief in the authority of facts and objectivity. The line agent in the original opening to *The Heart of the Matter* says he is only a “compiler of facts.” In *The Third Man* Calloway claims to be unimaginative and to have reconstructed his story from his files. And Fowler’s distant and impersonal viewpoint links him most closely with Bendrix, the novelist-narrator of *The End of the Affair*. Like Fowler, Bendrix, as Adamson observes, is a “controlled, detached, recorder of events used by Greene like a camera toward a certain end” (105). Both Bendrix and Fowler’s reportage-style narrative and self-styled neutrality give the appearance of distant observation that becomes broken down by a close subjective relationship as their stories proceed. Their peculiar shift between first-person narration and third-person observation becomes their defining quality.

The Quiet American, then, presents us with a first person voice which describes a peculiar third-person reality and a reporter-narrator, Thomas Fowler, whose need for distance and objectivity is paradoxically matched with an unacknowledged longing for involvement. As the novel progresses, Greene undermines Fowler’s objective mantra, showing that journalism often

does not, or cannot, do its job. Fowler comes close to admitting that his claim of being a disengaged, impartial observer and narrator is a façade when he receives the letter from his wife refusing to divorce him: “I thought, how much you pride yourself on being *dégagé*, the reporter, not the leader-writer, and what a mess you make behind the scenes” (130). Every time Fowler lands in a difficult situation, he rakes up the issue of his professional identity, wearing it, as Chakrabarti observes, “as his Talisman” (143).

Fowler’s brave front of disinterestedness soon slips when, in a hurry to escape an imminent attack from Viet Cong companies on the tower, he panics. Instead of climbing down the ladder, he jumps, twisting his ankle in the process and a realization dawns on him: “I had believed I was tough and unimaginative, all that a truthful reporter and observer should be” (116). This contrasts sharply with his reaction in Phat Diem when the patrol Fowler accompanies comes under enemy fire: “I hope Phuong had sent my suits to the cleaners... I tried to remember whether I had paid the British Consul in Hanoi for the bottle of whisky he had allowed me” (52). Just before he is taken on a dive bombing mission from Haiphong, Fowler thinks he “could qualify for keenness with Granger” and “if one writes about war, self-respect demands that occasionally one shares the risks” (164). At the front and under fire, Fowler’s commitment to objectivity and distance remains clear, but when he is near death it is usurped by his humanity.

Fowler’s neutrality, of course, does not mean that he is a man without affective attachments but that his opinions are veiled in distant aesthetic. He loves Vietnam, for example, the same way he loves Phuong. At his first meeting with Pyle, he muses on the beauty of Vietnamese women: “Up the street came the lovely flat figures – the white silk trousers, the long tight jackets in pink and mauve patterns slit up the thigh: I watched them with the nostalgia I knew I would feel when I had left these regions for ever” (12-13). Even this kind of appreciation

seems removed from his experience. Brian Thomas observes in his analysis of the novel as an example of the romance mode that Fowler's reportage style "is a response to a certain exotic picturesque that tends to be displayed in visually static terms" (32). For Thomas, this type of narration lacks the immediacy of direct, participatory experience, and Fowler "essentially offers a picture, something seen from a certain distance" (30). Fowler's Vietnam is "a series of still vignettes which have something of the effect of a picture postcard, often silent and remote," suggesting a vision of reality similar to a news report in describing a distant, third-person reality. Like journalism, which has been defended as objective on the grounds that it collects fragments of reality to represent the whole, Fowler believes that through limited observation the whole is revealed.

Significantly, here, notions of vision are intricately tied to Fowler's objectivity. Seeing is important to him: "I wrote what I saw," he tells Vigot (16). He accompanies the patrol in Phat Diem because the lieutenant tells Fowler, "We will go and see" (53). Fowler's memory is also photographic, and he takes immense interest in photographs, and remembers almost every photo he comes across: "I turned my memories over at random like pictures in an album" (92). Called upon to identify Pyle's body, he is reminded of the photographs of the dead man he had seen earlier: "I saw him in a family snapshot, riding on a dude ranch, bathing on Long Island, photographed with his colleagues in some apartment on the twenty-third floor" (13). When he goes to pick up Phuong's belongings from Pyle's flat he notices her photograph with Pyle, taken "in the botanical gardens beside a large stone garden" (20). Fowler also has a picture-perfect recollection of his first meeting with Pyle, "coming across the square towards the bar of the Continental," with his "gangly legs" and his "crew-cut," "he folded himself around a chair and ordered a beer" (18).

Fowler's variable sight adds to the illusion of photographic realism in the novel. His eyes, while trying to convey the action "as he sees it," also act as a complex camera mechanism usually portraying action from afar. Fowler's view from the bell tower at Phat Diem, for instance, offers a pictorial panorama of the war, a vision of a particular battle seen all at once and as a whole. The perspective of detachment has the virtue of comprehensiveness but at the same time the truth that it provides is limited and partial. From the start, Greene draws attention to the incompleteness of Fowler's vision and thus the problems with his objective worldview. When he introduces Phuong, Fowler observes, "I saw a girl in the next doorway. I couldn't see her face only the white silk trousers and the long-flowered robe, but I knew her for all that" (1). Often Fowler refuses to see the whole picture, literally as well as figuratively, even when there is ample opportunity: "I was not going to get up for a policeman – I could see his khaki shorts without lifting my head" (6). Fowler, then, takes the part for the whole, relying on synecdoche, a common characteristic of news reports. This partial vision reveals his limited perspective and makes us further aware of his subjectivity and egocentricity despite his claims of being neutral in his observation.

Partial vision is compounded with censorship in the novel to further undermine claims of objectivity. Because he sees human beings as basically isolated, as Adamson observes, Fowler thinks it moral to report only what he sees. He also, however, concedes that reporting is often impossible: "It wouldn't have done to cable the details of [Pyle's] true career for it would have damaged Anglo-America relations" (181). And censorship is also imposed when he and Granger get information at a press conference but are told it cannot be printed. Only opinion, Fowler observes, is permitted and Vietnam is "awash with it." But Fowler regards opinion as "empty

privilege” by which humans, in trying to make sense of things, “inevitably commit intellectual violence by imposing themselves on others” (176).

Censorship is prevalent in the novel. On his way back to Vigot’s office after identifying Pyle’s body Fowler cables the news of the American’s death. But he “knew too well that the French correspondents would already be informed... or the censors would hold my telegram” (14). At Phat Diem, Fowler observes, “This was defeat: no journalists were allowed, no cables could be sent, for the papers must carry only victories” (46). Cables rush back and forth in every direction: “the day’s telegrams, the bulletins of the Vietnam Press” (134). Fowler’s editor cables back to him, trusting him to tackle the “confused situation in Indo-China” (173). Press conferences conducted by the French Army are a charade, and Fowler likens the atmosphere to that of an unruly classroom: the French colonel behaves like a “popular schoolmaster” where, if reporters ask too many questions, “the headmaster would appoint a member of his staff more efficient at keeping order” (65). This censorship and control parallels Greene’s earlier portrayal of the press in *It’s a Battlefield*, rendering an unflattering portrait of the business of reporting through Fowler’s eyes.

Fowler’s experience of Vietnam is similar to Greene’s and involvement creeps up on him unexpectedly, as it did on the author. Faced with the biggest story of his Vietnam posting, the death of fifty civilians outside the Hotel Continental, Fowler is overwhelmed by the sights and sounds, and is left unable to report it. “Being there on the spot, perhaps I got a bit shocked,” he tells Dominguez. “I can’t think of the thing in terms of a cable” (175). Concerned though Fowler is about the horrors of emotional violence, it is the bodies broken by the Saigon bombing that force him to become engaged. Realizing that Pyle has been naively supporting the bombers, Fowler thinks, “What’s the good? He’ll always be innocent, you can’t blame the innocent, they

are always guiltless. All you can do is control them or eliminate them. Innocence is a kind of insanity” (163). Pyle must be stopped and Fowler decides that he must help this process along and take action. Involvement is suddenly produced, as Adamson observes, “from empirical dissatisfaction when that very position of uninvolvedness is threatened” (45).

It is Fowler’s reputation for neutrality that ensnares him in betrayal and death. Mr. Heng, a Communist, shows him evidence that the Americans are sponsoring the Third Force violence and asks him to report it. “Or perhaps you cannot,” Heng asks. Fowler replies, “My paper’s not interested in General Thé. They are only interested in your people, Heng... [The police] aren’t interested in Thé either. And do you think they would dare to touch an American? He has diplomatic privileges. He’s a graduate of Harvard. The Minister’s very fond of Pyle” (115). The press does not, or cannot, as Adamson observes, do its job; objective observation alone will not expose the truth and so we come to the necessity for the courageous individual act. Fowler thus turns Pyle over to the Viet Minh, not because he believes in their cause, but because, given his own liberal conscience, he has no alternative. “Suffering is not increased by numbers,” he tells us. “One body can contain all the suffering the world can feel. I had judged like a journalist in terms of quantity and I had betrayed my own principles” (152). He cannot forget the baby “covered under the straw hat. I can’t get it out of my head” (152). Fowler turns Pyle over because after seeing innocents die he must do something in order to live with himself. He must be subjective and “take a side,” and he chooses the Viet Minh.

Through Fowler, Greene critiques the kind of journalistic objectivity that he had subscribed to in his earlier writing, novels, and reportage. Related to his lack of objectivity and inability to fulfill the function of societal watchdog, Fowler is purblind in a metaphoric sense, “a figure cursed with wisdom that is of little use to him in deciphering the truth” (Chakrabarti 234).

Objectivity, in this connection, is seen as an incorrect theory of journalistic inquiry, built upon an indefensible epistemology and a false characterization of journalism as passively empirical. The epistemology of traditional objectivity presupposes epistemic dualisms of fact/value and fact/interpretation that Greene realized distorts our understanding (Ward 261). Journalists, then, are objective only insofar as they are passively empirical. The epistemology of traditional objectivity grounds itself in the persistent metaphor of the journalist as a passive recorder who aspires to be a perfect recording instrument. As long as recording was the central notion, objectivity could be understood as the passive intake and transmission of information. Objectivity was about recording with “high fidelity,” as Ward says, “as phonographs promised” (262).

However, in *The Quiet American* we see that traditional objectivity is flawed by the mistaken belief that it requires claims to be based on absolute standards or facts, as ascertained by neutral, perspective-less agents. As Adamson observes, “[Greene’s reportorial method] and the empirical approach is non-biased, if we forget about the author. But we cannot” (191). Contrary then to the idea that a journalist is detached from and thus superior to the coverage, Greene’s novel shows that the press “belongs” to its milieu. This belongingness, according to an editorial on his journalism in the *Cebu Sun Star* “is less the condition of a performer who wanders into the stage when it is not yet his cue. It is more of the quandary of a letter or even a punctuation that, in the context of a sentence, is altered by and alters the meaning in that string of symbols” (1). Fowler, a journalistic caricature who comes to realize his own shortcomings, a self-described “recording device,” is exposed by Greene as human and journalism as a truth-seeking but ultimately, as David Remnick, editor of *The New Yorker* stated in a 2006 interview with the *Globe and Mail*, “a flawed and fleeting project.”

Conclusion

Graham Greene's perception of the world was, as Matthew Rubery observes of Joseph Conrad, "influenced as much by the daily press as by serious literature" (752). In fact, Greene admitted as much in an interview with V.S. Naipaul in the *Daily Telegraph Magazine* in 1958: "I've always liked reading newspapers. My enemies might say I get my ideas from theological works and newspapers" (1). The newspaper made available to Greene, to adapt a phrase from Mikhail Bakhtin, "new worlds of verbal perception" (323). Journalists are to Greene what Caliban is to Prospero: things of darkness he grudgingly acknowledges as his own but from which he then distances himself. As an editorial in the *Cebu Sun Star* said of Greene's journalist characters,

If there were a Madonna filling in as patron saint for journalists, chances are she would be blessing and taunting the confused members of the press peopling Graham Greene's novels... Clinging at the periphery of this political and personal turbulence was the quintessential Greene journalist: someone whose insistence on impartiality and disengagement approached the obsessional. However, the journalist-character's decisions and actions invariably had the opposite effect of sinking the Fourth Estate inextricably deeper into, what Greene called, the heart of the matter. (1)

Of course, there is hardly one character in Greene's entire body of work who is a paragon of virtue. Greene's journalists have in them all the shades of grey that distinguish his more notorious central characters: the whisky priest, Scobie, Pinkie, Raven, and Harry Lime. Indeed, it seems that Greene's journalists, as compared to his other characters, are more aware of their surroundings and the machinations of the profession they represent. It is this awareness of the

world around them and their helplessness to do anything about it combined with their complicity in the scheme of things, that mark them off as essentially tragic characters, more alienated and isolated than Greene's priests, gangsters, detectives, and economic attachés.

Journalists are at the heart of Graham Greene's fictional world. Denizens of the fictional country "Greenland," his writers in action infuse that metaphoric realm with the reality that Greene thought was missing from the world of the novel. They are as ubiquitous, as Leopold Duran has said of Greene's priests, "as the figure of the lone woman in the paintings of Edward Hopper, part metaphor, part real person" (15). Writing on *It's a Battlefield*, Paul O'Prey notes, "The city streets are full of newspaper vendors and quotations from newspapers are numerous, as if individuals in this modern, mass society cannot escape the intrusion of the outside world into their private one" (35). Greene's writing embodies and reflects the ongoing debate about the function of journalists and journalism in the body politic and culture. And whether Greene's journalists purport to inform, entertain, or hold to account, their idiosyncratic characteristics combined with Greene's attention to detail in describing the profession provide a stroke of realism to the world they inhabit. The narratives that Greene weaves, with such realism, suggest that the journalist in him profoundly influenced his fiction. The wealth of physical detail and the particulars of the journalistic practice make the fictional settings in each of the novels realistic and powerful. They lend credibility to the narrative, and thus strengthen Greene's critique of the profession.

Writing of the need to reform journalism schools, Jack Schafer observes that, "Journalism depends on uncredentialed losers, outsiders, dilettantes, frustrated lawyers, unabashed alcoholics—and, yes, creative psychopaths—to keep its blood red" (7). In typical Greene fashion, his journalists have filled most of these roles, falling, like most all of Greene's

characters, between virtue and damnation. They have played heroes and villains, embodying a range of journalistic motifs, as well as appearing in other guises such as the drunk, the crusader with a broken lance, the outsider, the war correspondent, and even the vicious editor (McMonagle 65). Many critics have commented on Greene's honest thieves and compassionate murderers but little has been said of his subjective observer. Greene's personal involvement with the profession allowed him to portray his journalists not as mere recorders of facts or chroniclers of day-to-day events but as human beings whose narratives reveal them as people trying to find meaning in the stories they are pursuing. The media become a signature presence in the novels analysed in this study, embodying a range of themes from the illusion of press objectivity to the role of popular media and journalism to the dystopic elements of the news gathering process. Fiction allowed Greene an outlet to put his ideas about media, considered thoroughly and refined through journalistic travel, to work in a conceptual space.

Stamboul Train's Mabel Warren and *It's a Battlefield's* Jim Conder do not involve themselves in the philosophy of the profession and are nonchalant about the way they go about collecting news. They often find themselves in situations where they are forced to choose a side despite being part of a profession which emphasizes objectivity. However, in each instance, they retreat from conflict and attempt to regain a sceptical distance from their subject. Characterized by a deep scepticism about the world, each of these characters' practical philosophies are defined by detachment and rationality. Like Fowler, they are recording instruments. However, without a basis for formulating an alternative ethic, these observers, like Greene for many years, cannot act against what they condemn.

Although differences abound in Greene's later journalists (as we see with Fowler), they share common characteristics related to his portrayal of the profession as shady, inhabiting a

“scarred and shabby” world (*Brighton Rock* 106); they are poorly paid, live parsimoniously, are physically abhorrent, dress shabbily, are employed by small provincial papers, and most often cater to a tabloid readership. Grim and gritty, with a range of habits, almost all of them drink profusely. Fred Hale, who gives out prizes for the *Daily Messenger* in *Brighton Rock*, “Drank too much” according to the inspector giving his post-mortem, and Mabel Warren twice goes through “the visible shedding of her drunkenness” (34). Not surprisingly, then, most of his journalists live in seedy dwellings. Minty, from *England Made Me*, lives in a small one-room flat on the top of a four-story building, sparsely furnished with “the brown woollen dressing gown hanging on the door, the cocoa and water-biscuits in the cupboard, the little Madonna on the mantelpiece” (136). Warren puts up with “a small flat” (34). Fowler’s home consists of a bare room with a dripping cold water tap in the bathroom, and Conder lives in a “bed-sitting room” whose only features “were pictures of the family hanging on the wall and a shaving mirror” (22).

Greene fuses the image of the dog with that of the journalist, most memorably in the case of Warren, the newshound who fights untiringly for the scoop. The image of the dogged pursuit of news by reporters is given a macabre twist in the cases of Minty and Conder, when Greene associates both with the vulture, feeding remorselessly on the carcass of newsworthy events and people. Both images lead on to a broader association of the hunger for news with physical appetite among the readers as well as journalists. Warren’s readership is “hungry... for its lions’ steak” (70) and Minty’s constant craving for news is matched only by his yearning for cigarettes and cups of tepid coffee. The image of ingestion of news is embedded in Greene’s portrayal of media processes, attended closely by associated images of excretion. Conder explicitly compares the mechanism of news gathering and newspaper circulation with the bodily cycle, while Warren

associates newspapers with menstruation. In both novels, this association serves as a reminder of the rise of the popular and the change in motive of the press to meet public demand.

The nature of news, in this connection, was one of Greene's most consistent themes. In *It's a Battlefield*, Conder reflects on the short-lived nature of the stories he writes: "Condemned to the recording of trivialities, he saw the only hope of a posthumous immortality in a picturesque lie which might catch a historian's notice as it lay buried in an old file" (87). Greene's distinction between fiction and news-writing is one of his most repeated. Almost five decades after *It's a Battlefield* Greene held the same view about the ephemerality of news, contrasting it with the longevity of fiction. In the 1981 interview with Marie-Francoise Allain, he said:

There's one great distinction between the writer and the professional journalist: a written or televised reportage is only read or seen once, after which it disappears into the archives, while a novel carries on for a number of years. (88)

Not all Greene's fiction, though, enjoyed similar sorts of life-expectancy, as he told Allain: "I've always enjoyed telling stories, and my impression is that readers prefer this to the nouveau roman, for instance. The life expectancy of the nouveau roman turned out to be limited" (89).

Greene's experience and achievements as a literary and non-literary journalist at various times and a correspondent at others created in him an overwhelming belief in the virtues of the individual reporter and the corresponding vices of others in the business, particularly editors. From the perspective of the individual journalist, being close to the action, witnessing tragedy and horror, grants Greene's journalists a moral superiority over their bosses. The editor/journalist relationship in Greene's fiction, which is treated only briefly in this study, would make an interesting examination in and of itself. All three of the major characters discussed in this study view themselves as victims of their employers, who in turn lack the discernment to appreciate the

reporter's excellent work and superior vision. As McMonagle says about the portrayal of journalists in Michael Ignatieff's *Charlie Johnson in the Flames*, the "reportorial egocentrism weakens the criticism of journalism" in the novels.

The image of metaphoric blindness of individual journalists sets up an ironic contrast with their professional function as watchdogs of the society, the supposed "eyes that show others the world" (Chakrabarti 132). Unsurprisingly, then, Greene's journalists are insecure about their own physical appearance and rely heavily on mirrors and photographs in order to grasp reality. Warren is seen trying to compose herself before a mirror before getting on the train at Cologne. Conder visualizes himself as someone in an "old school photograph," and Fowler can sense the massive explosion at Rue Catinat only through a mirror image: "The world I inhabited... suddenly inexplicably broke in pieces... two of the mirrors on the wall flew at me and collapsed half way" (179). The association of Greene's journalists with broken mirrors, old photographs, and a common insecurity about their place in society suggests that they are habitually on the outside looking in.

Throughout all of Greene's novels, journalists are, as Chakrabarti observes, "protean, mutable creatures," a view that stems from seeing journalism as an in-between profession, a combination of detection, law, and writing. As a corollary, his journalists frequently double-up as amateur detectives, extending the image of watchdog. Warren works out Czinner's intentions from his briefcase, Minty gathers substantial evidence against Hall for murdering Anthony, and Fowler collects sufficient proof of Pyle's involvement with the bicycle bombs at the Hotel Continental. The complex and somewhat undefined nature of their profession seems to have an effect on the sexual orientation and morality of the journalists. Warren is a lesbian, Minty is a repressed homosexual and Conder "is accosted by women, but they never got him beyond the

doors of their flats, entrances to their hotels” (22). McMonagle believes that Fowler can be seen as a “perverted old man,” a reincarnation of the unashamedly lecherous journalist Hammersten of *England Made Me* (82). The transgressive sexuality of the journalists and their shifting identities give them core generic instability. Journalist and reportage contaminate the genre. Reportage frequently shades off into detection, allowing for complex, multiple readings. Journalists and their reports often introduce a contrary movement in the narrative, frequently carving out a “real space” within the confines of Greene’s fiction.

As if to return the compliment of Greene’s lifelong fascination with the workings of the media, the press found in him an inexhaustible source of good copy. Scanning the archives of *The Times*, “Graham Greene” appears in articles on subjects as varied as the fate of the Brighton West pier, Papa Doc and Haiti, Vietnam, the comparative merits of intercontinental train travel and flying, Evelyn Waugh’s diaries, trouble in the Naga Hills, and the state of the contemporary thriller. Greene, conversely, found the press to be an equally interesting source for his novels. A journalist, he said, must be “faithful to the notion of respecting the truth and mustn’t on any account set out with preconceived ideas or give allegiance to the paper which employs him” (*Conversations* 34). But, it should be noted, Greene was a novelist before a journalist and once remarked that “a writer’s task is more complicated than the journalist’s; it is to engage sympathy for characters outside the usual range, such as the traitor... to see that the villain is in fact human” (37). This study has sought to show that in Greene’s work those same sympathies are extended to the journalist, whom he represents in various complicated and varying ways.

The media, particularly print journalism and its operatives, are central to Greene’s fictional oeuvre, and perhaps it is their very ubiquity that is responsible for the absence of any substantial critical commentary on the subject. Journalism, a profession that combines the ethos

of espionage with authorship, held obvious attractions for the writer. The business of news collection, the many compromises and double-crossings it involves, the combination of mundane routine and breathtaking excitement on the job, the complex and the somewhat unaccountable and irregular process of composition – selection, editing, deletion, editorial intervention – Greene found fascinating and a veritable mine for sourcing characters. Journalism is a curiously grey profession, and this would again have appealed to Greene, who never tired of “articulating his fondness for indeterminate areas in all human affairs” (Sherry 122).

An interesting corollary to Greene’s attraction to journalism as a shady, in-between and inadequate profession is that his attitude to the profession and its practitioners remains deeply ambiguous, especially on evidence provided by his fiction. His use, evaluation, and deep consideration of journalism in its various forms, in journalists, the news media, and the popular press, is innovative and significant from a technical point of view. In typical Greene fashion, however, he does not allow the reader to come to any complacent conclusion about the primacy of the press in the scheme of things. The figure of the journalist, this study concludes, bridges the conflict between form and content, fact and fiction that is at the core of Greene’s enigmatic appeal for readers all around the world.

When journalists reflect on their role, they are likely to see themselves as standing on neutral ground. From this stance, they see themselves “watching the swirl of activity that marks modern government,” business and commerce, science, society, culture, and civil society, and they describe themselves more as recorders and critics, or, more aggressively, as sentinels and watchdogs (even as spies), than as custodians or stewards of democratic life (Adam xvii). There is utility – even some truth – to such a role. It positions the journalist outside of the action and

places the reporter outside the fray – free to record without the on all manner of events and subjects. Greene, this study concludes, positioned the journalist very much within it.

Focusing on *Stamboul Train*, *It's a Battlefield*, and *The Quiet American*, three of Greene's novels that have a journalist as a central character, this study examined Greene's neglected journalists, who are no less fascinating than his vast and varied cast of honest thieves and compassionate murderers. In Greene's fiction, journalists are decoys that keep up the illusion of realism, propping up the otherwise unrecognisable "Greeneland" with the more easily identifiable trestles of the modern media. Greene's outcast scribes and hacks, writers of doubtful talent, and journalist-detectives, came to represent a range of themes and questions relating to his ambiguous and sometimes contradictory attitude to the press, from the rise of newspapers to alienation, futility of communication, and the politics of objective journalism. His journalists testify, as Zadie Smith notes, that Greene was "a writer in the deepest, as well as the widest, sense of the term." The placing of words on a page to Greene was "as necessary as breathing" (195).

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