

Tribhuvan University

New Historicist Examination in Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*

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Letter of Recommendation

Ashok Acharya has completed his thesis entitled " New Historicist Examination in Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from 2068/05/05 B.S. to 2069/05/10 B. S. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Approval Letter

This thesis entitled “New Historicist Examination in Graham Greene’s *The Quiet American*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Ashok Acharya, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* exposes the deep and internal political intricacies of the long-fought Vietnam War within the love triangle of a Vietnamese girl Phuong with a British citizen Fowler and American citizen Pyle respectively. The Viet Nam War has become a matter of image and prestige for France, America, Britain and China to prove themselves as more powerful and superior to others. The soldiers are compelled to fight without knowing the reasons of war under the command of the selfish political leaders and the general people are forced to face unnecessary pains and sufferings. As a perfect new historicist novel, *The Quiet American* brings the literature and history together as a complement of each other. Highlighting the voices of the suppressed, oppressed, backward and marginalized people, it foregrounds the hidden, secret and so-called banal themes related to death, sex, drug abuse, smoking and so on. Moreover, it openly interrogates the universal and permanent truth blurring the generic boundary and making use of abundant matters from letters, poems, interviews, dramas, films and stories.

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I. Graham Greene and New Historical Concerns

This project entitled “New Historicist Examination in Graham Greene’s *The Quiet American*” aspires to excavate the complex political intricacies under the mask of love triangle. It examines the hidden interests and selfish motives of the colonizers behind the Vietnam War thereby showing the ‘divide and rule’ policy of France, Britain and America. Due to all-engulfing war in Vietnam, the condition of life of the people becomes extremely pathetic and deplorable. Vietnam becomes the matter of interest and place of war of the powerful countries to show their power and supremacy over other countries. So, this war is the war of reputation and prestige. Moreover, *The Quiet American* shows the relativity of truth regarding war, morality, religion and so on. The concept of truth is enmeshed with the history and power politics of that time.

The current research tends to prove the hypothesis that the triangular characterization functioning as a rivalry ultimately turns as the relation between the oppressor and oppressed. Dwindling relation among the characters seems as the treachery to overpower whole state mechanism and to show their supremacy.

The Quiet American (1955) by English novelist Graham Greene takes place during the early stages of American involvement in Vietnam during the period of French colonial rule. An Englishman and an American, who hold opposing views on the war, also are rivals in love. The plot is based on a love triangle between Fowler, a British journalist, Pyle, who is presented the Quiet American, and Phuong, a beautiful Vietnamese girl. The love triangle is symbolic of the political situation in mid-1950’s Vietnam; Fowler, representing the old colonial powers, tries to remain detached, while Pyle, representing the Americans’ naïve belief that democracy can be imposed

by a 'third force', merely adds to disorder and chaos. Phuong, symbolizing the Vietnamese, remains enigmatic throughout.

Elucidating and excavating the extremely dehumanizing life of people, the novel attempts to explore the selfish motives of the power holders behind the wars like Vietnam War. It examines the truth of war which is not absolute and changes over time when the power changes. Truth is the matter of perspective, attitude and viewpoint. Blurring the generic boundary of literary texts, it makes use of letters, stories, and poems; and there is abundant discussion about films and dramas. *The Quiet American* novelizes the history of Vietnam War and historicizes the imaginary story of the novel. The triangular love story between Flower and Pyle with Phuong is enmeshed with the history of Vietnam War. To explore such condition of Vietnamese people and to examine the political interests of America, Britain and France over the internal matters of Vietnam War, the research has made new historicism as a critical apparatus. To examine the historicity of the text and textuality of history, the theoretical modality called new historicism is, perhaps, the best one for the better analysis of the text to pay due and sincere tribute to it. So, it will incorporate the new historicist ideas put forward by various theorists and critics including Sonja Laden, Chung Hsiung Lai, Peter Barren, Richard Lehan, Stephen Greenblatt Michel Foucault and others.

Henry Graham Greene was born on 2 October 1904 at Hertfordshire in England. He was an English author, playwright and literary critic. His works explore the ambivalent moral and political issues of the modern world. Greene was notable for his ability to combine serious literary acclaim with widespread popularity. He worked for a period of time as a private tutor and then turned to journalism – first on the *Nottingham Journal*, and then as a sub-editor on *The Times*. Although Greene

objected strongly to being described as a Roman Catholic novelist rather than as a novelist who happened to be Catholic, Catholic religious themes are at the root of much of his writing. His writings also show a keen interest in the workings of international politics and intelligence. Greene suffered from bipolar disorder, which had a profound effect on his writing and personal life.

In 1925, while an undergraduate at Balliol College, Oxford, his first work, a poorly received volume of poetry entitled *Babbling April*, was published. Greene suffered from periodic bouts of depression while at Oxford, and largely kept to himself. Greene's first published novel was *The Man Within* (1929). Greene also wrote short stories and plays, which were well-received, although he was always first and foremost a novelist. Greene originally divided his fiction into two genres: thriller (mystery and suspense books), such as *The Ministry of Fear*, which he described as entertainments, often with notable philosophic edges, and literary works, such as *The Power and the Glory*, which he described as novels, on which he thought his literary reputation was to be based. Commenting on this lean, realistic prose and its readability, Bergonzi wrote that "nothing deflects Greene from the main business of holding the reader's attention" (52). He is known to a successful writer.

His novels often have religious themes at the centre. In his literary criticism he attacked the modernist writers Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster for having lost the religious sense. Only in recovering the religious element and the ultimate metaphysical realities of good and evil, sin and divine grace, he shows his religious tune. Suffering and unhappiness are omnipresent in the world Greene depicts; and Catholicism is presented against a background of unvarying human evil, sin, and doubt. Greene concentrated on portraying the characters' internal lives – their mental, emotional, and spiritual depths. Greene was criticized for certain tendencies in an

unorthodox direction – in the world, sin is omnipresent to the degree that the vigilant struggle to avoid sinful conduct is doomed to failure, hence not central to holiness.

The Power and the Glory (1940) is considered Greene's greatest novel. It is based on actual events in Mexico in 1926, when the revolutionary government of President Plutarco Elias Calles attempted to eradicate Roman Catholicism entirely. The worst persecutions occurred in the state of Tabasco, where Governor Tomas Canabal succeeded in driving every priest from his domain. Like many of Greene's other works, it deals with religious themes, features a hunted man in a deplorable environment, and focuses on the inner spiritual struggles of a weak and sinful protagonist who is unable to live up to his ideals. He is painfully aware of his own sin, to a degree rarely found in human experience, let alone in literature. Through his personal struggles, he learns compassion for the sins and weaknesses of others, even to the extent of being able to minister to and forgive the worst of his persecutors and betrayers. It gives us a religious vision with political overtones.

The Heart of the Matter (1955) is one of Graham Greene's most enduring and tragic novels. In this widely acclaimed modern classic, Graham Greene delves deep into character to tell the dramatic, suspenseful story of a good man's conflict between passion and faith. A police commissioner in a British-governed, war-torn West African state, Scobie is bound by the strictest integrity and sense of duty both for his colonial responsibilities and for his wife, whom he deeply pities but no longer loves. Passed over for a promotion, he is forced to borrow money in order to send his despairing wife away on a holiday. When in her absence he develops a passion for a young widow, the scrupulously honest Catholic finds himself giving way to deceit and dishonor. Enmeshed in love and intrigue, he will betray everything he believes in, with tragic consequences.

His highly acclaimed novel, *The End of the Affair* (1951) concerns the events of an adulterous affair in England during World War II. With the war and the affair over, Maurice Bendrix seeks an explanation of why his lover, Sarah Miles, broke off their relationship so suddenly. It could be related to the setting of the story, as the war was fresh in their memories and they were living in the same postwar period as the characters. Within this setting, Greene explores themes of love and hate, faithfulness, and the presence of the divine in human lives. Critics consider *The End of the Affair* the last in Greene's Catholic tetralogy as the depiction of God as a source of grace in people's spiritual lives. It also addresses the ideas of morality, sin and redemption. To many critics, *The End of the Affair* is the most obviously Catholic of Greene's novels, due to the apparent sainthood of the heroine, whose death is followed by a series of miracles.

The Lawless Roads (1939) is a travel account by Graham Greene, based on his 1938 trip to Mexico, to see the effects of the government's campaign of forced anti-Catholic secularization and how the inhabitants had reacted to the brutal anticlerical purges of President Plutarco Elías Calles. A Catholic and conservative man, Greene travels to Mexico to find the remnants of Catholicism. His journey takes him from the northern border towns, through the cosmopolitan capital, and then into the states of Puebla and Chiapas. Suffering and unhappiness are omnipresent in the world Greene depicts; and Catholicism is presented against a background of unvarying human evil, sin, and doubt. It exhibits Greene's actual vision of religion, salvation and damnation, and of the ultimate metaphysical realities of good and evil, sin and divine grace.

Journey Without Maps (1936) is, at least superficially, an account of the expedition Graham Greene made to the largely unexplored hinterland of Liberia in 1935. It is about a 350-mile, 4-week walk through the interior of Liberia in 1935. It

was Greene's first trip outside of Europe. He hoped to leave civilization and find the "heart of darkness" in Africa. The interior of Liberia was at the time unmapped and so he relied on local guides and porters. Greene set off from the northern most point of the country bordering Sierra Leone near the town of Kailahun (near Pendembu) and traveled in a south-eastern direction through the jungle highlands. He crossed through a section of French Guinea, going between the Liberian towns of Zorzor and Ganta, before turning south-west and arriving at the coast at Grand Bassa. He then traveled to Monrovia. Greene's account provides many insights into what Liberia was like in 1935. Prostitution, paedophilia, flagellation fantasies and war crimes are beautifully explored with the help of travel account.

Graham Greene's classic novel *The Quiet American*, though written in 1955, is still a biting condemnation of American foreign policy. His novel takes place in Vietnam (prior to the US/Vietnam war); the narrator, Thomas Fowler, is an English newspaper correspondent who meets Pyle, an American CIA operative, the "Quiet American" of the title. Pyle, one of two Americans in the novel, the other being Granger, a fellow correspondent. Greene's an outstanding writer, and this is an outstanding book. If you're interested in politics, this is definitely worth reading -- and the fact that it's never been out of print makes it pretty easy to dig up a copy, too. The novel is at once a thriller, a romance, and a political novel.

After its publication in the U.S. in 1956, the novel has received many critical appraisals. It was widely condemned as anti-American. It was criticized by *The New Yorker* for portraying Americans as murderers, largely based on one scene in which a bomb explodes in a crowd of people. According to critic Philip Stratford:

American readers were incensed, perhaps not so much because of the biased portrait of obtuse and destructive American innocence and

idealism in Alden Pyle, but because in this case it was drawn with such acid pleasure by a middle-class English snob like Thomas Fowler whom they were all too ready to identify with Greene himself. (Diemert 25)

The internal policy of America towards other countries is exposed in this novel. Behind the so-called liberal and positive American strategy lie its vested interests and selfish motives. The aim of Pyle to bring peace and progress in the then Viet Nam by using 'The Third Force' is just to justify American colonial intention. Moreover, America wants to get maximum benefits from the pathetic condition of Viet Nam. Though Pyle is presented as punctual, democratic, educated and idealistic, he is not good at all in his heart.

The novel, however, was popular in England and over the years has achieved notable status, being adapted into films in 1958 and most recently in 2002 by Miramax, making Michael Caine and Brendan Fraser well known and earning the former a Best Actor nomination. *The Quiet American* shows the international politics of different countries to get complete grip over Viet Nam and to prolong their domination. France was the then colonizer which was ruling over Viet Nam. Other countries like Britain, America, and China were also showing their interests in the affairs of Viet Nam as:

The novel takes place in Vietnam during the French occupation, rather notably before the American one, and it's a nation whirling in colonial and civil conflict, with bloody front lines protecting unsteady cosmopolitan zones of Vietnamese urbanites, Chinese businessmen, French authorities, American missions of various types, and any number of international correspondents. . . . Part of Greene's brilliance

is in setting up a contrast between what's shown and what's told, and to pick apart Pyle as a character takes some serious wringing of that noun. (Lewis 210)

It is important here that Pyle is American, Fowler is English, and Phuong, their mutual love interest, is Vietnamese. Greene, through the journalist, makes brilliant rhetorical points on the American character. The Americans are presented as having bloody cycle of imperial history. Fowler's cynicism is based on experience; his contempt is for youth as much as for anything else, and not just Pyle's youth. Presenting Vietnam as the site of war, *The Quiet American* highlights the role of powerful countries to control, dominate and suppress the so-called less powerful countries.

The novel makes abundant use of immoral and anti-social activities which are supposed to be banal in the main stream writing. The narrator, Fowler is always engaged in smoking, drinking and using opium. Similarly, Phuong is presented as a prostitute, involving in sexual activities with different people only to earn money and make her living. The pathetic and pitiable condition of Viet Nam due to the cruel and inhuman rule of foreign countries is clearly demonstration in the novel. Though outwardly it is anti-war novel, in its heart it excavates the internal and inherent causes of war as:

Graham Greene's novel, *The Quiet American* at first appears to be merely a novel of anti-war sentiment, however, upon closer reading, it reveals itself not as solely a tale to debase war and unsound politics, but a story of a man's, Fowler's, spiritual unrest and ultimate embarking on a journey to healing. Fowler, who recounts the story, is exposed as a

character full of cynicism, fear of death---or life, and loss, trying to escape reality through drug use and apathy. (Chapman 81)

When matters come to a climax and the American disappears from the picture, Fowler falls into a state of sorrow and guilt at his regained life restored by Pyle's death. This guilt, justly acquired, since Fowler was partially responsible for Pyle's death, leads Fowler from self imposed apathy to guilt, the passion that changes his deadened state to one for recovery. Though not completely, Fowler, ultimately comes to terms with his feelings and starts on a path to health.

In *The Quiet American*, Graham Greene has some substantial themes to work with colonialism; the clash of east and west; the dangers of idealism – which he explores by creating an interesting dichotomy that is embodied in the two main characters. The love triangle served to emphasize the situation of the war. Pyle represents the US's actions in Indochina and later on Vietnam (somewhat ignorant, not viewing the situation at hand directly, etc), Fowler represents the UK; Phuong represents Vietnam, and so on. If we observe this connection, the book seems more interesting, which means one has to know a bit about the Indochina War and its results. The novel attempts to explore the deep psychology of the characters as:

The Quiet American reveals Greene's most advanced use of dramatic irony in the novel form, and once the reader recognizes that Fowler is not Greene's *alter ego*, but a character being observed and criticized by both reader and author, then the novel as chauvinism disappears, and the novel as art emerges. . . . it is an account of various attempts to solve the problem; and Greene's irony is most operative in this, that none of the solutions explicitly proposed is satisfactory, and none of

the major characters recognizes the true solution which the reader is led to discover.... (Patten 231)

The ironic presentation of the story is very important. It is the excavations of Greene's own as well his characters' inner alter ego. The problem in the beginning of the story and at the end is same. The selfish motives of different countries in Viet Nam to exercise their power are evident throughout the text. Commenting on the terroristic intention of the colonizers, James M. Welsh tells, "*The Quiet American* is regarded as Greene's most carefully constructed novel. It offers a story of espionage set against a documentary background of terrorism, political chaos, and moral ambiguity" (3). He expresses the excess of immoral and anti-social activities done by the selfish short-sighted rulers. Similarly, Carl Rollyson argues:

The Quiet American is considered one of Graham Greene's achievements. The story is told with great economy, superb characterization, and sophisticated irony. The plot resembles that of a mystery story. A crime has been committed. Who is the murderer? As in most mystery stories, as much needs to be learned about the victim as about the villain. Yet, what is learned takes on political, moral and religious significance. The story ends in mystery as well. Who exactly killed Pyle is not revealed, but the burden of the crime, like the burden of telling the story, is Fowler's. (Rollyson 4)

The story of *The Quiet American* is similar to the mystery story. The murderer of Pyle is not revealed till the last. He is trapped in the love intricacy which is proved to be suicidal to him. Unlike other critics, Charles Dodd White points out that "Greene's political intent is clearly to ridicule the notion of a "Third Force" in Asian politics, counting the threat of communism and replacing the rationale of colonialism as a

justification for western involvement” (11). He argues that Greene’s political intention behind this novel is to mock the notion of “Third Force” in the politics of Asia. The so-called democratic mission of the developed countries becomes failure and unsuccessful.

New historicism is a currently developed literary theory which attempts to refigure the relationship between texts and the cultural system in which they were produced. In new historicism, a literary text can only be evaluated in its social, historical, and political contexts. Therefore, new historicism renounces the formalist conception of literature as an autonomous aesthetic order that transcends the needs and interests of a society. A literary text cannot be considered apart from the society that produced it. A literary text is another form of social significance which is produced by the society and in return is active in reshaping the culture of that society.

Joining the words ‘new’ and ‘historicism’, the term new historicism was coined by the American critic Stephen Greenblatt whose book *Renaissance Self Fashioning* (1982) is usually regarded as its beginning (Barren 172). It took shape in the late 1970s and early 1980s as opposed to new criticism, old historicism and to the critical deconstruction. Because of its ideological open-endedness, new historicism firmly established itself in academia during the 1980s. New historicism is a theory which studies literary as well as non-literary texts in equal parameter with reference to the contextual factors in which they are produced and interpreted. Defining new historicism Peter Barren says:

A simple definition of the new historicism is that it is a method based on the *parallel* reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period. That is to say, new historicism refuses (at least ostensibly) to 'privilege' the literary text: instead of a literary

'foreground' and a historical 'background' it envisages and practices a mode of study in which literary and non-literary texts are given equal weight and constantly inform or interrogate each other. (Barren 172)

By rejecting the voice of history, which is seen as merely a series of documents recording a fixed series of objective facts, literary studies would seem to have banned the dialogue between literature and history. Michel Foucault, Lois Montrose, Stephen Greenblatt, Michel Foucault and others are the main persons to bring new historicism in the present state. “By breaching disciplinary boundaries between the text and history, and between fiction and reality, New Historicism, eventually and inevitably, has now come to terms with the decision to set up its priority in a place between textualism and contextualism” (Lai 4). Therefore, new historicism is the amalgamation of different concomitant and discordant ideas.

Thus, *The Quiet American* foregrounds the hidden motives and actual intentions behind the war waged by power holders. The love story between Flower and Pyle with Phuong is not based on the ground of positive feelings and long-lasting motives but based on power and selfish interests. Similarly, the linear history is disrupted in the novel and generic boundary is also ruptured. To explore such situation, the research depends on the theoretical modality called new historicism. It divides the research work in three chapters. The first chapter is the introduction of the research including hypothesis, objectives and literature review along with Greene’s concerns regarding history, literature and politics. The second chapter is a thorough analysis of the text including theoretical modality in embedded form. Similarly, the third chapter is the conclusion of the research, which briefly encapsulates the overall project and shows the relation between literature and other forms of art.

II. New Historicist Examination in *The Quiet American*

The Quiet American by Graham Greene foregrounds the political intricacies of the then colonized country; Viet Nam which became the place of conflict for a long period of time. It is a political novel or parable about the war in Indochina which tells a complex but compelling story of intrigue and counter-intrigue, bombing and murder mixing the rivalry of two white men for a Vietnamese girl. These elements are all subordinate to the political thesis which they dramatize and which is stated baldly and explicitly throughout the book. As the title suggests, America is the principal concern, which is extremely materialistic and 'innocent' nation with no understanding of other people. Blurring the boundary among different genres, it merges literature and history. In this sense, there is interplay between the text and historical contexts. The so-called trivial matters in literature are highlighted in the novel. Moreover, it interrogates the truths created by the colonizers about different things.

As an anti-war novel, *The Quiet American* condemns the harmful consequences and effects of Viet Nam War. It tells the detailed and minute activities of the war. Thomas Fowler is a British journalist in his fifties who has been covering the French war in Vietnam for over two years. He meets a young American idealist named Alden Pyle, who lives his life and forms his opinions based on the books written by York Harding, with no real experience in matters of south-east Asia at all. Harding's theory is that Communism or colonialism are not the answer in foreign lands like Vietnam, but rather a "Third Force," usually a combination of traditions, works best. Pyle is young and idealistic. When Pyle and Fowler first meet, Pyle says he would be delighted if Fowler could help him understand more about the country. Fowler is much older, more realistic and more cynical.

Fowler has a live-in lover, Phuong, who is only twenty-years old and was a dancer at The Arc-en-Ciel (Rainbow) on Jaccareo Road, Cholon, until she met Fowler. Her sister's intention is to arrange a marriage for Phuong that will be of benefit to her and her family. The sister disapproves of their relationship as Fowler is already married and an atheist. So, at a dinner with Fowler and Phuong, Pyle meets Phuong's sister who immediately starts questioning Pyle about his viability for marriage with Phuong. Towards the end of the dinner Pyle dances with Phuong, and Fowler notes how poorly he dances.

Fowler goes to the city to cover a battle there. Pyle travels there to tell him that he has been in love with Phuong since the first night he saw her, and that he wants to marry her. They make a toast to nothing and Pyle leaves the next day. Fowler gets a letter from Pyle thanking him for being so nice. The letter annoys Fowler because of Pyle's arrogant confidence that Phuong will choose to leave Fowler to marry him. Meanwhile, Fowler's editor wants him to transfer back to England. Pyle comes to Fowler's place and they ask Phuong to choose between them. She chooses Fowler, her lover of two years. She does not know that he is up for a transfer. Fowler writes to his wife to ask for a divorce in front of Phuong.

Fowler and Pyle meet again in a war zone. They end up in a tower, and their discussion topics range from their sexual experiences to religion. As they escape, Pyle saves Fowler's life. Fowler goes back to Saigon where he lies to Phuong that his wife will divorce him. Pyle exposes the lie and Phuong moves in with Pyle. After receiving a letter from Fowler, his editor decides that he can stay in Indo-China for at least another year. Fowler goes into the midst of the battlefield to cover the unfolding events.

When Fowler returns to Saigon, he goes to Pyle's office to confront him but Pyle is out. Pyle comes over later for drinks and they talk about his upcoming marriage to Phuong. Later that week, a car bomb is detonated and many innocent civilians are killed from the blast. Fowler puts the pieces together and realizes that Pyle is behind the bombing. Realizing that Pyle is causing innocent people to die, Fowler takes part in an assassination plot against him. Although the police believe that Fowler is involved, they cannot prove anything. Phuong goes back to Fowler as if nothing had ever happened. In the last chapter Fowler receives a telegram from his wife in which she states that she has changed her mind and that she will start divorce proceedings. The novel ends with Fowler reflecting on his first meeting with Phuong, and the death of Pyle.

New historicism is a method of literary criticism that emphasizes the historicity of a text by relating it to the configurations of power, society, or ideology in a given time. It associates both history and literature together in order to show their inter-connectedness. It is a term applied to a trend in American academic literary studies in the 1980s that emphasized the historical nature of literary texts and at the same time, in contrast with older historicisms, the textual nature of history. As part of a wider reaction against purely formal or linguistic critical approaches such as the New Criticism and deconstruction, the new historicists, led by Stephen Greenblatt, drew new connections between literary and non-literary texts, breaking down the familiar distinctions between a text and its historical background as conceived in established historical forms of criticism. Inspired by Michel Foucault's concepts of discourse and power, they attempted to show how literary works are implicated in the power-relations of their time.

New Historicism is a theory applied to literature that suggests literature must be studied and interpreted within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the critics. Literature and history are completely intertwined and interpretation of literature without regarding history is worthless and fruitless attempt. It evaluates how the work is influenced by the time in which it was produced as:

Indeed, what most New Historicists have done so far is actually to situate the literary text in its context and to recover as far as possible the repressed, contradictory or unknown historical meanings (or historicity) of the text. Then they examine the relationship between these historical and cultural meanings of the text and the situation of the reader in order to arouse the reader's cultural wonder at the resonance in both the past and the present. (Lai 13)

New historicism can be differentiated from old historicism by its lack of faith in 'objectivity' and 'permanence' and its stress not upon the direct recreation of the past, but rather the process by which the past is constructed or invented.

Contrary to the New Critical insistence on the autonomy of literary texts and on the importance of reading such texts 'intrinsically', new historicists believe that it makes no sense to separate literary texts from the social context around them because such texts are the product of complex social exchanges or negotiations:

Literature, for new historicism, is a social and cultural creation constructed by more than one consciousness, and it cannot be diminished to a product of a single mind. Therefore, the best way of analysis is achieved through the lens of the culture that produced it. Literature is a specific vision of history and not a distinct category of human activity. Man himself is a social construct; there is no such

thing as a universal human nature that surpasses history: history is a series of "ruptures" between ages and man. As a consequence, the critic is trapped in his own historicity. No one can rise above their own cultural formations, their own ideological upbringing in order to understand the past in its own terms. Therefore, it is impossible for a modern reader to appreciate a literary work as its contemporaries experienced it. (Dogan 82)

The initial enterprise of new historicism is to relocate the literary text among nonliterary "discursive practices" of an age by making use of documents like chronicles, legal reports, pamphlets and by analyzing other forms of art like painting, sculpture, music, etc. Nevertheless, history is not viewed as the cause or source of literature. The relationship between history and literature is seen as dialectic: the literary text is interpreted as product and producer, end and source of history. Stephen Greenblatt explains the new historicist effort to establish relations between different discursive practices as an attempt "to develop terms to describe the ways in which material—here official documents, private papers, newspaper clippings, and so forth—is transferred from one discursive sphere to another and becomes aesthetic property" (Lai 3). Different forms of literature are interpreted in the equal parameter in new historicism.

The Quiet American mixes the history with literature. It is an imaginary creation of the author but it makes remarkable use of historical events. The activities of Viet Nam War are amply illustrated. The inhuman activities of the war; the inequalities and atrocities of the war; immoral and unethical activities of the war are beautifully and realistically described in the novel. Questioning the truth, the narrator says, "There usually a way round, and I haven't noticed much regard for truth in our

papers either” (88). He questions the truth which is always relative, not absolute. It is individual, dynamic and situational. The truth of Vietnamese people is not the truth of colonizers and vice versa.

There are adequate descriptions of colonial rules in India and other countries. The narrator talks about the colonial rule of India, Burma as he says, and “Look at the history of Burma” (88). He even maintains the colonial experience of America as “Americans were not colonialists in those days’ (88). Its thorough analysis indicates that *The Quiet American* is like a good historical document. The narrator’s reference of Germany highlights the colonial condition of Viet Nam as he says, “I closed my eyes and tried to imagine myself somewhere else – sitting up in one of the fourth-class compartments the German railways ran before Hitler came to power” (92). We can find many of the similarities between this novel and historical documents.

New historicists aim simultaneously to understand the work through its historical context and to understand cultural and intellectual history through literature, which documents the new discipline of the history of ideas. Michel Foucault based his approach both on his theory of the limits of collective cultural knowledge and on his technique of examining a broad array of documents in order to understand the episteme of a particular time.

New historicism is claimed to be a more neutral approach to historical events, and to be sensitive towards different cultures as “the New Historicism argues that there is no universal meaning or truth in history and that the meaning imputed to history reflects power relations at the time of writing as well as the time of the events’ occurrence” (Hoover 356). The bitter relationship between Fowler and his wife is exposed through his conversation with Phuong and through her letter to him. Fowler’s

wife is severely against the domination and discrimination of the males over the females. As a strong feminist, she doesn't like the way of his life. She says:

You say it will be the end of life to lose this girl You say that we've always tried to tell the truth to each other, but, Thomas, your truth is always so temporary. What's good of arguing with you, or trying to make you see reason? It's easier to act as my faith tells me to act – as you think unreasonably – and simply to write: I don't believe in divorce: my religion forbids it, and so the answer, Thomas, is no – no. (110)

Fowler's wife is religious-minded. She doesn't like the ideas of her husband to let his divorce. Divorce, for her is against her religious. It shows the exact of the historical era of that time. People at that time have strong belief in religion or religion was a binding force to unify people. New historicism focuses on the contextuality of all human thought and activities. It claims no non-historical vantage point for judging such thought or activity. Instead there are changing concepts of value peculiar to separate societies.

Power is a means through which the marginalized are controlled, and the thing that the marginalized seek to gain. This relates back to the idea that because literature is written by those who have the most power, there must be details in it that show the views of the common people. New Historicists seek to find sites of struggle to identify just who is the group or entity with the most power. "It draws attention to the marginalization and dehumanizing of suppressed Other's usually by starting an essay with an analysis of a contemporary historical document which overlaps in some way with the subject matter of the play" (Poudel 199). "New historicism is resolutely anti-establishment, always implicitly on the side of liberal ideals of personal freedom and

accepting and celebrating all forms of difference and ‘deviance’” (201). Michael Warner phrases new historicism’ motto as, “the text is historical, and history is textual” (Guerin and others 5). Foucault’s work looks at the institutions which enable this power to be maintained, such as the state punishment, prisons, the medical profession and legislation about sexuality. He says further as:

Michel Foucault sees the state which is panoptic surveillance. The panoptic (all-seeing) state, however, maintains its surveillance not by physical force and intimidation but by the power of its ‘discursive practices’. Discourse is not just a way of speaking or writing, but the whole ‘mental set’ and ideology which encloses the thinking of all members of a given society. It is not singular and monolithic there is always a multiplicity of discourses. (Poudel 122)

On the whole, new historicism seems to emphasize the extent of this kind of ‘thought control’, which the implication that deviant thinking may become literally ‘unthinkable’ so that the State is seen as a monolithic structure and change becomes, almost impossible. The power holders use different techniques and methods to maintain their power and control forever. New historicism focuses on the contextuality of all human thought and activities. It claims no non-historical vantage point for judging such thought or activity. Instead there are changing concepts of value peculiar to separate societies.

Fowler has not good relationship with his wife. There is tension in his family life mainly because of his relationship with Phuong. By hook or by crook he wants to adopt her and wants to discard his relationship with his wife. As he is in affair with Phuong he wants divorce with his wife in order to start a fresh and new life. He forces her to leave him but her letter shows that she is a strong feminist and questions the

senseless activities of her husband. She says, “You pick up women like your coat picks up dust” (108). She doesn’t like the activities of her husband. She vehemently criticizes her husband as:

Marriage doesn’t prevent you leaving a woman, does it? It only delays the process, and it would be all the more unfair to the girl in this case if you lived with her as long as you lived with me . . . we were back at the old routine of hurting each other. If only it were possible to love without injury – fidelity isn’t enough: I had been faithful to Anne and yet I had injured her. The hurt is in the act of possession: we are too small in mind and body to possess another person without pride or to be possessed without humiliation. (110)

The male-dominated society has a tendency to keep women as an evergreen puppet. They want maximum freedom whereas they want to confine the women within the four walls of the house. They employ the policy of use and throw. They even demand divorce if they get better wife. In this sense, the women in the male dominated society live the life that of a machine or factory to breed children. They have always subordinate role. In *The Quiet American* Greene Graham foregrounds the role of female. Fowler’s wife has philosophical ideas. She has even ability to question her husband for his fidelity, devotion, morality and religion.

The Quiet American was written in 1955 and set in Vietnam, then the site of a rising local insurgency against French colonial rule. In its brilliant braiding together of a political and a romantic tangle, its characters serve as emblems of the American, European and Asian way, and yet ache and tremble as ordinary human beings do. It also is a typically Greenian prophecy of what would happen 10 years later when U.S. troops would arrive, determined to teach a rich and complex place the latest theories

of Harvard Square. Lyrical, enchanted descriptions of rice paddies, languorous opium dens and even slightly sinister Buddhist political groups are a lantered backdrop to a tale of irony and betrayal.

New historicism is a method of literary criticism that emphasizes the historicity of a text by relating it to the configurations of power, society, or ideology in a given time. The government uses different forms of power to control, dominate and rule over the people. It creates a kind of discourse which the people do not question rather believe naturally that it is true. Foucault in regard with discursive practices says as:

there is a reluctance to idealize oppositional gestures because, following Foucault, "one of the most powerful themes of this New Historicism has been the idea that societies exert control over their subjects not just by imposing constraints on them but by predetermining the ways they attempt to rebel against those constraints this clever containment also provides the subversive and the marginal with a voice and thus, strangely but plausibly enough, functions as a mode of empowering it as an expressive cultural force. (Fluck 223)

New historicism studies the power politics behind the activities of everything. There is underlying power behind everything. The subjects of a country are ruled over by the power holders with the help of a discourse they make about themselves and the people. New historicism digs out the internal intricacies of politics – both internal as well as international. After finding out the causes and consequences of power politics, it gives prime concerns to the marginalized and backward groups thereby raising their

voices. It brings forth the suppressed, oppressed and backward people to the centre thus addressing their demands.

In *The Quiet American* highlights the Viet Nam War and observes the internal and inherent causes, hidden motives and interests of the powerful countries. It gives premium importance to the culture of the thwarted people, their feelings and their sufferings. The foreign people with colonial mentality do not have any kind of sympathy towards the local people. They want to achieve their mission by hook or by crook. Their goal to gain power and to cheat people is described as follows:

‘The French may hold, poor devils, if the Chinese don’t come to help the Vietminh. A war of jungle and mountain and marsh, paddy fields where you wade shoulder-high and the enemy simply disappears, bury their arms, put on peasant dress. But you can rot comfortably in the damp in Hanoi. They don’t throw bombs there. God knows why. You could call it a regular war.’ (16)

All the foreigners have at least one kind of motive with them. They are looking the land of Viet Nam with the vulture eyes as “the strangers found then picturesque, but there is nothing picturesque in treachery and distrust” (17). There is only bad thing within the so-called good thing of the foreigners. Pyle is moulded in the ideas put forward by York Harding. York Harding writes that “what the East needed is a Third Force” (7). Pyle makes his ideas through the books of York Harding and he believes that ‘Third Force’ is the one and only solution of the present disorder of Viet Nam. He forcefully imposes his ideals on others. In this sense, he is a hard liner and never dwindles from his ideology. For Pyle to save Viet Nam from the dangers of colonial rule and Communism “Third Force” is needed. It is, for him, only the solution of the

present condition. Regarding the way out of Viet Nam war, his ideas as per the narrator is:

Then someone asked him some stock question about the chances of the Government here ever beating the Vietminh and he said a Third Force could do it. There was always a Third Force to be found free from Communism and the taint of colonialism – national democracy he called it; you only had to find a leader and keep him safe from the old colonial powers. (115)

Pyle seems to be simple and ideal in his concept. He is strict in his idea. He represents the overall ideas of America. He wants to impress other people with the help of his ideas. Though the idea of “Third Force” seems to be good externally, it has great conspiracy within it. He wants to interfere the internal affairs of Viet Nam and wants to prove his country as superior and powerful. The internal intention of the power-holders is exposed as “the minister’s very concerned about the grenades” (10). They are not interested in the general welfare of the common people. The war mongers are only interested to continue the unrest and turmoil in the country so that they can fulfill their vested interest and selfish motives easily. In other words they want to gain the advantages of the critical and sensitive situation.

Pyle is a bookish fellow. He formed all his grandiose ideas with the help of York Harding’s books. As a member of American Economic Mission, he wants to help Vietnamese people outwardly but anyhow he wants to show American power. As he aspires to prove to be in superior group, “everything was important to Pyle” (11). It means he wants to utilize the ideas of the books to gain control over Viet Nam:

His arms full of the books he had been reading in advance on the Far East and the problems of China. He didn’t hear what I said; he was

absorbed already in the dilemmas of Democracy and the responsibilities of the West; he was determined – I learnt that very soon – to do good, not any individual person but to a country, a continent, a world. Well, he was in his element now with the whole universe to improve. (10)

His ideas outwardly seem to save the whole world, but there is conspiracy within it. It seems that Pyle is not part of the economic office after all, but some kind of secret operative. Indeed, Pyle is responsible for setting off a bicycle bomb in a public square, resulting in the deaths of some 30 innocent civilians, including women and children. After confirming his suspicions about Pyle, Fowler decides the man must be stopped. Specifically, he encourages an assassination of Pyle, which succeeds.

New historical criticism insists that to understand a literary piece, we need to understand the author's biography and social background, ideas circulating at the time, and the cultural milieu. It seeks to find meaning in a text by considering the work within the framework of the prevailing ideas and assumptions of its historical era. New Historicists concern themselves with the political function of literature and with the concept of power, the intricate means by which cultures produce and reproduce themselves as:

Louis Montrose describes new historicism as a reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and the textuality of history. This historical mode is grounded on the concept that history itself is not a set of fixed, objective facts but, like the literature with which it interacts, a text which needs to be interpreted; that a text, whether literary or historical, is a discourse which, although it may seem to present, or reflect, an external reality, in fact consists of what are called representations –

that is, verbal formations which are the ‘ideological products’ or ‘cultural constructs’ of a particular era; and that these cultural and ideological representations in texts serve mainly to reproduce, confirm, and propagate the power-structures of domination and subordination which characterize a given society. (Abrams 249)

Literature does not occupy a trans-historical aesthetic realm which is independent of economic, social, and political conditions and is subject to timeless criteria of aesthetic value. Instead a literary text is simply one of many kinds of texts – religious, philosophical, legal, scientific, and so on and which are subject to the particular conditions of a time and place. The literary text has neither unique status nor special privilege. It is equal to other forms of arts.

The Quiet American was written when the Viet Nam War was going on. Graham Greene’s own experience is also discerned in the novel. Similarly the historical facts of the time are also clearly described. The colonial rule of French, the suffering and pain of people, American, British, Chinese and other countries’ evil intentions are also clearly mentioned in the book. “French methods are a little old-fashioned by our cold standards; they believe in the conscience, the sense of guilt, a criminal should be confronted with his crime, for he break down and betray himself” (12). There is not any sense of humanity and fraternity in the colonizers. This historical fact is exhibited here. . French colonialism in Vietnam is a paradoxical and surreal world of formalities, proper manners, and class elitism in stark contrast to the daily grim realities of opium addiction, brothels, death, and destruction.

The people with colonial mentality don’t have any kind of mercy and sympathy towards other people as if other people don’t have human beings at all. Not only the French people other colonizers too are extremely rude. American people

have also their own selfishness and interests in Viet Nam. Though Pyle is presented as kind and helpful who is capable of understanding Vietnamese people in the beginning, later his selfishness knows no boundary. He is ready to do anything to achieve his goal. Here, America policy of taking the advantage of the situation is heavily criticized. Pyle's ruthless activities are presented as follows:

. . . he [Pyle] had been responsible for at least fifty deaths, for it would have damaged Angle-American relations, the Minister would have been upset. The Minister had a great respect for Pyle – Pyle had taken a good degree in – well, one of those subjects Americans can take degrees in: perhaps public relations or theatrecraft, perhaps even Far Eastern studies (he had read a lot of books). (13)

Pyle is an innocent who believes that others must surely share his ideals and pureness of motive. He has come to Vietnam to foster a group that will adhere to this Third Way. Pyle is a young, idealistic, "quiet" American working for an economic development organization. He steals Phuong away from Fowler but winds up dead in the river. Fowler is suspected of the murder. He wants to benevolently spread his book-learned democracy to the suffering and repressed Vietnamese. The problem is that he wholeheartedly endorses the democratic ideals of his idol, York Harding, who has written the books like *The Advance of Red China*, *The Challenge to Democracy*, *The Role of the West*, *The Philosophy of Marriage* and *The Triumph of Life*, and so goes searching for a worthy "Third Power" to solve the political crisis. Pyle's innocent selection of the loose cannon, General The, leads to the deaths of several innocent civilians, and ultimately Pyle's own demise at the hands of the Vietminh. Pyle also acts as a clumsy and interruptive Third Force in Fowler's relationship with Phuong.

There is general confusion over the murder of Pyle. Outwardly, he seems to be the friend of Vietnamese people but “sometimes we have a kind of love for our enemies and sometimes we feel hate for our friends” (168). The reason behind his death is unknown. Though Flower is suspected behind his death, there remains confusion and puzzlement among the people as:

... he [Pyle] might have been murdered by the Vietminh. They have murdered plenty of people in Saigon. His body was found in the river by the bridge to Dakow – Vietminh territory when your police withdraw at night. Or he might have been killed by the Vietnamese Surete – it’s been known. Perhaps they didn’t like his friends. Perhaps he was killed by Caodaists because he knew General The. (19)

Pyle works in the American Economic Mission. He is a representative of America to Viet Nam to study and report the activities of the war. There is a wide gap between his outward call for economic help for the war-affected areas and his internal intention because economic mission “covers a multitude of sins” (114). He is the representative of the colonial country to the colonized country. He tries to prove his cultural as well as religious supremacy over the native people of Viet Nam. His economic mission to Viet Nam to help the people is tainted with his selfish motive and vested interest to perpetuate American domination in Viet Nam. Like Pyle, other representatives of China, Russia, German and British too are looking for golden opportunities to maintain their domination. Pyle pretends to have good motives but he can’t be out of question as lies and conspiracies within him. Regarding his motives and nature the narrator narrates as, “I hope to God you know what you are doing there. Oh, I know your motives are good, they always are”. He looked puzzled and suspicious. ‘I wish sometimes you had a few bad motives, you might understand a

little more about human beings. And that applies to your country too, Pyle” (124).

There is irony in the statement of the narrator.

History is not a homogeneous and stable pattern of facts and events which can be used as the “background” to explain the literature of an era, or which literature can be said simply to reflect, or which can be adverted to (as in an earlier type of Marxist criticism) as the “material” conditions that, in a simple and unilateral way, determine the particularities of a literary text. In contrast to such views, a literary text is said by new historicists to be “embedded” in its context, as an interactive component within the network of institutions, beliefs, and cultural power relations, practices, and products that, in their ensemble, constitute what we call history. (Abrams 250)

New historicism evaluates how the work is influenced by the time in which it was produced. It also examines the social sphere in which the author moved the psychological background of the author, the books and theories that may have influenced the author, and any other factors which influenced the work of art. All work is biased. Most new historicists may begin a critical reading of a novel by explaining themselves, their backgrounds, and their prejudices. Both the work and the reader are corrupted by everything that has influenced them. New historicism thus represents a significant change from previous critical theories like New Criticism, because its main focus is to look at things outside of the work, instead of reading the text as a thing apart from the author.

The Quiet American describes in detail about the activities of Viet Nam War which was fought for long period of time. The death and destruction crosses the limitation in this war as “there are thousands killed every year” (20). Vietnamese

people fought against the colonial powers because for them “it is only a damned colonial war anyway” (28). American government is against the establishment of communist rule in Viet Nam. So they use all their strategies as the narrator says about the use of machine and other things: “medicine’s a kind of weapon, isn’t it? These Catholics, they’d be pretty strong against the Communists, wouldn’t they? (28). The description of war is presented as follows:

From the bell tower of the Cathedral the battle was only picturesque, fixed like a panorama of the Boer War in an old *Illustrated London News*. An aeroplane was parachuting supplies to an isolated post in the *calcaire*, those strange weather-eroded mountains on the Annam border that look like piles of pumice . . . the war was very tidy at that distance . . . we couldn’t land at the naval station because it was cut off by the enemy who completely surrounded the town at a range of six hundred yards. (38)

The Quiet American shows the internal truth of Viet Nam War. The war is taken by the so-called powerful countries as a chance to show their supremacy and power against other powerful countries. These countries are looking with vulture eyes in order to grasp the opportunities. They use different strategies to meet their vested interests. The narrator is a British citizen who talks about democracy. Pyle who is American citizen talks about the ‘Third Force’ which he learns from the books of York Harding. ‘Third Force’ is the indirect way of dominating and gaining control over other countries by using different strategies like in the name of democracy, economy aid, religion, culture and so on.

The colonial rulers use different strategies to rule over Viet Nam. They mobilize some of the local people as their agents. So, directly or indirectly, they create terror, horror and fear among the people in order to sustain their rule as:

Nobody noticed the Vietminh agents who had joined the procession too, and that night as the main Communist battalion moved through the passes in the *calcaire*, into the Tonkin plain, watched helplessly by the French outpost in the mountains above, the advance agents struck in Phat Diem . . . no journalists were allowed, no cables could be sent, for the papers must carry only victories. (40)

The war is the war of reputation for France, Britain, America and even China. “An advantage of this war was that a European face proved in itself a passport on the field: a European could not be suspected of being an enemy agent” (42). The Europeans have spread their empire in the East. They have taught their language, culture and other things to the Eastern people like Vietnamese people. They want to sustain their regime by employing all the strategies they have. The narrator says, “We’ve brought them up in our ideas. We’ve taught them dangerous games, and that’s why we are waiting here, hoping we don’t get our throats cut” (87). The narrator forms his ideas following York Harding who is always in favour of colonial rule and who teaches Western people to teach their religion and culture to the Eastern people. His books are always proved to be milestones for the colonial rulers to form their ideas. In this way, *The Quiet American* shows how literature and politics are inter-related.

Thomas Fowler is a British journalist in his fifties who has been covering the French war in Vietnam for over two years. He has become a very jaded and cynical man. He meets Alden Pyle and finds him naïve. Throughout the book Fowler is often caught in lies and sometimes there may be speculation that he is lying to himself.

Fowler's relationship with Vietnamese woman Phuong often fuels the conflict in the story, especially between Fowler and Pyle. Fowler is also used as a metaphor to describe the character. The word foul is relatively similar to his last name and connections can be made about the character's actions in the book. He is there to report the activities of the war. He is not a fair reporter to report each and every activity of the war. Rather he is full of his selfish interests as he says:

I know myself, and I know the depth of my selfishness. I cannot be at ease (and to be at ease is my chief wish) if someone else is in pain, visibly or audibly or tactually. Sometimes this is mistaken by the innocent for unselfishness, when all I am doing is sacrificing a small good – in this case postponement in attending to my hurt – for the sake of a far greater good, a peace of mind when I need think only of myself. (105)

In *The Quiet American*, Graham Greene examines the difference between truth and fiction in private and public life. The narrator Thomas Fowler, the cynical foreign correspondent for a British newspaper 'reports' on his struggle with his opponent in love, the inexperienced 'trade official' Alden Pyle.

Inspired by Michel Foucault's concepts of discourse and power, new historicists attempt to show how literary works are implicated in the power-relations of their time. In addition, new historicism acknowledges that any criticism of a work is necessarily tinged with the critic's beliefs, social structure, and so on. Whatever they do and write is affected by the then historical condition. The writers, critics and readers can't go beyond their socio-historical realities. Moreover, it claims as:

Under the new historicist paradigm, literary studies deal with representations which have a social as well as a textual dimension:

How are power, poverty, crime, the penal system, and war represented and discursively constituted at a certain place, at a certain time? How are sexuality, gender, identity, leisure and work, sickness, epidemics, and death depicted? How does the intertwining between mass culture and politics affect the political process? New Historicism is concerned with analyzing the complex routes by which culture, society, and political life crisscross and intersects. (Kaes 157)

The new historicists are less fact- and event-oriented perhaps because they have come to wonder whether the truth about what really happened can ever be purely or objectively known. They are less likely to see history as linear and progressive, as something developing toward the present, and they are also less likely to think of it in terms of specific eras, each with a definite, persistent, and consistent zeitgeist (spirit of the times). Hence they are unlikely to suggest that a literary text has a single or easily identifiable historical context. New historicist critics also tend to define the discipline of history more broadly than did their predecessors. They view history as a social science like anthropology and sociology, whereas older historicists tended to view history as literature's "background" and the social sciences as being properly historical.

In *The Quiet American*, Graham Greene has some burning themes to work with – colonialism; the clash of east and west; the dangers of idealism – which he explores by creating an interesting dichotomy that is embodied in the two main characters. The narrator as a representative of colonial country wants to show his power and superiority over the native people of Viet Nam. He presents himself what he is not. His internal and actual reality is not revealed through his activities. As the

narrator Thomas Fowler tells the story of the Quiet American Alden Pyle, he also exposes the truth about himself as he says:

All that you encounter in daily contact with him was gentleness and humility and an absolute love of truth: you would have had to be married to him to discover the pride. Perhaps truth and humility go together; so many lies come from our pride – in my profession a reporter's pride, the desire to file a better story than the other man's, and it was Dominguez who helped me not to care – to withstand all those telegrams from home asking why I had not covered so and so's story or the report of someone else which I knew to be untrue. (113)

The narrator reveals the internal truth about himself. As a reporter he should have to report impartially. But we can't find that that his report is tainted with his personal pride and prejudices. He is biased and observes the situation from the point of view of British people and comments on the activities of the representatives of other countries. The mystery of the novel is not whether Pyle was eliminated for his government work, but what part Fowler played in his death. The truth is revealed not in sudden, shocking revelations, but gradually. Because it's a first person narrative told in retrospect, all the clues are there from the start and it's pretty easy to guess where the story is going. The tale is modest in scale, focused more on the love triangle with the war only serving as a back drop. The love triangle has political motives of showing the power in its heart. Both Flower and Pyle want to prove themselves and their countries as powerful and superior in comparison with the other.

Fowler is always uncertain about the things happening around him. Although he is a journalist by profession but he doesn't have ability to pin point the truth from false. Uncertainty, confusion, puzzlement and mystery are rampant in new historicist

text. In the same way the narrator is completely confused about different things. He is unknown about the happenings and events around him. He expresses his confusion with the following remarks:

. . . but I was less capable of telling truth from falsehood, and so I formed the habit of calling in on him in the evenings to discuss what I had heard. Sometimes one of his Indian friends was there, sitting beside the narrow iron bed in the lodgings Dominguez shared in one of the meaner streets off the Boulevard Gallieni . . . but he never lost the clarity of his thought. It was as though his illness were happening to another person's body. (114)

The relation between Fowler and Pyle is tinged with conspiracy and rivalry. Both of them are head over heel with Phuong. Pyle sincerely tells that nobody can trust anyone in the case of girl and love. He says to Flower, "You shouldn't trust anyone when there is a woman in the case" (122). There is a great rivalry between Pyle and Flower to get the love of Phuong. Death of Pyle and success of Flower symbolically suggest that the writer is in favour of British rule and he criticizes American tendency to interference and encroachment towards other countries.

It is not only surprisingly uneventful, but the main characters lack depth and the relationships between them are un-engaging. Fowler is a typical, almost cliché, detached narrator – a world weary expat reporter with a local mistress and an opium habit. He is likable for his sharp observations, his down-to-earth humanistic philosophy and his self-awareness. It is this latter trait that proves problematic for Greene to maintain, for in order to draw out the mystery the author must have the protagonist avoid his own culpability in Pyle's death. The religious-minded people too are not untouched with the Viet Nam War. Willingly or unwillingly they express

their views regarding the war. Though they pretend to be neutral, in fact, in reality, they can't be out of the touch of the historical reality. We can observe their interest in war as:

The father at my side said in explanation, 'We are neutral here. This is God's territory.' I thought, 'It's a strange poor population God has in his kingdom, frightened, cold, starving' – "I don't know how we are going to feed these people," the priest told me – you'd think a great King would do better than that.' But then I thought, 'It's always the same wherever one goes – it's not the most powerful rulers who have the happiest populations.' (40)

Questioning the traditional concepts regarding God and religion, *The Quiet American* presents multi-god concept. As there is no difference in believing in different Gods, we may not believe in God at all. The narrator of the story interrogates the existence and usefulness of God. He says, "I've no reason to believe in a God", "How many hundred million Gods people believe in? Why even a Roman Catholic believes in quite a different God when he's scared or happy or hungry" (85-86). God in the time of war is also helpless. Believing in God or religion is not the solution of the war. The utility of religion in the time of turmoil, tumult and commotion in the country is severely criticized and castigated.

Graham Greene describes the minute activities of Viet Nam War. Presenting the narrator as a news reporter, he gives the detailed realities and internal secrets of the wars. Though he describes about the events of Viet Nam war but these events are not real; they are fabulous and imaginary – the products of writer's mind. He merges some of the events of the history and some events of his imagination so as to make it

interesting and lively. The main aim behind merging of these events is to show the exact nature of literary works. The activities of the war are presented as:

It was all quite trivial – ten explosions, six people slightly injured and God knows how many bicycles They captured this place two days ago. Our parachutists are only a few hours away. We want to keep the Viet head down in their holes until we have recaptured the post I was not aware of the moment when the bombs were released; then the gun chattered and the cockpit was full of the smell of cordite and the weight was off my chest as we rose, and it was the stomach that fell away, spiraling down like a suicide to the ground we had left. (134-141)

The war causes a lot of destruction of property and death of people. It is not to anyone. Only few people can fulfill their interests and motives with the help of war. The soldiers are just the puppet in the hands of the politicians. One of the soldiers says, “But we are professional: we have to go on fighting till the politicians tell us to stop. Probably they will get together and agree to the same peace that we could have had at the beginning, making nonsense of all these years” (144). There worthless of wage a war. It is only wastage of time, money and death of many soldiers. We can't get even what we had before the war.

Alden Pyle, the Quiet American of the title is the renowned or infamous depending on his politics, CIA operative, who is sent to Viet Nam in the 50's to subvert the Vietminh after a string of successes in the Philippines. Pyle is an innocent who believes that others must surely share his ideals and pureness of motive. He is convinced, based on his adherence to the writings of York Harding, that there is a Third Way for Vietnam, somewhere between Communism and the corrupt colonial

government. He has come to Vietnam to foster a group that will adhere to this Third Way. The journalist, Fowler, a cynical world-weary man of much wider experience, realizes that Pyle is a dangerous man because he is imposing his idealized vision on a group that is merely power hungry. Meanwhile, Pyle has fallen in love with Phuong, Fowler's Vietnamese girlfriend. And while Fowler can offer her little because his wife refuses to grant him a divorce, Pyle offers marriage and respectability and a life in America. As Fowler loses Phuong to Pyle and Pyle's group begins a terror campaign, Fowler finally abandons his neutrality and chooses sides, a choice made all the more ambiguous because of his romantic rivalry with Pyle. New historicism focuses on the unheard, unseen and hidden voices of the marginalized, suppressed and oppressed people as:

Indeed, if there is any inevitability in the new historicism's vision of history it is this insistence on agency, for even inaction or extreme marginality is understood to possess meaning and therefore to imply intention. Every form of behavior, in this view, is a strategy: taking up arms or taking flight is a significant social action, but so is staying put, minding one's business, turning one's face to the wall: Agency is virtually inescapable. (Barren 174)

It is a method in which a new historical essay will place the literary text within the 'frame' of a non-literary text. The practice of giving 'equal weighting' to literary and non-literary material is the first and major difference between the 'new' and the 'old' historicism.

Trivial and petty matters are highlighted in the new historicist texts. In *The Quiet American* such matters are given premium importance. Phuong means “Phoenix but nothing nowadays is fabulous and nothing rises from its ashes” (3). She is “the

hiss of steam, the clink of a cup”, “a certain hour of night and the promise of rest” (4). Pyle is very, punctual, earnest and gives lectures on the Far East. There is excessive description of trivial matters like smoking, drinking, drug addiction and sexual matters. The hidden realities of the society are fore-grounded. These contents which are normally excluded from or are given less priority in the literature are abundantly presented in *The Quiet American* as the narrator says, “it was a superstition among them [people] that a lover who smoked would always return, even from France. A man’s sexual capacity might be injured by smoking, but they would always prefer a faithful to a potent lover” (5).

“The bead of opium bubbled gently and smoothly as I inhaled . . . The practiced inhaler can draw a whole pipe down in one breath, but I always had to take several pulls” (5).

Flower says, “after the pipes I felt my mind clear and alert” (8). The narrator says, “opium makes you quick-witted – perhaps only because it calms the nerves and stills the emotions. Nothing, not even death, seems so important” (8). The description of trivial matters is described as:

Nothing to worry about. Nothing to worry about at all. I took a sip of tea and held my hand in the pit of her arm. When you left me, I said, ‘it was lucky I had this to fall back on. There’s a good house in the rue d’Ormay. What a fuss we Europeans make about nothing. You should not live with a man who doesn’t smoke, Phuong.’ (6)

These trivial matters are described in great detail. Even the sexual matters are found in rampant. Though these matters are not included in the mainstream literature, in new historicism they are very much important. Phuong is the representative of Vietnamese people. From her, we can study the effects of colonial war to the native people of Viet

Nam. The colonized people have learnt the culture, language, religion and civilization of the colonizers. The native people like Phuong speak broken French language. They are confused about the religion – whether it is good or not. Moreover, “like the French she [Phuong] has a passion for the royal family” (92). The people have forgotten their root and base. Though she is a whore or prostitute, she wants to follow the lifestyle of the French people. The narrator too wants to be with Phuong all the time. But, he has a different point regarding sex as he says, “One starts promiscuous and ends like one’s grandfather, faithful to one woman” (94). He is a little bit against open sexual activities. But, he is always sexually attracted towards Phuong and performs sexual intercourse with her, which he himself describes as:

I wondered whether she would consent she would sleep with me that night if Pyle never came, but I knew that when I had smoked four pipes I would no longer want her. Of course it would be agreeable to feel her thigh beside me in the bed – she always slept on her back, and when I woke in the morning I could start the day with a pipe, instead of with my own company. (6)

In *The Quiet American*, we can find redefinition of sex, virginity, women, marriage, religion and so many other things. Fowler says to Pyle, “You can have a hundred women and still be a virgin” (96). He even says that “women don’t want virgins” (96). Marriage is taken as a temporary matter as “Marriages break. Often they break quicker than an affair like ours” (69). Similarly, when he is totally mad with Phuong, he compares himself with “a woman who demands to be raped by her lover” (102). He sometimes thinks sex is everything to him as “Why should I want to die when Phuong slept beside me every night?” (70). Moreover, he says, “that night I woke from one of those short deep opium sleeps, ten minutes long, that seem a whole night

rest, and found my hand where it had always lain at night, between her legs” (14).

Phuong works in the Grand Monde and “the hostesses of the Grand Monde were whores” (32). Sexual matters are further described as:

Kiss me, Phuong. She had no coquetry. She did at once what I asked she went on with the story of the film. Just so she would have made love if had asked her to, straight away peeling off her trousers without question, and afterwards have taken up the thread of Mme Bompierre’s story and the postmaster’s predicament. (107)

Phuong is presented as a whore who keeps relationship with many of the suitable changing one and another. *The Quiet American* was first published in 1955, well before America was inextricably tangled in the affairs of Vietnam. Whether through depth of insight or stopped-clock coincidence, Graham Green outlined in advance the history of American involvement in Indo-China. He writes so skillfully and has such fundamental understanding of individual human beings that the natural interpretation is that Graham Greene knew what he was talking about. American involvement in the internal affair of Viet Nam has nothing to do except to show its power and domination over the matters of other countries. The direct and indirect interference of powerful countries over other supposed to be less powerful countries is clearly shown in the novel.

New historicism asserts that history cannot be divorced from textuality. In Louis Montrose’s most famous dictum, the new orientation to history in literary studies may be characterized as a dynamic dialogue between literature and history and it has a reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and the textuality of history. Stephen Greenblatt and other New Historicists thus intend to play the role of

breaking the wall between history and literature. It studies the literary texts which are enmeshed in the social-cultural context of a certain era:

New Historicism should move from singular and linguistic dimensions to plural and socio-historical dimensions, from the pessimistic concepts of panoptical power to the dynamic possibility of subversive resistance, from monolingual historical assumptions to a comparative new historicism in an international culture, from the analysis of canonical texts to that of popular texts, and from the examination of dominant culture to the analysis of marginal culture and multi-culture.

(Lai 19)

The new historicism analyzes the literary and non-literary texts in a parallel mode thereby providing equal focus. The so-called banal concepts in the society like sex and deaths are openly discussed in such novel. There basic truths of human life which are supposed to be hidden are primarily focused in new historicist books. In *The Quiet American* Greene has brought the concept of death under discussion. The narrator talks too much about death. He says, “death takes away vanity – even the vanity of the cuckold who mustn’t show his pain” (13). Similarly, “death takes people in different ways” (23). He further says, “I would have liked death to come with due warning, so that I could prepare myself” (44). He is extremely selfish and self-centered and thinks about himself. Describing death and human selfishness, he further says:

I had never believed in permanence, and yet I had longed for it. Always I was afraid of losing happiness . . . death was the only absolute value in my world. Lose of life and one would lose nothing again for ever. I invited those who would believe in God and I distrusted them Death was far more certain than God, and with

death there would be no longer the daily possibility of love dying. The nightmare of a future of boredom and indifference would lift. I could never have been a pacifist. To kill a man was surely to grant him an immeasurable benefit. Oh yes, people always, everywhere, loved their enemies. It was their friends they preserved for pain and vanity. (36)

The narrator prefers death than to live a lonely life without Phuong. Greene demonstrates many times that Fowler hates war; he doesn't need to beat the reader over the head with it, and he cheapens the moment by having Fowler reduce his horror into such a direct phrase. The book is littered with these kinds of statements, many of which are corny. "I thought 'I hate war' . . . The lieutenant said, 'Have you seen enough? Speaking savagely almost as though I had been responsible for these deaths. Perhaps to the soldier the civilian is the man who employs him to kill, who includes the guilt of murder in the pay-envelope and escapes responsibility'" (45). The soldiers have wrong concept regarding war. They understand less about the internal politics of war.

New historicism concerns itself with extraliterary matters – letters, diaries, films, paintings, medical treatises – looking to reveal opposing historical tensions in a text (Guerin 283). It welcomes the breakdown of genres and invites the analysis of discontinuities, linking anecdotes to the disruption of our understanding history (Lai 3). The notion of history as a neutral power and the belief in all resistance being doomed as futile have prevented New Historicism from taking a political stance or giving any kind of political commitment. Consequently, it shuns contemporary political movements like Marxism and feminism. (22) They juxtapose literary and non-literary texts, reading the former in the light of the latter (Barren 175). Thus, all kinds of literary texts are studied together giving equal weight and importance.

The Quiet American is a compendium of different forms of literature. Though it is a war novel, it merges poems, letters, and activities of stories, dramas and even films. Let's see a poem mentioned in the novel:

‘I drive through the stress and I care not a damn,
The people they stare and they ask who I am;
And if I should chance to run over a cad,
I can pay for the damage if ever so bad.
So pleasant if is to have money, heigh ho!
So pleasant it is to have money.’ (169)

The novelist has blurred the boundary among different genres. He makes use of these forms of literary to show his genius and talent. He has also includes some lines of Baudelaire's poem "*Mon enfant ma soeur...*" - Aimer a loisir,/ Aimer et mourir/Au pays qui te ressemble (6). Besides these the narrator tells, "I remember the old Saigon story of the distinguished visitor who had lost his trousers fighting his way back to the safety of the police post. There was no protection here for the civilian" (30). There is danger and threat everywhere. The common civilians have no hope, belief, expectation and optimism. Prospects and possibility are completely lost.

The Quiet American is the compendium of knowledge and forms of literature. There is adequate presentation of drama, films, and books of philosophy, letters, poems and even letters. Phuong is a dancer in the Grand Monde. Dancing as Pyle describes is "a perfectly respectable profession" (93). Fowler is afraid of being lonely. Perhaps that's why Phuong is perfect for him; she is totally passive, she takes care of him and she has sex with him—and asks for almost nothing in return, except for the occasional scarf allowance. He is pretentious, sardonic, and at the novel's end,

villainous. Different forms of literature are presented within the single piece of novel.

Phuong tells the story of the film as:

Well, her lover tried to rescue her from prison. He smuggled in boy's clothes and a man's cap like the one the gaoler wore, but just as she was passing the gate all her hair fell down and they called out "*Une aristocrate, une aristocrate*". I think that was mistake in the story they ought to have let her escape. (179)

The mixture of different forms of arts makes the novel charming and lively. It attracts the attention of the modern readers due to this very fact. Pyle literally ends up a pile at the beginning of the novel, lifelessly heaped in the mud. Dead bodies are often piled at wartime and so this may allude to his responsibility for war casualties as a result of backing the Third Force. Fowler doesn't particularly care about Vietnam either and has no particular politics -- and is a bit of a cynical, egotistical jerk. The fact that Fowler isn't a perfect being of light exposing the terrible American makes the novel compelling and makes Greene's points go down a bit easier.

Thus, *The Quiet American* is an epitome of parallel presentation of history and literature. It provides a detailed description of Viet Nam War within the masks of love triangle between the main characters – Flower, Pyle and Phuong. It at the same time examines the internal intricacies and politics of the wars. Blurring the boundary among the literary forms, it questions the universality of truth thereby supports the relativity of truth. So, new historical reading provides proper justice to this novel and to excavate the selfish motives and vested interests of the power holders.

III. Power Politics within the Heart of Wars

The careful and thorough reading of *The Quiet American* by Graham Greene shows the internal and hidden causes behind the Viet Nam War. There are many selfish motives and vested interests of Britain, America, France and even China in the then Viet Nam War. The war is waged only to show and prove the power and supremacy of those countries. The current thesis attempts to show the deep and internal political intricacies of the long-fought Viet Nam War within the love triangle of a Vietnamese girl Phuong with a British citizen Fowler and American citizen Pyle respectively. It brings the literature and history together as a complement of each other, which remain incomplete in the absence of the other. Highlighting the voices of the suppressed, oppressed, backward and marginalized people, it foregrounds the hidden, secret and so-called banal themes related to death, sex, drug abuse, smoking and so on. It also makes use of abundant matters from letters, poems, interviews, dramas, films and stories.

Alden Pyle is the ‘quiet American’ of the title. Pyle is thoughtful, soft-spoken, intellectual, serious, and idealistic. Pyle is inspired by the philosophy of York Harding who says, “Go ahead. Win the East for Democracy” (23). The Third Force proposed by York Harding to solve the problems of eastern countries impresses Pyle deeply. For him the Third Force is the one only measure to solve the problem of Viet Nam. He forcefully imposes his idealism to other people and thinks that other people too are like him in favour of the solution give by Harding. He says that he “had learnt a technique – to divide and conquer” (30). So, he represents American policy of interfering the internal affairs of other countries.

The Quiet American is a war novel, which describes the detail activities of Viet Nam War. Flower is a journalist from Britain. He has his own interest. He wants to show

his power by gaining the heart of Phuong. Viet Nam War, which was fought for long time, inflicts great pains and sufferings to the common people. It has different causes but the powerful countries want to show their supremacy as no historical event, according to Foucault, has a single cause; rather, each event is tied into a vast web of economic, social, and political factors. Not even a tyrannical aristocrat simply wields power, for the aristocrat is himself empowered by discourses and practices that constitute power.

Blurring the boundary of different forms of literature, *The Quiet American* mixes the matters of letters, diaries, dramas, films and stories. Flower's wife sends different letters to her husband which are given as they are. Similarly, there is deep and thorough discussion about films, stories and poems. Thus it gives equal importance to all forms of literature. It also mixes the literature and history. Within the imaginary live triangle of the main characters, Viet Nam War is presented. As "a war needs money", Viet Nam has become economically debased and weak (66). The rights of people are snatched by the colonial rulers. Even the news is not distributed truly. The narrator says that "the censor would hold my telegram" (13). New historicism is interested in history as represented and recorded in written documents, in history-as-text (Poudel 200). *The Quiet American* also shows different forms of art. It examines the presence of the mixture of literary forms.

The so-called banal or less important matters like death, love, sex, drug abuse, smoking and so on are presented in great detail in the novel. These subject matters are not preferred in the literature of mainstream. After performing sexual intercourse 'she seems fresh like a flower, and I [the narrator] had flippantly replied 'poor flower' (175). The relationship of Phuong with Pyle or Fowler is based on the fulfillment of sexual needs. She is seemingly cold and pragmatic, switching lovers as the wind

changes. Greene intends her as a symbol of the unfathomable nature of her country and its people, but it also means that readers are unlikely to relate to her. Thus, *The Quiet American* excavates the historical as well as basic realities of the society. What new historicism sees cultural phenomena as text best applies in the case of this novel. Frederic Jameson insists “always historicize!” (Guerin 9). Without historicizing *The Quiet American*, we can’t understand the basic idea of the novelist. As the war was going on, “there were the open legal methods, but legality was not essential in a country at war” (6). Law and order are absent in the country. Everywhere there is disorder, confusion and chaos.

Thus, *The Quiet American* by Graham Greene excavates the complex political intricacies of the then Viet Nam War under the mask of love triangle among the main characters. The hidden interests and selfish motives of the colonizers of ‘divide and rule’ are exposed clearly. Viet Nam War becomes the matter of interest and place of war of the powerful countries to show their power and supremacy over other countries. So, this war is the war of reputation and prestige. Blurring the boundary among different genres, it merges literature and history. In this sense, there is interplay between the text and historical contexts. The so-called trivial matters in literature are highlighted in the novel. Moreover, it interrogates the so-called universal and permanent truths created by the colonizers about different things. The voices of the suppressed, oppressed, dominated and marginalized are raised and foregrounded in the novel.

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