



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 11. Issue.1. 2024 (Jan-March)

INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA  
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

THE STUDY OF FAITH IN SELECTED NOVELS OF GRAHAM GREENE

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doi: [10.33329/ijelr.11.1.60](https://doi.org/10.33329/ijelr.11.1.60)



Article information

Article Received:04/1/2024  
Article Accepted:01/02/2024  
Published online:06/02/2024

ABSTRACT

Graham Greene, a renowned 20th-century English novelist, playwright, short-story writer, and screenwriter, is widely recognized for his profound exploration of faith, religious themes and morality in his literary works. He depicted various complex themes such as faith, morality, and human nature. His works often depict faith as a complex and uncertain concept, rather than an ultimate source of comfort or morality. His works are often characterized by their intricate plotlines, nuanced characters, and profound insights into the human condition. Faith plays a central role in many of Greene's novels, serving as a source of strength, solace, and grappling for his characters. His novels delve into the complexities of human nature, often juxtaposing sin and redemption, doubt, and belief, in a captivating narrative style. Greene's intricate portrayal of faith stems from his own experiences and struggles with belief, adding depth and authenticity to his characters' spiritual journeys. Greene's faith is deeply intertwined with his view of human nature and the world around him, and he often writes about the complexities of faith. He frequently portrays the coexistence of people with different religious backgrounds and the confusion and doubts that often accompany religious faith. He uses faith as a way of exploring his characters' struggles and suffering. And examining the power of faith in difficult times, and providing moral guidance to mankind. By analyzing characters, themes, and language, this paper will also examine how Greene explores faith in his works and how it profoundly affects his protagonists.

**Keywords**—Doubt, Uncertainty, Hope, Faith, Human Struggle, Moral Guidance, Sin.

1. Introduction to Graham Greene's Novels and Faith Elements

Graham Greene's novels are profoundly filled with traces of faith. In this research paper, the focus will be on exploring the faith in Graham Greene's novels. This paper will specifically examine the central characters in Greene's novels to gain insight into the presentation and portrayal of faith. These characters will be analyzed in terms of their beliefs, actions, and interactions with others to understand how faith shapes their identities and influences their relationships with the world around them. It will also consider the broader implications and messages about faith that Greene's novels convey. By exploring these characters and their journeys, this paper seeks to shed light on Greene's thoughts and perspectives on faith and religion.

Faith is a significant literary theme in Graham Greene's novels, which allows to explore human belief systems, moral dilemmas, and existential questions. Faith is a belief or trust in something beyond empirical evidence, often about religious or spiritual matters. Greene delves into the innermost thoughts and struggles of his characters, presenting readers with a rich tapestry of spiritual exploration and introspection. His works explore various religious traditions and the complex relationships between faith and doubt in both public and private spheres. This paper discusses how Greene uses faith as a literary theme and how it addresses various literary, religious, and philosophical concerns.

In *The End of the Affair* published in (1951), Greene explores the transformative power of love and faith through the story of Maurice Bendrix, a writer who is in love with Sarah Miles, a wife of Beurocrat. Sarah's staunch faith in God, despite her struggles, profoundly impacts Maurice, leading him to confront his doubts and beliefs.

Graham Greene's novels offer profound insights into the complexities of faith and its impact on human lives. Through his characters' struggles and triumphs, Greene explores the enduring power of belief in the face of doubt, sin, and despair. His works continue to resonate with readers, challenging them to examine their relationship with faith and its role in their lives. He explored themes of faith, sin, and redemption in his works. His novels are often set in morally ambiguous settings and feature characters who grapple with their beliefs amidst complex ethical dilemmas.

Greene's exploration of faith is deeply personal, reflecting his struggles with Catholicism. His upbringing was in a Catholic family, but he often questioned and challenged the Church's teachings. This questioning and challenging attitude is also found in his major characters who often grapple with doubts and uncertainties about their faith. Despite his doubts, Greene never abandoned his belief in God. He saw faith as a source of hope and meaning in a world that could be cruel and unforgiving. His novels often portray characters who find redemption through their faith, even in the most desperate circumstances.

Here are some of the key elements of faith which can be observed in Graham Greene's novels:

- **Doubt and Uncertainty:** Greene's characters often struggle with doubts about their faith. They may question the existence of God, the teachings of the Church, or their own beliefs. This doubt is often portrayed as a natural part of the human condition, rather than a sign of weakness.
- **Sin and Redemption:** Greene's novels often explore the themes of sin and redemption. His characters may commit acts of violence, betrayal, or other moral transgressions. However, they also have the capacity for remorse and change. Greene believed that even the most sinful person can find redemption through faith and love.
- **Hope and Meaning:** Despite the darkness and despair that often pervade Greene's novels, there is also an underlying message of hope. His characters may find meaning and purpose in their lives through their faith, even in the face of great adversity.

Here are some examples of how these elements of faith are explored in Greene's novel.

One of his most prominent novels which is set in 1930s Mexico, *The Power and the Glory* (1940) tells the story of a whisky priest who is on the run from the Mexican government to provide sacraments to the persecuted Catholics in his region. Despite his fear and isolation, the priest finds unwavering faith and purpose in his ministry, offering hope and redemption to those in need. The priest is a flawed and tormented character, but he is also deeply committed to his faith. He finds solace and purpose in his ministry, even as he faces death. Greene aptly stated this in the novel

“It was for this world that Christ had died; the more evil you saw and heard about you, the greater glory lay around the death. It was too easy to die for what was good or beautiful, for home or children or a civilisation — it needed a God to die for the half-hearted and the corrupt.” (114)

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The Heart of the Matter, published in 1948, is a novel by Greene that explores the moral dilemmas of Scobie, a British colonial officer stationed in West Africa. Scobie, a devout Catholic, is torn between his love for Helen and his duty to his wife and faith. Driven by love and compassion, his conscience leads him to betray his wife. Despite his self-destruction, Scobie's unwavering faith in God's mercy and forgiveness offers hope amidst his self-destruction. The dilemma and hope of the character stated by Greene in these lines

"How often, he thought, lack of faith helps one to see more clearly than faith." (243)

"The prayers we pray then don't count, surely? No, but when the moment of Grace comes, they rise" (221)

Brighton Rock (1938) is a novel set in Brighton, England, Greene explores the dark underbelly of human nature through the character of gangster Pinkie Brown, who murders due to nihilism and rejection of faith. Despite his cynical nature, Pinkie is haunted by guilt and a lingering belief in God. His internal struggle between his actions and his conscience highlights the complexities of faith and the possibility of redemption. The sense of guilt is stated by Greene in these lines

"You little know how you have ruined my life in breaking faith with me, you have crushed the very soul out of me, as the butterfly on the wheel; but with it all, I do not wish anything but your happiness." (152)

The other novel, The End of the Affair (1951) is a poignant love story set during World War II. Sarah Miles, a married woman, embarks on an adulterous affair with Maurice Bendrix, a writer. Their relationship is tested by Sarah's conversion to Catholicism and her belief that their love is a divine test. Greene clearly stated in these lines, Sarah's staunch belief in God

"You needn't be so scared. Love doesn't end. Just because we don't see each other.....She said, 'My dear, my dear. People go on loving God, don't they, all their lives without seeing Him?'" (54)

"I thought, in the morning I'll ring up a doctor and ask him whether a faith cure is possible. And then I thought, better not; so long as one doesn't know, one can imagine innumerable cures . . ." (190)

Graham Greene's exploration of faith is complex, nuanced, and multifaceted, reflecting his struggles with belief. He does not offer easy answers to the difficult questions about God, sin, and redemption. Through his characters' journeys, Greene invites readers to contemplate the nature of faith, its power in the face of adversity, and its ability to shape human existence. However, his novels provide a profound and thought-provoking examination of the human condition.

### **Understanding Faith as a Literary Theme in Graham Greene's Work**

Faith is a significant literary theme in Graham Greene's novels. This allows Greene to explore the complex problem of human belief systems, moral dilemmas, and existential questions. Greene's works, profoundly explore the role of faith in contemporary life, the ways individuals approach faith as faith, and how faith is experienced in their life.

Greene's works explore the intricate connections between faith and doubt in public and private spheres. In 'The Heart of the Matter', religious characters navigate World War Two chaos, demonstrating how faith can offer comfort and strength. In The Quiet American, British officer Fowler grapples with morality and faith amid the CIA's influence in Vietnam.

Greene's works also explore the psychology of faith, portraying how an individual's faith can both motivate and hinder them in life. In Brighton Rock, He explores the complex psychology of faith, while in 'The Power and The Glory', he details the journey of a priest struggling with faith in a hostile modern world. His exploration of faith in his novels provides insight into the complexities of human belief systems, moral dilemmas, and existential questions.

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## The Theme of Faith in Graham Greene's Character Development

Graham Greene's writing often employs the concept of faith in character development. He conveys the idea that faith is the foundation of human progress, and to have faith in oneself is an important step toward fulfilment. Faith in oneself can guide one to make the best decisions and to progress from wisdom and experience. By using a variety of characters, he explores faith as the theme of his stories.

The characters in Greene's novels show both religious and secular faith. Greene saw faith in terms of "the spiritual danger in accepting faith without an understanding." He believed that it was important to acquire faith and use it with discernment and understanding. He explored the idea that faith can lead to a loss of perspective, which could prevent people from making the best decisions. In this way, faith can act as a tool for character development.

This idea is often demonstrated in Greene's writing through characters who use faith as a tool for self-discovery and growth. In his novel, *The Power and the Glory*, the main character, a nameless priest, is portrayed as having faith in his ability to serve God through his ministry. Despite the danger he faces, he continually puts his faith in the Lord and the potential of a better future. This sense of faith in the unseen drives the character forward and ultimately gives him the courage and strength to carry out his mission.

Greene also used faith to explore the idea of longing for an understanding that reaches beyond this life. In his novel, *The Heart of the Matter*, protagonist Scobie searches for spiritual peace. He is a man of faith but does not believe in the power of faith for himself. He calls his religion "the rites of the spirit," which is defined as "the need for a sense of truth beyond one's own life." Through his character, Greene explored the idea that a person's faith can lead to spiritual growth and understanding.

Finally, Greene explored the idea of faith as a source of guidance in his novel *The End of the Affair*. protagonist Bendrix uses faith as a tool to determine what is true and right. He puts his faith in God and his beloved, Sarah. His faith enables him to overcome a hostile world and ultimately achieve a sense of peace. The character of Bendrix serves as an example of how faith can be used as a pathway to inner understanding and fulfilment.

Graham Greene's writing often uses faith as an underlying theme of character development. Greene's characters demonstrate both religious and secular faith, and Greene uses them to explore faith as a pathway to self-discovery and growth. By exploring the idea of faith, Greene seeks to convey the idea that faith can be an invaluable tool in making the best decisions in life and finding spiritual peace.

### Influence of personal beliefs on Graham Greene's storytelling

Being a Roman Catholic his life greatly influenced his writing, as well as his political beliefs which ultimately shaped his morality and worldview. He extensively uses subtle symbolism and the theme of faith to express his own beliefs and reflect his outlook on life.

*The Power and the Glory*, a novel about a man searching for meaning, highlights Catholicism's emphasis on redemption. His reliance on religion allowed him to explore human suffering, mortality, and despair while maintaining hope for redemption.

His works focused on issues like war and poverty, often targeting those in power. He sought to challenge the status quo and criticize those complicit in others' suffering. His novel, *The Quiet American*, denounces US imperialism overseas. Despite its political content, Greene managed to incorporate a strong moral message through a Catholic-inspired theme of redemption. His political writings were a powerful critique of the status quo.

He believed that life was difficult, but individuals could remain optimistic through faith and hard work. This idea is evident in his novel *Brighton Rock*, where characters struggle between faith and hard work, seeking redemption while striving for redemption.

### Exploring the Role of Faith in Conflict and Resolution in Greene's Novels

Themes of faith, conflict, and resolution are prominent in many of Graham Greene's novels. Through the exploration of faith, Greene can explore the complex issues of morality in human life and how faith can offer a way out of difficult situations. A recurrent theme in Greene's works is the power of faith in conflict and resolution. Greene focuses on how faith can motivate, enlighten, and inspire individuals, while also being a source of conflict. He creates characters who undergo struggles in their faith and how despite often difficult circumstances, faith can lead to a successful resolution.

In *The Power and the Glory*, the protagonist is faced with choices that require him to consider his faith and morality. The priest's faith is challenged and tested throughout his journey. He acknowledges his weaknesses and doubts about his beliefs, but despite his internal struggles, he is determined to fulfill his spiritual duties. Greene portrays the priest as a conflicted character whose faith leads him to make decisions that will help him resist the forces of morality and political oppression. The priest's faith allows him to become a beacon of hope for the citizens of this corrupt society. The priest is successful in his mission to comfort the people he meets and find a resolution in his struggle. Greene conveys the power of faith in how it can give an individual the courage to confront difficult moral and political issues.

In *The Heart of the Matter*, the protagonist, Scobie, is an unfaithful British police officer in Africa during World War II. At the beginning of the novel, he is in a difficult moral dilemma: live in dishonesty with his extra-marital affair or be truthful to his Christian faith and abandon his lover. He attempts to reconcile his moral obligations with his faith, often in fruitless efforts. Throughout the novel, Greene shows Scobie's struggle between his secular obligations and the strictures of his religious beliefs. Greene also emphasizes the human capacity to reconcile and find resolution in his faith. In the end, Scobie can come to terms with his moral failings and find redemption and resolution in his faith.

Greene's exploration of faith and resolution is ultimately a meditation on the relationship between faith and human behaviour. He highlights how, in difficult moral and political situations, faith can provide an individual with strength and help them find resolution in the face of adversity. Further, Greene also explores how reliance on faith can create difficulties but also lead to successful resolutions. Through the characters in his novels, Greene explains that faith can offer hope and purpose in times of difficulty, and it is the individual's choice to follow the guidance of their faith and make moral decisions.

### Theological Undertones in Graham Greene's Literary Universe

Graham Greene's literary works often explore the tension between the divine and the irreligious, using biblical and Christian symbolism, moral ambiguities, and spiritual and ethical themes. He often explores the mysterious aspects of religion, avoiding overt religious references but still incorporating theological undertones.

Greene's works often incorporate biblical and Christian symbols, themes, and motifs, such as the image of a condemned criminal in *The Power and the Glory* and the motif of light and darkness in *The Heart of the Matter*. These symbols provide a powerful framework for the stories and shape the characters' emotional experiences.

Greene also explores religious and moral ambiguities, as seen in *Brighton Rock*, where a character in a gang, struggles for moral redemption and must choose between a life of moral relativism and a life of faith. This character illustrates the challenges faced by modern people who must confront the complexities of religious morality.

Greene's works often focus on spiritual and ethical ideals, particularly the notion of grace and its presence in seemingly broken and immoral places. For example, *A Burnt-Out Case* features a spiritual outcast character who can achieve goodness through moments of grace. In many of Greene's works, spiritual grace is revealed as the only refuge from the dark and chaotic aspects of life. Greene's works serve as a lens through which to examine both the divine and profane aspects of life and spirituality.

## The Impact of Faith on Readers' Perception of Greene's Novels

Graham Greene's use of faith themes in his novels has a significant impact on readers' perceptions. His Catholic faith serves as a major inspiration for many of his works, and his vivid portrayals of religious struggles and moral issues have created controversy. For example, in his anti-war novel *The Quiet American*, Greene portrays an atheist journalist in an affair with a Vietnamese woman, highlighting the complexity of religious tensions during the time.

However, Greene's incorporation of faith themes has had a powerful effect on readers' perceptions. He often uses faith to provide a moral perspective on difficult questions, challenging readers to consider their own beliefs and values. This is evident in his portrayal of suffering in *The Heart of the Matter*, which explores the spiritual crisis of a police officer who renounces his faith and suffers. Greene's addition of faith elements to his stories encouraged readers to confront difficult questions of morality and consider the consequences of their decisions.

Greene's use of faith elements in his works has had a lasting impact on readers' perceptions of his works. His unique and vivid portrayals of religious themes inform his works, challenging readers to consider their own beliefs and moral perspectives. Through his faith-based stories, Greene invites readers to confront difficult questions of right and wrong and consider the consequences of their decisions.

### Graham Greene's Approach to Faith in Literature

Greene used a unique approach to faith in literature, incorporating various religious themes to depict a nuanced view of humanity's complex relationship with faith. His novels often draw from his own experiences and Catholicism to explore these themes. His protagonists often face difficult ethical dilemmas, navigating moral ambiguity and questioning their religious faith. For example, in *The Quiet American*, Alden Pyle, a naïve American idealist, uses his country's power to intervene in a turbulent post-war Southeast Asia. Despite his faith providing security and purpose, he ultimately explores concepts of right and wrong, questioning the reliability of faith as a guide to morality. Greene also explored the Catholic Concept of Peace, focusing on the priest's struggle with his faith as a mediator of peace between warring tribes in Africa. His faith provides spiritual comfort but also challenges his conscience.

Greene's characters often act as allegories for religious symbols and ideas. The 'whisky priest' in 'The Power and the Glory' and the 'Scobie' in 'The Heart of the Matter' represent the symbols of good and evil. (Erdinast-Vulcan)

In conclusion, Graham Greene's works are some of the most important explorations of faith and religion in literature, offering a unique view of faith and religious ideology that remains relevant today. His works remain powerful and thought-provoking, challenging readers to think more deeply about their relationship with faith.

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