

## **Between Baudelaire and Pascal: Religious Doubt and Faith in Greene's *The Quiet American***

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Graham Greene is known as a chronicler of the anxiety and agnosticism of twentieth-century man. As a novelist, he has repeatedly dealt with the problem of evil, sin and religious doubt. His protagonists, often situated on the front lines of war and poverty in tropical settings far removed from their native England, suffer from depression and unhappiness as they struggle with ethical choices of how to live and how to come to grips with the reality of evil. In ultimately confronting the necessity of action, his characters have to wade through their own complacency and cynicism.

In the context of the Second Indochina War of the early 1950s, Greene's novel *The Quiet American* (1955) presents the personal discord and spiritual disharmony of the main protagonist/narrator Thomas Fowler, an English journalist who had abandoned the restrictions of English domestic life. In particular, I draw upon the contrast between the staunch religious belief of the French Catholic Investigator Vigot, dutiful and straightforward, with Fowler and his moral relativism, self-indulgence and self-deceit. In examining this contrast, I draw upon the novel's allusions to French literature: Vigot's reading of Pascal's *Les Pensées* and Fowler's affinity for Baudelaire's decadent poetry.

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