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## Concept of Patriotism in Graham Greene's *The Human Factor*

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### **Abstract:**

*The Human Factor*, which has been stayed on the bestsellers list of the New York Times for six months, is considered by Graham Greene himself an 'entertainment,' a title which he has given to some of his works which are different from his other serious novels. The novel encapsulates in its title the explicit concern of Graham Greene for the human beings, more than any other thing and even more than a country, as he has a different philosophy of patriotism. With the British Secret Service as its base, Greene creates a mature and complex blend of familiar questions of loyalty and betrayal, commitment and non-commitment to the countries, to the various organizations like CIA, KGB, MI5, BOSS, and to various ideologies like communism and capitalism. He ultimately finds no interest or sympathy with any ideology as his sympathy lies with the private world of individuals. A family has more importance than a country for Greene, and therefore, the protagonist of the novel, Maurice Castle, pays all his attention to his family which he himself considers his life and not to the false ideologies that do not even consider anything before killing human beings in the name of patriotism. Therefore, the present research article intends to explore the different concept of patriotism in the novel.

### **Full Paper:**

*The Human Factor* is one such novel which deals with the story of a British double agent, Maurice Castle, who leaks some classified information to Soviet Union which is usually an act of treason. In the general sense of the word, treason is a most serious crime in the eyes of a country for which Maurice Castle is considered as a traitor to his country. But Graham Greene never calls Castle a traitor because he does not see the things on the surface

level only, and goes very deep to the things in order to know the root cause of Castle's action, and accordingly presents a different picture of patriotism in the novel. With some first-hand experience of intelligence work, which contained little excitement or melodrama in his life, Greene has written an espionage novel with the portrayal of day-to-day espionage in the office scenes related to Castle and his colleague Davis which has become a part of their tedious and unglamorous kind of routine. Another prominent figure in MI5, who arouses the sympathy of the reader, is Colonel Daintry who is appointed in the Service as a new security officer, and who is no better than a mere "prisoner cooped up in a cell" (HF137). He is a sad lonely figure in the novel and "nobody called Daintry by his first name because nobody knew it" (HF 22). He feels uneasy with the strangers and finds himself left out inside as well as outside of the world of Secret Service. Greene points out the situation of Daintry in order to show that his devotion to his duty makes him a lonely figure in the whole world. Even his wife has run away from him because of his too much involvement in the office work, the "chilling world of long silences" (HF 91). He painfully opens his heart to Castle: "Don't you get damned lonely sometimes in this outfit?" (HF 137) Daintry is a simple and kind person at heart who does a great justice to his duty as a security officer. He warns Castle and Davis at the time of routine check about the consequences of their act of taking notes and reports outside the office. Later he explains his action: "There's nothing personal in all this, you know. Purely a routine check. There are so many rules that sometimes some of them get neglected. It's human nature. The regulation, for example, about not taking work out of the office" (HF 7). Therefore, through the character of Daintry, Greene explicitly shows the realistic picture of life of persons working in a Secret Service where individual freedom does not matter at all but the Secret Service or Government has all the importance. Castle's wife Sarah also severely criticizes his job in the Secret Service: "I didn't mean for the job . . . I don't care a damn about the job. . . . A department of the Foreign Office, Everyone knows what that means, but you have to go around with your mouth shut like a criminal. If you told me—me, your wife—what you'd done today, they'd sack you" (HF 16). It is where Greene stands against the government or the country, and describes his views about patriotism from a different perspective. His description is more realistic than romantic when he talks about the novel:

. . . a novel of espionage free from the conventional violence, which was not, in spite of James Bond, been a feature of the British Secret Service . . . to present the service unromantically as a way of life, men going daily to their office to earn their pensions, the background much like that of any other profession—whether the bank clerk or the business director—an undangerous routine, and within each character the more important private life. (*Ways of Escape* 255)

Greene deliberately shows this type of atmosphere of the British Secret Service in order to justify the Castle's action to betray his agency. *The Human Factor* is set in London with the background of underworld of spies, where the British Secret Service, or any other secret services since "each side shares the same clichés," confines each person into his own 'box,' for it is the 'drill' that matters (HF 129). Life has been drilled into 'watertight boxes' and the 'human factor' has been drilled out. This dehumanizing system produces heartless monsters like Doctor Percival, Hargreaves and Cornelius Muller who can shamelessly justify even the murders of innocent persons like Davis and Carson because, as Daintry thinks, "they had heads of stone, he thought, stone" (HF 29). Therefore, the British Secret Service in the novel is depicted as "Machiavellian, ruthless and collaborative with the apartheid regime in South Africa" (Watts 80). The British Secret Service is in association with the United States and South African Government for the execution of a secret programme called 'Uncle Remus' which is the code name for an elaborate defense pact designed to protect South Africa. 'Uncle Remus' exemplifies how the major powers of the world can identify their interests in pursuance of their dark design. Therefore, the novel also explores what Greene considered the hypocrisy of the West's relation with South Africa under apartheid:

Perhaps the hypocrisy of our relations with South Africa nagged me on to work too. It was so obvious that, however much opposed the governments of the Western Alliance might pretend to be to apartheid, however much our leaders talked of its immorality, they simply could not let South Africa succumb to Black Power and Communism. (*Ways of Escape* 258)

The first impression that *The Human Factor* creates on the minds of the reader is that it is all about politics and "a secret service novel" (Drabble 431). But the artist in Greene ultimately finds no interest or involvement in anything of the sort as Colm Toibin remarks: "Greene had no interest in dramatizing the life of a man with fixed political beliefs, who was prepared to betray his country for them" (HF vii). His sympathy does not lie with the ideology that draws its basic points and its spirit from communism, capitalism, or social

democracy. The human factor for Greene is not limited only to the political consciousness of his work that colors his fiction. He seems to have no interest, whatever, in anything beyond mere home or family. Therefore, *The Human Factor* explicitly shows that Greene is primarily concerned with the individual life rather than public or social life of his characters, which is yet another instance of his remarkable sensitivity to the individual liberty of the protagonist as well as other characters of the novel. What is basic to Greene's fiction is his loyalty to human rights and individual freedom untrammelled by the constraints of a country or a government. However, to call him democrat or pro-communist is simply the bone of contention that engages many critics and scholars for an argument. But he is a novelist who is concerned with the choices of individuals; however, in doing so he is against the governments and all those who wield power and responsibility. It is not forms of government but the quality of human life that Greene is essentially concerned with, and in which lays his different philosophy of patriotism. In this novel the more important private world of individuals is opposed to and threatened by the great hostile public world of politics and violence, and Greene's allegiance to the private world and betrayal of the public world is the sign of his different kind of patriotic philosophy that recalls Warmold's declaration of individuality in his another novel *Our Man in Havana*:

I wouldn't kill for capitalism or communism or social democracy or the welfare state—whose welfare? . . . A family-feud had been a better reason for murder than patriotism or the preference for one economic system over another. If I love or hate, let one love or hate as an individual. I will not be 59200/5 in anyone's global war. (122)

Therefore, Castle is very concerned for his family, and there is nothing that matters for Castle more than his family. He has become a traitor in the eyes of Secret Service but Greene never presents him in dark shade, and attributes his act of treason to his gratitude to Carson who has helped his wife Sarah in her escape from South Africa. It was during the time of his African assignment when he fell in love with Sarah. There he fell foul with the local authorities who charged him with violating the race laws and tried to put him behind the bars. But he managed to escape safely to England, however without Sarah. Then Carson, the Communist advocate ensured Sarah's safe departure from South Africa. So, he scarcely disguises his liking for the Communist Carson, and his dislike for Muller, the man who caused trouble to him in South Africa: "How I hate the man who killed Carson and now call it pneumonia. I hate them for trying to shut Sarah up and let Sam be born in prison" (HF 113). Seven years later when Muller is sent to England by BOSS in connection with 'Uncle

Remus,' the wickedness of this dark plan and the hate stirred by Muller are enough to revive Castle's sympathy for the blacks. He argues with Muller: "But those little tactical atomic weapons of yours. Think of all the blacks who will die before you do. . . . I mean all the families in the infected area. Children, girls, the old grannies" (HF 151). This incites a strong hate in Castle for the Secret Service and the Government. Therefore, love rather than politics is responsible for his sympathy with Carson, and his hate for the agency. His keen desire to repay Carson's kindness impels him to supply the secret information about South Africa to Russia, through their agent Boris. His betrayal is motivated neither by money nor by commitment to an ideology but by sentiments as he himself announces:

When people talk about Prague and Budapest and how you can't find a human face in Communism I stay silent. Because I've seen—once—the human face. I say to myself that if it hadn't have been for Carson Sam would have been born in a prison and you would probably have died in one. One kind of Communism—or—Communist—saved you and Sam. I don't have any trust in Marx or Lenin any more than I have in Saint Paul, but haven't I the right to be grateful? (HF 101)

Therefore, Castle has nothing in common with the communist view, and makes clear to Boris that he is giving only a limited support over Africa alone: "It has always been quite clear between you and me. I give you all the information you want in my section. I've never pretended that I share your faith—I'll never be a Communist" (HF 115). Later on his way to Moscow, while driving with Old Halliday, a member of the Communist party, Castle says: "If we drove for a century, Halliday, you wouldn't convert me" (HF 215). Therefore, Castle has no politics in his character, yet he can like Carson—a Communist, likewise he is not a religious man, and yet he remembers a particular priest in Africa. He himself says: "For a while I half-believed in God, like I half-believed in Carson's. Perhaps I was born to be a half-believer" (HF 107). He only wants to find "a permanent home, in a city where he could be accepted as a citizen, as a citizen without any pledge of faith, not the city of God or Marx, but the city called peace of mind" (HF 107). Castle also comes to know that his information was regarded minor in importance; it was being passed back to London by a Russian agent in order to fool London into thinking that the Russian agent was really in the hands of British Secret Service. So Castle has merely been helping to establish the credentials of a triple agent. The world of spying is thus shown in the novel to be a world of "bluff and double bluff, of multiple treachery and profound cynicism" (Watts 80). The ambiguity of Castle's thoughts inverts upside down the traditional view of loyalty and betrayal and makes nonsense

of narrow patriotism and political ideologies. His love for his family, and his hate and revolt against a life-long submission to a soulless system is that of a normal human being.

Therefore, Castle, the protagonist, can betray his organization and country, but not the country he constitutes with his wife and son. The heart of the matter, for Castle, lies somewhere in his heart—in his love for his family. He is truly loyal to them. What irks him is the heartless system that murders Carson and Davis, and then justifies those murders by calling just pneumonia and cirrhosis respectively. If Castle goes astray by providing the secret information to Russia, it is only due to human feelings. What is notable in *The Human Factor* is the vindication of Castle's act of treason or the way he comes out of the furnace like gold. Those seemingly betrayed by him hardly deserved any loyalty. Those thirsting for the human blood deserve no consideration whatsoever, and therefore, there is nothing wrong in cheating the cheats. His mother, however, still calls him a traitor, but Sarah can sincerely retort: "All right—a traitor then. A traitor to whom? To Muller and his friends? To the Security Police? . . . He said once I was his country—and Sam" (HF 257). What really matters for Greene more than patriotism is love for human beings as in Greene's another novel named *Our Man in Havana*, Henry Wormold's secretary Beatrice rightly declares:

I don't care a damn about men who are loyal to the people who pay them, to organizations. . . . I don't think even my country means that much. . . . Would the world be in the mess it is if we were loyal to love and not to countries? (209)

As a work of fiction, *The Human Factor* focuses on the tragic mess in the life of its characters who are "the committed and the uncommitted, the conformists and the non-conformists" to the 'bogus ideals' (Sharma 188). In this contemporary world of materialistic growth men like Percival and Hargreaves have lost all the connections with other human beings, and has gone into the hands of their masters, the CIA, KGB, MI5, and BOSS who can virtually make or mar their existence. On the other hand, there are characters like Castle, Sarah, Davis and Daintry who always follow their hearts. Castle considers his responsibility to his wife and son more than his organization and his country. His love for his family, and his hate and revolt against a life-long submission to a soulless system is that of a normal human being. His betrayal to his organization and country is motivated neither by money nor by commitment to any ideology, but by the sentiments. However, he commits the most serious of all crimes in the eyes of the country but Greene depicts him in such a sympathetic manner that it becomes impossible for the reader to condemn Castle for his action, and ultimately he wins the regard of the reader in spite of his betrayal to his country. It becomes

possible only because Greene explicitly shows his different concept of patriotism which gives the importance to a family more than an organization or a country.

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