



# Dimensions of Sin in Graham Greene's *The Third Man*

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**Abstract**— The term 'sin' not only pertains to theology and religion but also holds significance relevance in the lives of individuals. It affects the morale and behavior of every individual in society. Whether we are aware of the concept of sin or not, it is the foundation of our moral disposition. The effect of sin on one's life is undeniable. Like the state law, its effects are sometime not readily apparent, but they are highly powerful. As an example it can be observed that despite the fact that by any law it is forbidden to throw garbage in public places or monuments, but people consistently disregard this law. However there is no rule in scripture about not throwing garbage in sacred place like church, temple etc. but people usually don't throw garbage there. It is because in their deep in consciousness there is a sense of sin and ethical value. So it may be observed that how powerful the sense of sin is in the individual's mind. And here in this paper it is going to discuss how various kinds of sinful acts unfold through this novel. To comprehend the essence of sin, it is essential to ascertain its definition and explore its dimensions. This paper will analyze how these qualities appear through the characters in the novel of Graham Greene's *The Third Man*.



**Keywords**—Sin, Evil, Pride, Deceit, Lying, Adultery, Murder, Hatred, Dishonest, Wickedness, Selfishness, Arrogance, Moral Disposition,

Sin is natural for man in the sense that it is universal but not in the sense that it is necessary.

Reinhold Niebuhr

Graham Greene was the great writer of twentieth century; the themes of his novels mostly revolve around the sinful acts of his characters. Many critics called him a Roman Catholic Novelist. Although he 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.

According to *Oxford Dictionary*, Sin means, an offence against God or against a religious or moral law. However, as it seems defining the act of sin in real life is not that simple or straightforward. (1423)

According to *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "Sin is an offence against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbour caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human

solidarity. It has been defined as an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the eternal law. (505)

In his book, *A Right Conception of Sin*, Richard S. Taylor talks about the acts, that falls under the sin. He summarizes that God quarrel is not to our humanity but our disposition, but with our disposition to set our will against his. This is the thing, which he is trying to get rid of, and that is the only thing, which will bring final condemnation. In other words, he opines, Sin is the transgression of law. (12)

It may be observed in the *Holy Bible*, various acts are falls under sin. These are sinful acts, because these are restricted to commit. Although, God spoken through the Scripture. We can find some description of these sinful acts in *Thompson Chain Reference Bible*. These acts are adultery, arrogance, backbiting, bribery, covetousness, deceit, dishonesty, evil influence, murder, injustice, lying, neglect of mercy, oppression, partiality, polygamy, pride, selfishness, slander, unjust gain of wealth etc. These acts can affect our spiritual disposition and our relationship

with God. By committing these acts, we harm to other people too, which is a forbidden act in the Holy Bible. As we can see the one of very popular verse of (Mark 12:31) in *Holy Bible*:

Love your neighbour as yourself.” There is no command greater than this.

Therefore, it may be understood that by following God's command, we obey the God, and by transgressing his command, we are committing a sin. There are various acts of the transgression of God's law which are going to be discussed in the novel.

Graham Greene, whose long life (1904-1991) nearly spanned the twentieth century, was one of its greatest novelists. He began to attract notice as a novelist with his fourth book, *Orient Express*, in 1932.

Graham Greene's *The Third Man* published in 1948. It is a story about a racketeer Harry Lime who is also a protagonist of the novel, even he was not available physically more than half part of novel but the story triggered and affected by his mysterious death or may we call it murder, as Martins was thinking initially in the novel. Lime had been selling watered-down penicillin on Vienna's black market. This results in the misery and demise of innumerable persons, exemplifying avarice and a lack of regard for human life.

Murder, homicide, theft etc. were the by-product of his acts. Because of the shortage and trafficking of penicillin men were dying in war and hospital. These actions are a major sin since they result in the deaths of numerous innocent individuals. They are both a crime against the law and a sin against spirituality. But Lime's defence of his crimes in the renowned Ferris wheel speech underscores his moral disengagement and utilitarian rationale for malevolent acts.

The Novel starts with the introduction of his best friend Rollo Martins a thirty-five-year-old second grade writer who invited by his oldest friend Harry Lime in post-war Vienna. But he learns that Lime is killed by a car accident same day and buried that day. After some investigations, Martins discovers that Lime is alive and he plotted his fake death because of saving himself from the catch of law. And to learn this truth Martin disguise himself as decoy and confront to his friend Lime and by taking law in his hand he killed his friend Lime. That is the way, story ends in this novel.

Rollo Martins embodies the conflict between allegiance and ethical obligation. His path from denial to confrontation represents the painful admission of sin in interpersonal relationships as well as the loss of innocence.

The novel, begin with the introduction of the sinful act of Rollo Martin, a friend of Lime. On his acts, Officer Calloway aptly reflects:

One never knows when the blow may fall. When I saw Rollo Martins first, I made this note on him for my security police files: ‘In normal circumstances a cheerful fool. Drinks too much and may cause a little trouble. Whenever a woman passes raises his eyes and makes some comment, but I get the impression that really he'd rather not be bothered.’”

It is evident from the aforementioned excerpts that Martin was a natural polygamist and drinker. He always attempts to please his sexual appetite, and seeing multiple women is just his way of getting it. Furthermore, it is a prohibited act for a Christian. As in the *Holy Bible*, we can observe that: But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.’ (Matt 5:28)

The other sinful act of his behaviour is that he is a drunkard by nature, and no control over himself. Moreover, it ultimately leads a person to other sinful acts such, adultery, murder, quarrel, wickedness etc. All these acts lead to the ‘transgression of law’ of God.

The other incident of sinful act appeared in chapter two of the novel, when Martins learns that Calloway is police officer, so he becomes very angry and in disgust, he says that: I've always hated policeman. They are always either crooked or stupid.” In addition, at another place he again says,

Why don't you policemen catch a few murderers for a change?

Here we can observe the absolute hatred and anger toward Officer Calloway. Martins blamed the police department for this even on the second occasion, which is again against what the Bible says in Luke 6:42,

How can you say to your brother, Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye, when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

It may be observed in the novel that Officer Calloway was doing just his duty and nothing else, but it is Martins, who in spite of having no connection with the sinful acts of his friend, was overreacting. In addition, Martins again got angry over Officer Calloway and

rebuked: Listen, Callaghan, or whatever your bloody name is. I'm going to make you look the biggest bloody fool in Vienna.'

His immoral deed of rage is portrayed in the narrative. Again, we see Martin's 'ungratefulness' in the novel. Further in the novel when Martins asks to Officer Calloway that he want to drink some wine because he has not enough money for this. By learning, that officer Calloway offered him wine happily. However, at the time of departing from bar, he learns that Calloway is a police officer, and he forgot everything whatever he did to him and says:

I'm glad I don't have to feel grateful. I suppose that they were on expenses?

In this way, it represents that Martins is an ungrateful person, who for the sake of his convenience can forget every deed of goodness done by anyone. The Holy Bible aptly speaks about it:

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God--having a form of godliness, but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people. (2Ti 3:1-5)

As the narrative of the novel unfolds, it may be observed that in spite of having a dangerous situation in Vienna for Martins' life, and he felt it too, he was very curious to find out who has killed Harry Lime. Because of his ignorance, he could not understand it, that Harry Lime was faking his death to disguising the police officers of Vienna, and even to his good friend Martins, and his girl Anna too. That's the way he was covering his 'crime' and 'sin' from law, authority, religion and friend etc. and as it is written in the Holy Bible that,

He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy. (Proverbs 23:13)

In chapter 11, Martins, after left the meeting of officer Calloway goes to bar, and there he thinks about having sex with someone, and resolved in his mind that he would make love with Anna. In spite of knowing that, she is his best friend's girl too:

And he set out obstinately on foot to find Harry's girl. He wanted to make love to

her--just like that: no nonsense, no sentiment. He was in the mood for violence,

The Bible makes clear that having sex outside of marriage is a serious sin and that those who engage in it are sinners in God's eyes:

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The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

Further, it may be observed in the novel that how Harry Lime's wickedness manifested in his behavior, when he finally met with his friend Rollo Martins. He was not a careful or gracious person, nor does he have the feelings for his friend:

Well, Harry said, 'it's good to see you, Rollo. I was at your funeral.'

That was pretty smart of me, wasn't it?

Not so smart for your girl. She was there too in tears.'

She's a good little thing, Harry said. I'm very fond of her.'

It is evident that Harry was a "wicked" person; even his friend Martins, was concerned about him from the beginning. Even he has no feelings for his girlfriend, Anna, who was so committed to him and loved him unconditionally that she turned down Martins' proposal after returning from Harry Lime's burial and realizing that Lime was dead and that she was alone in the world.

She loved Harry unconditionally after his death and lived alone in Vienna. Despite this, Harry seemed unappreciative and denounced her disposition. Even his closest associate Rollo Martins was disappointed with Harry Lime because of his immoral behavior and criminal mentality, which ultimately led to his death and the deaths of other innocent people. This is the reason why Martins' choice to kill Lime was influenced by the revelations made by Officer Calloway concerning Lime.

Graham Greene's *The Third Man* is an intricate study of sin, highlighting moral ambiguity and the difficulties of making ethical decisions. The novel's vibrant characters and ethically charged environment challenges readers to consider the intricacies of human vanity and the elusiveness of redemption.

As a consequence, it reveals the various facets of sin appeared through the characters in *The Third Man*. In addition, it is obvious, that how the acts of sin, affecting everyone's life in the novel. As Greene told it, *The Third Man* had a casual birth: 'Sometimes one may turn them over stories after many years and think regretfully they would have been good once, in a time now dead.' (Sherry, 241). Graham Greene's complexity of portraying characters with moral dilemma cannot be missed. It persists in the reader's thoughts and presents a dilemma. There is no comparison to Greene's skill in crafting moral and theological themes.

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