



The Third Man

Graham Greene

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Rollo Martins' usual line is the writing of cheap paperback Westerns under the name of Buck Dexter. But when his old friend Harry Lime invites him to Vienna, he jumps at the chance. With exactly five pounds in his pocket, he arrives only just in time to make it to his friend's funeral. The victim of an apparently banal street accident, the late Mr. Lime, it seems, had been the focus of a criminal investigation, suspected of nothing less than being "the worst racketeer who ever made a dirty living in this city." Martins is determined to clear his friend's name, and begins an investigation of his own...

The Third Man Details

Date : Published May 1st 1999 by Penguin Books (first published 1950)

ISBN : 9780140286823

Author : Graham Greene

Format : Paperback 160 pages

Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Classics, Crime, Thriller

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novella is not worth checking out. Graham Greene is a deft hand at conveying emotion with elegance and an economy of words that hint at a lot of passion behind the stiff upper lip British attitude.

Vienna in the immediate aftermath of World War II is a desolate place, scoured by chill winds, with mountains of rubble barely hidden under the snow, tensions between the occupying powers and a flourishing black market that attracts the more unsavoury elements of the human race.

Rollo Martins is a convincing character as the writer of pulp westerns, lonely but always on the look out for love, drunk, angry, torn by the struggle between keeping faith with his childhood friend and condemning his crimes.

Harry Lime, even without the famous "cuckoo clock" quote, is a chilling villain, a dangerous psychopath without an ounce of empathy for his victims, always looking out for number one - himself.

The romantic element is another highlight of the novella, reminding me of broken dolls trying to piece themselves back together, cynics with little faith in the possibility of happy endings.

One memorable scene for me was the Literary soiree with some biting arrows thrown at literary critics and the elitist debate of the merits of Joyce or Galsworthy while Rollins agonizes over his actions that probably led to the death of an innocent man.

Then there's the ride on the great wheel in Prater and the chase through the sewers that were so effective on film. Worked well here, too.

Mark says

This book is a re-issue of the 1950 in Dutch translated edition, re-issued in the series of the Tomas Ross crime classics. Tomas Ross being the best living thriller writer in the Netherlands these days.

The book starts with a message by the writer in which he explains that the story was never meant as a book but was written as a treatment for a movie, and that any difference in story is due to the fact that the story of movie was changed by the director at a later date.

So why read the book, that is simple the movie is brilliant and you cannot fail to see the face of Orson Welles when you read the story. And hearing the brilliant music echoing, The zither music score, in my mind as created by Anton Karas.

The book is situated in a post WWII Vienna in which Rollo Martins arrives on invitation of friend Harry Lime. He is actually a wee bit late to meet his friend but in time to attend his funeral. The narrator one Colonel Calloway is interested in this wild west writer whose appearance he finds difficult to explain, and in their first meeting Martins ends up in believing that there was foul play involved in Harry Limes dead. AND it is through the actions of Martins that the whole story evolves into an explosive ending in the sewers of Vienna.

Unlike the novels by Philip Kerr, who did a brilliant book in postwar Vienna, and Alan Furst this book by Graham Greene does not have the colour locale and the flavor of the postwar world. The book contains not enough excitement to keep you going, all in all it is a weak copy of the brilliant movie by Carol Reed. It is not one of Graham Greens better efforts but it remains famous due to the brilliant images of the movie.

however it is worth reading if you really like the movie, but only if you do not have any other good book to

read.

Helen says

A breathless read.

Set in Vienna at the end of World War II, the reader is immediately struck off balance by a turbulent, blighted world. Gone is the gracious city of old-world coffee houses. Every street is in ruins, the scars of war blanketed by snow. Side by side on the same block are lovely old apartment houses and blackened craters. Shops flourish at street level, the floors above them bombed out of existence. To add to the sense of displacement, the city is divided into four zones ruled by the Allied victors, Russia, America, France and England.

Into this confused landscape falls Rollie Martins, a writer of westerns and cheap thrillers. Invited for a visit by his oldest friend, Harry Lime, he arrives at his apartment only to discover that his beloved school chum has died in a car accident. Immediately, discrepancies develop in the story. Rollie tearfully vows to reconstruct the events of what really happened to his fallen hero.

It's obvious that GG didn't write this for publication, but as a sketch for a screenplay; though his characterizations are, as always, razor-sharp, the finessing of words is not as keenly honed as in, say, *The Heart of the Matter*, or *The End of the Affair*. Still, the plot, the setting, the dilemmas and the betrayals are all Greene at his absolute best. Having seen the movie years ago, I knew the story and the ending, and I still couldn't put the book down. I actually preferred this Harry Lime, a reckless, amoral schoolboy, to Orson Welles' ominous, obvious heavy.

This is a jaded, cynical, discomfiting little story. No one comes out well. God, I wish I could write like this.

Andrew Smith says

I know it's an old story but it does feel dated... and abridged (though it isn't)... and really written for the screen (which it is). Disappointing.

BrokenTune says

I have tried to watch *The Third Man* more times than I care to remember. Tried and failed. I know it is considered a classic but the only effect it ever had on me was to put me to sleep.

As part of my self-imposed Greene-land challenge, this is one of the two books that I have looked forward to least. The other, btw, is Greene's other cinematic "classic" *Brighton Rock*.

So, there I was starting *The Third Man* having made a huge pot of coffee in full expectation that slumber would befall me at anytime.

And what happens? Greene brings to life the dreariness of post-war Vienna much more effectively on page than the film ever could in moving images. Who'd have thought it?!

"I never knew Vienna between the wars, and I am too young to remember the old Vienna with its Strauss music and its bogus easy charm; to me it is simply a city of undignified ruins which turned that February into great glaciers of snow and ice. The Danube was a grey flat muddy river a long way off across the Second Bezirk, the Russian zone where the Prater lay smashed and desolate and full of weeds, only the Great Wheel revolving slowly over the foundations of merry-go-rounds like abandoned millstones, the rusting iron of smashed tanks which nobody had cleared away, the frost-nipped weeds where the snow was thin. I haven't enough imagination to picture it as it had once been, any more than I can picture Sacher's Hotel as other than a transit hotel for English officers or see the Kärntnerstrasse as a fashionable shopping street instead of a street which exists, most of it, only at eye level, repaired up to the first storey. A Russian soldier in a fur cap goes by with a rifle over his shoulder, a few tarts cluster round the American Information Office, and men in overcoats sip ersatz coffee in the windows of the Old Vienna."

The other aspect I enjoyed about *The Third Man* was that this wasn't so much of a thriller which was meant to be taken seriously anymore. Greene found his touch as a writer of political spoofs - only later to be surpassed of course by *Our Man in Havana*.

"There is a lot of comedy in these situations if you are not directly concerned. You need a background of Central European terror, of a father who belonged to a losing side, of house-searches and disappearances, before the fear outweighs the comedy. The Russian, you see, refused to leave the room while Anna dressed: the Englishman refused to remain in the room: the American wouldn't leave a girl unprotected with a Russian soldier, and the Frenchman - well, I think the Frenchman must have thought it was fun. Can't you imagine the scene? The Russian was just doing his duty and watched the girl all the time, without a flicker of sexual interest; the American stood with his back chivalrously turned, but aware, I am sure, of every movement; the Frenchman smoked his cigarette and watched with detached amusement the reflection of the girl dressing in the mirror of the wardrobe; and the Englishman stood in the passage wondering what to do next."

Review originally posted on BookLikes: <http://brokentune.booklikes.com/post/...>

Oziel Bispo says

Hollo Martins chega em uma Viena pós guerra e descobre que seu amigo de colégio Harry Lime acaba de morrer em um acidente ;tendo sido atropelado por um veículo. Hollo acha as circunstâncias da morte do amigo muito suspeitas e Seguindo sua consciência, decide investigar por conta própria para tentar limpar o nome do amigo que está sendo acusado de vários crimes pela polícia local. Em sua investigação descobre várias coisas sobre seu amigo e descobre também que havia um terceiro homem na cena do acidente que pode ser crucial para a resolução desse acidente. Um grande clássico cheio de intrigas e suspense.

Panagiotis says

Ο Γκριν ε?ναι ?νας απ? τους αγαπημ?νους μου συγγραφε?ς. Με ?χει κερδ?σει ολοκληρωτικ? το χιο?μορ του, η διεισδυτικ?τητ? του στην ανθρ?πινη φ?ση που δ?νει μια πλο?σια σε καυστικ?τητα

γράφει. Γράφει νουβέλ, γράφει για τον Β Παγκόσμιο, γράφει ψυχροπολεμικές ιστορίες, για τυχάρπαστους, ερωτευμένους - γράφει πολλά και ίσως η κατηγοριοποίηση να αδικεί έναν τέτοιο άνθρωπο: γράφει λογοτεχνία όπως ελάχιστοι γράφουν, γράφουν και θα γράψουν.

Το *The Third Man* έχει την πρωτοτυπία να είναι συνακλόουθο δημιούργημα μιας ταινίας. Ήταν ζητήθηκε από τον Γκρην να γράψει το σενάριο για την ομώνυμα ταινία με πρωταγωνιστή των Άρσον Γουόλς, ο μόνος τρόπος να τα καταφέρει ήταν να γράψει πρώτα αυτό το βιβλίο. Τόσιου έδους πληροφορίες τοποθετούν σε ένα λόγο πιο στιβαρό πλαίσιο την ανήγωση ενός γραπτού. Εμμένα όμως με ξετρελάνουν καθώς για μια στιγμή βλέπω λόγο μέσα στα μεγάλα μυαλά των δημιουργών. Μικρές εξομολογήσεις που ίσως αποκαλύπτουν ανθρώπινες αδυναμίες για εμμένα αποτελούν μικρές εμμονές μια ευφυΐας.

Η ιστορία είναι μικρή, εξαιρετική γραμμική, γρήγορη. Το ταλάντο του Γκριν στην σκιαγράφηση της συλλογικής ματαιότητας των επιδιξέν μας είναι παρόν, σγουρα όμως τιθάσευμένο. Ωστόσο πουθενά δεν προοδεύει τί σκοπιμότητα του βιβλίου είναι εξυπηρετεί την δημιουργία ενός κινηματογραφικού σενάρου. Είναι αυθπαρκτο, μια κινηματογραφική περιπέτεια της εποχής από μόνο του.

Διασκεδαστική, για ποιον γνωρίζει τον Γκρήχαμ Γκριν και θλίει μια μικρή δόση από την πύνα του. Για τους υπόλοιπους ας ξεκινούν από άλλο. Ήχι γιατί δεν είναι καλό τοτο έδ, αλλά οι 160 σελίδες του θα φάνον τόσο λίγες σε μια πρώτη γνώριμα με τον σπουδαίο Βρετανό!

David Schaafsma says

Graham Greene to my mind somewhat stuffily separated his narrative books for much of his career into two categories—fiction and “entertainments”—such as this noir novel, *The Third Man*. The book was written (or at least published) after the screenplay he produced for the film by the same name (1949, directed by Carol Reed, featuring Joseph Cotton and Orson Welles). I saw the film decades ago, and since I was reading all these mysteries and detective fiction, and because I had just reread two of his finest novels, *The Heart of the Matter* and *The Power and the Glory*, I thought I would listen to the novel from a celebrated novelist I admire, but the only thing available on my audiobook service was this adaptation for the stage of the screenplay. Since two of the actors include Kelsey Grammer and John Mahoney (*Frasier*), I jumped, and enjoyed. I just don’t see the distinction between novels and entertainments; great writing is great writing.

The Third Man is a really well-written thriller, short and taut and efficient, about a crime ring that sells penicillin on the black market in Vienna in the aftermath of World War II. Novelist Holly Martins is haunted by the news of the death of his friend Harry Lime, who had offered him a job. Who killed Lime? And why? Or is he possibly still alive? Martins enlists the help of Anna Schmidt, Lime’s girlfriend. There’s some great dialogue and some happy surprises along the way. The focus of the criminal material also, not surprisingly for the Catholic Greene, involves an ethical concern: The children who are victims of Lime’s diluted penicillin, become brain-damaged as a result of meningitis.

Lime, at one point confronted, makes a brutal and heartless case for arguing in favor of greed over “the dots” (human beings, the masses, the countless poor) he observes from a several stories high perspective:

“You know what the fellow said – in Italy, for thirty years under the Borgias, they had warfare, terror,

murder and bloodshed, but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and the Renaissance. In Switzerland, they had brotherly love, they had five hundred years of democracy and peace – and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock.”

Highly recommended, though I will add a note about the film later, soon to be reviewed. Maybe better to see the film then read the screenplay or novel.

Joseph Sciuto says

Graham Greene's, "The Third Man" is a wonderful mystery (thriller) set in post war Vienna with the legendary character of Harry Lime; a notorious racketeer selling poisoned penicillin to children's hospitals and doctors, at exorbitant prices, resulting in the death and disabling of innocent victims.

Mr. Graham originally wrote this as a screenplay which was made into the legendary movie "The Third Man" starring the great Orson Welles and Joseph Cotton. He later wrote the book, which is slightly different than movie, but just as great.

I recommend the book and the movie. You will not be disappointed.

Franco Santos says

3.5

Buen libro de misterio para leer en una sola tarde. Lo recomiendo.

Orsodimondo says

IL PRIMO UOMO

Il gioco delle ombre.

Uno dei primi esempi di novelization della storia: la sceneggiatura del film scritta da Greene è del 1949, il romanzo (racconto lungo, novella) del 1950.

Holly Martin/Joseph Cotten e Anna Schmidt/Alida Valli.

Tra film e romanzo cambia il punto di vista, la voce narrante: nel libro a raccontare è il colonnello inglese Calloway (Trevor Howard), ufficiale dei servizi segreti britannici che deve bloccare un traffico di contrabbando (medicinali scaduti, avariati, più specificamente, penicillina) - nel film è lo stesso protagonista, lo scrittore Holly Martins (Joseph Cotten) che arriva a Vienna subito dopo la liberazione (1945) per scoprire che fine ha fatto il suo amico d'infanzia Harry Lime (Orson Welles) nei cui loschi traffici finisce invischiato. Il che trasforma la narrazione letteraria in un tono più disincantato e ironico, donandole la capacità di sorridere e non prendersi sul serio, cogliendo l'aspetto ridicolo di circostanze invece drammatiche.

Harry Lime/Orson Welles.

Io però preferisco il film, senza se e senza ma. Greene scrittore mi è più caro altrove.

Lo stesso Greene considerava superiore la pellicola al libro.

Il film è un miracolo dell'arte cinematografica.

Vienna era la location perfetta per i traffici illegali: bombardata, cosparsa di rovine e macerie, abbandonata, terra di tutti e nessuno, divisa in quattro zone di occupazione militare come Berlino (inglese, francese, russa e statunitense). Una città distrutta e allo sbando offriva riparo e humus a personaggi che necessitavano, o preferivano, muoversi nell'ombra, come Harry Lime.

Appuntamento alla ruota panoramica del Prater.

Holly Martins, scrittore di libri d'evasione (si tratta di romanzetti western presumibilmente non eccelsi), è il perfetto pollo per un luogo dove si giocano partite come quella messa in piedi dal suo amico Harry Lime: Holly è un ingenuo, impiega un tempo smisurato prima di decidere che il suo amico d'infanzia è diventato un lestofante. Si rifiuta di credere a quello che Calloway gli racconta, e vuole convincere l'agente inglese che il suo amico di sempre, che lui venera e idealizza, è innocente.

Più Lime è avido, spregiudicato, immorale, manipolatore e senza scrupoli, più Martins è all'opposto puro, ingenuo, rigorosamente etico, romantico, quasi sciocco.

Vienna dopo la guerra.

Holly (già dal nome si capisce che è un pedone, non certo un alfiere) arriva a Vienna per 'indagare' sulla morte di Lime: non crede alla versione ufficiale ed è convinto che il suo amico sia stato assassinato.

Omicidio al quale hanno assistito tre uomini, uno dei quali è sparito nel nulla.

Uno dei due testimoni, il portiere del palazzo dove abita Anna, viene ammazzato.

Holly Martins cerca il terzo uomo, colui che potrebbe risolvere il mistero, e finisce col trovare il finto morto (nella tomba di Harry Lime si scopre il cadavere di un altro).

Altro personaggio basilare è Anna Schmidt (Alida Valli), profuga ungherese con passaporto austriaco, attrice professionista, innocente pur se costretta a vivere di espedienti, e innocente anche se sinceramente innamorata di Harry Lime.

Anche lei, come Holly Martins, fa molta fatica a credere ai racconti di Calloway su Harry Lime, a convincersi che l'uomo che ama è uno spregiudicato truffatore.

Rifiuta e respinge sempre l'amore che Holly prova immediatamente per lei.

La fuga nelle fogne di Vienna.

Il terzo protagonista, il vertice del triangolo, è quindi proprio Harry Lime, un villain perfetto per l'arte di Orson Welles, che amava questi personaggi negativi ai quali sapeva dare vitalità, leggerezza, simpatia e carica umana come nessun altro: ironicamente melodrammatici, simpaticamente gigioni, misuratamente teatrali, erano personaggi divertenti e affascinanti benché loschi e corrotti.

Harry Lime è prima di tutto un'ombra, si muove nascosto dall'ombra, è un fantasma creduto morto per buona parte della storia (a parte da Calloway che lo vuole acciuffare): quando fa la sua prima apparizione ha indosso un cappotto che sembra un mantello e un cappello scuro.

Credo che la battuta aggiunta al dialogo del film dallo stesso Welles (parola di Greene) renda perfettamente lo spirito dell'uomo Harry Lime:

In Italia, sotto i Borgia, per trent'anni hanno avuto guerre, terrore, assassini, massacri: e hanno prodotto Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci e il Rinascimento. In Svizzera, hanno avuto amore fraterno, cinquecento anni di pace e democrazia, e cos'hanno prodotto? Gli orologi a cucù.

Il film pur se diretto dal bravo Carol Reed, è il film più à la Welles che si possa immaginare: nell'uso del bianco e nero (fotografia di Robert Krasker), della profondità di campo, delle inquadrature sghembe e dal basso, nell'ironia, nel gioco di specchi, di rimandi, di travestimenti, nel gioco di maschere, nell'incastro di scatole narrative.

Nella stessa trama, che si potrebbe descrivere anche così: venuto in soccorso dell'amico, man mano Holly si trasforma in segugio, in inseguitore a sua volta però inseguito, vittima e carnefice, nel tentativo di districarsi da fili che lo controllano a sua insaputa.

Nella prima apparizione di Lime, protetto dalle tenebre, invisibile finché non si mostra, trionfo del 'fuori campo' che diventa fulcro narrativo, cinema arte del visibile che diventa arte dell'invisibile.

L'ombra di Welles regista è presente in ogni inquadratura proprio come l'assenza del personaggio che interpreta è vitale in ogni momento della storia.

È il prototipo del film cult.

A cominciare dalla colonna sonora (il motivo musicale di Anton Karas con la cetra), la fuga di Lime nelle fogne di Vienna, l'incontro tra Holly e Harry sulla ruota panoramica del Prater, la lunga camminata finale di Anna.

Un capolavoro da vedere decine di volte con lo stesso piacere.

Anna rifiuta l'amore di Holly e rimane fedele al ricordo di Harry.

Solistas says

Π?σο καλ?ς ειναι ο Greene; Κακ?ς δεν ?χω ασχοληθε? ?σο πρ?πει, μ?νο το Τ?λος Μιας Σχ?σης εχω διαβ?σει κ αυτ? πριν πολλ? χρ?νια. Ας ε?ναι... Ο τρ?τος ?νθρωπος ε?ναι μια κλασικ? hard boiled ιστορ?α στην μεταπολεμικ? Βι?ννη, και ξεκιν?ει με την ?φιξη του Ρ?λο που γρ?φει με ψευδ?νυμο βιβλ?α γου?στερν. Η τυπικ? επ?σκεψη στο φ?λο του Χ?ρι, ξεκιν?ει αν?ποδα αφο? απ'το αεροδρ?μιο π?ει στο νεκροταφε?ο για να προλ?βει την κηδε?α του φ?λου.

Με αφητρ?α ?τι δεν ?χει πειστε? οτι πρ?κειται για ατ?χημα, ο ?ρωας του βιβλ?ου περιφ?ρεται στη διχοτομημ?νη π?λη με τον Greene να δ?νει ?ση ?νταση πρ?πει πριν λ?σει το μυστ?ριο. Απ'τις μοναδικ?ς περιπτ?σεις που το βιβλ?ο γρ?φεται μετ? το σεν?ριο που οδ?γησε στην βραβευμ?νη ταιν?α με πρωταγωνιστ? τον Wells.

Προφαν?ς, δεν ε?ναι στο επ?πεδο της Σχ?σης, ε?ναι πολ? πιο γρ?γορο αλλ? κ διασκεδαστικ?.

2.5 stars
