



# Comparing selected aspects of Somerset Maugham's "Ashenden or The British Agent" and Graham Greene's "The Quiet American"

*Sylvio Konkol*

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Seminar paper from the year 2013 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: 1,0, University of Leipzig (Institut für Anglistik), language: English, abstract: Espionage and love appear as two closely related matters throughout the history of the British spy novel. Between the two domains there seems to exist a mutual attraction as well as an incompatibility. The duties of the spy may put an end to his love affairs, or a love affair may cause the failure of an important espionage mission. The secret agent may give in to emotional feelings, regardless of the dangers this entails, or he may prey upon love as the weak point of another, an enemy spy perhaps. And in some cases, like that of The Quiet American, the secret war affecting the fate of a country becomes coincident with the fight for the love of a woman.

This paper aims at comparing two British spy novels, Graham Greene's The Quiet American (1955) and a proportion of Somerset Maugham's Ashenden: or The British Agent (1928). By way of taking into consideration the particular historical context at the time of the novels' publication, the comparison focuses on the following points: Firstly, the respective depiction of the spy and his activities, also with regard to legitimacy and morality. Secondly, the respective depiction of the American, and the British view upon him. Finally, the depictions of the exotic Eastern settings – Russia and Vietnam respectively – and of the women personifying them, as well as their romantic relationships towards the male protagonists. In the end, the results of this comparison will serve to illustrate not only certain tendencies in the development of the spy novel genre, but also the sociocultural turn from colonialism to post-colonialism.

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