"Postcolonial Triangles": An Analysis of Masculinity and Homosocial Desire in Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Greene's *The Quiet American*

By Beth Kramer, New York University, USA

Abstract:
This article provides an original approach for understanding postcolonial representation through queer theory. I argue that mapping Sedgwick's view of triangulated desire onto literary models of postcolonial representation uncovers how authors create gender hierarchies in their novels that mirror the inherent power disjunction in the colonizer/colonized relationship. Specifically, I examine two postcolonial works which employ the love triangle, Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* and Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*. By integrating Anne McClintock's and Frantz Fanon's conception of imperial imagery and power into this exploration, I show how Achebe and Greene use the love triangle to portray the relation of masculinity and patriarchy to neo-imperialism and the new world order. This study is ultimately an attempt to explore the following question- can the love triangle, an age old literary device central to the European novel, in fact be decolonized?

> The triangle is useful as a figure by which the "commonsense" of our intellectual tradition schematizes erotic relations, and because it allows us to condense in a juxtaposition with that folk-perception several somewhat different streams of recent thought. (Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*)

1 The love triangle, as Eve Sedgwick notes above, is an excellent literary vehicle to represent the complexity of human desire. In this paper, I will explore two postcolonial works which employ this device, Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* and Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*. Although Greene's *The Quiet American* and Achebe's *A Man of the People* convey different views of the colonial and postcolonial situation, both works use the triangulated model of desire to create gender hierarchies in their novels that mirror the inherent power disjunction in the colonizer/colonized relationship. By integrating Anne McClintock's and Frantz Fanon's conception of imperial imagery and power into this exploration, I will show how Achebe and Greene use the love triangle to portray the relation of masculinity and patriarchy to neo-imperialism and the new world order. This study is ultimately an attempt to explore the following question & can the love triangle, an age old literary device central to the European novel, in fact be decolonized?

2 In *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, Anne McClintock makes the statement that "all nations depend on powerful constructions of gender" in their declaration of power and nationhood (353). In particular, McClintock stresses that the British government used gendered language and images to reinforce its ultimate projection of power. Lee Horsely, in *Fictions of Power in English Literature: 1900-1950*, gives further evidence to McClintock's claim by stressing that before the First World War,

"the whole notion of heroic adventure was most closely bound up with the excitement of empire-building" (20). This historian equates the British imperialist enterprise with male heroic action and he notes that tales of adventure kept alive the idea that battles, man-to-man combat, and fierce struggles were vital to the national image. Other scholars, such as Roger Horrocks and Michael Kaufman, further concede that civilized societies were built through and shaped by decimation, containment, and exploitation of other peoples (See Horrocks 141 and Kaufman 5). "The blood thirsty history of the British empire and more recently of American expansionism should not be ascribed to the biological or psychological make-up of the British or American male," says Roger Horrocks, "but to the specific social and political oppression of other states" (141).[1] These historians reveal the historical tie between nation building and the masculine military image.

3 The mighty British imperial image was also strengthened throughout its history by associating colonized lands with the oppressed feminine body. In *Gender Power in Britain, 1640-1990*, Susan Kingsley Kent explains that in the era of colonization, depictions of non-white peoples become increasingly depicted as feminine until "representations of empire took on the image of masterly, manly Britons exercising control over irrational, impulsive, weak-willed, effeminate colonial peoples" (203). She reinforces this point by explaining how the ideologies of similarity and difference between British and non-British peoples depended upon a notion of gender difference; she claims that a common justification for the practice of imperialism was that the non-British were inherently incapable of exercising the self-control necessary for governing themselves, and required the strong arm of British might to keep order. McClintock also studies representations of Victorian advertising which featured a "vista of Africa conquered by domestic commodities" and as a result presented "colonized men… feminized by their association with domestic servitude" (219). Gender hierarchies were therefore embedded in the practice of imperialism and the public justification of the practice.

4 Nevertheless, in the era of decolonization when Achebe and Greene were writing, this British image reliant on masculinity was under threat from a variety of sources. Lee Horsley discusses how Britain in the first half of the twentieth century "witnessed the collapse of old empires, the failure of parliamentary governments, the rise of totalitarian dictatorships, and violent revolutions and the devastation of two world wars" (1). He speaks to the widespread loss of confidence in the notion of heroism and how this was overcompensated by the fictions of power and language of the cold war which emerged throughout Europe (4). This loss of

[1] Horrocks credits the motivation behind British and American expansion to the need of the modern state to both condone its own violence and at the same time condemn the violence of others.

power served to feminize the imperial island itself; Kent notes that it was thought British colonies failed "because Britain's political institutions were in the hands of a corrupt, weak and even effeminate ruling class" (80). In addition, the growing presence of women in societal power positions posed a threat to the masculine image of empire. In *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain*, Alan Sinfield notes that women's roles in servicing the workforce during the Second World War were viewed as "undermin[ing] male control of public affairs and the household" (206). In addition, Fanon's theory is useful in understanding the use of masculine, imperial imagery in new nation formation as former colonized lands struggled to assert independence and new leadership. Fanon speaks to the fantasy of substitution in which "The native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor" and recycle the imperial structure under new leadership (53). Both Greene and Achebe's texts focus on the human obsession with weakening imperial imagery and patriarchal leadership.

5 Yet, how does this tie to theories of desire and the love triangle? Rene Girard understands desire as "a dynamic structure extending from one end of novelistic literature to the other" (95). Girard posits that all novels present and negotiate desire in some type of capacity. In his work *Deceit, Desire, & the Novel*, Girard analyzes literary representations of love triangles to study how the emotions of esteem, envy, jealousy and rivalry between members of the same sex become stronger pulls than the sexual passion for the object. Girard reveals that triangular desire disfigures the object and confuses same-sex desire between rivals for heterosexual yearning (17). Eve Sedgwick's theory on triangulated desire builds upon Girard's argument. In her work *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, Sedgwick uses Girard's notion of triangulated desire to focus more deeply on what she terms the "homosocial" bonds between the subject and the mediator. Sedgwick uses the following claim by Girard to make her point:

> The bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved…the bonds of 'rivalry' and 'love,' differently as they are experienced, are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent. (21)

While Sedgwick uses this theorem as a foundation to her argument, she criticizes Girard for reading a symmetry in the triangle that is undisturbed by gender differences, because she does not believe that a rivalry between women over a male object would hold the same play of identification as a construction of two males over a female object. To reinforce this point, Sedgwick presents literary examples of triangulated desire which portray female characters serving as conduits to facilitate male homosocial relations. There has been minimal work, however, integrating Sedgwick's view of triangulated desire into studies of postcolonial

representation. Many scholars only address the similarities between imperial oppression and masculine domination, and thereby ignore the homosocial bonds that exist to preserve these structures. For instance, in *Masculinity and Power*, Arthur Brittan focuses on the male-female binary in his discussion of patriarchy. He supports the idea that in male discourse and pornography, "sexual objectification is reminiscent of the relationship between the slave and the master" (66). Brittan explains that making a woman an object of desire places her in a physically and politically subordinate position, like that of an exploited colony in the hands of its colonizer. Yet, Brittan does not address the presence of male bonds which might heighten or preserve this oppression. On the other hand, Michael Kaufman, in *Beyond Patriarchy*, notes a "triad of desire" in which violence of "men against men" or violence of "men against themselves" reinforce each other but cannot be understood until confronted by "violence against women" (2). Kaufman, nevertheless, overlooks the way that this homosocial violence might speak to larger systems of nation formation.

6 I believe, however, that Sedgwick's theory provides a strong model for understanding political hierarchies *and* gender hierarchies in postcolonial representation. Sedgwick suggests that "there is a special relationship between male homosocial desire and the structures for maintaining patriarchal power" (25). Her work highlights specific ways in which the suppression of the female object in a homosocial context mirrors the power structures of masculine domination. For example, Sedgwick links triangulated desire with the traffic of women; she highlights how this process politically and economically oppresses women through a strengthening of male bonds. Sedgwick therefore conceptualizes both a theoretical and political goal in her writings. She explains specifically that her work aims to analyze a model for "delineating relationships of power and meaning, and for making graphically intelligible the play of desire and identification by which individuals negotiate with their societies for empowerment" (27). Her theory is consequently very helpful in addressing postcolonial novels whose plots inherently overlap political and gendered conflict.

7 Other triangular models can help us bridge the gap between Sedgwick's theory and postcolonial discourse. Starting as early as the seventeenth century, "triangular trade" or the slave trade worked through an asymmetrical mechanism; England and America exploited African resources and peoples to stimulate their own economic growth (Kent 84).[2] By understanding the connection between the two colonizing nations, England and America, as homosocial bonds gaining power because of the oppressed body of Africa, this notion of triangular trade can be read as a political version of Sedgwick's gendered triangle. Another

[2] Kent explains mechanism of slave trade as: the transport of slaves to North America in exchange for the raw materials of spices, tobacco and rum, which were exported to Britain for manufactured goods.

political triangle that can be envisioned is what I call a postcolonial triangle. This asymmetrical relationship emerged in the twentieth century between the former colonizer, the emerging nationalist elite, and the former colonized body or indigenous people. We can imagine a "homosocial" triangle in which the former colonizer and new nationalist elite mutually gain strength at the expense of the continued oppression of the former colonized body. These models offers insight into how the construction of asymmetrical triangulated desire can portray homosocial bonds in terms of a country or nation's "desire."

8 These theories will help to explore the imperial implications of Greene and Achebe's use of triangulated desire. "In large measure [Greene] is a product of England between the wars, of the period of diminution of the Empire," claims R.H. Miller in his work *Understanding Graham Greene* (98). Although he published *The Quiet American* in 1955, Greene incorporates into his novel the feeling of weakening empire which began much earlier in the century. Set in Indochina as the French were struggling to maintain control of Vietnam, *The Quiet American* references a situation in which the colonizer is under threat from communism and from the native population seeking independence. Greene not only sets his novel in a situation which captures an era of decolonization, but he also presents the action of the novel from the perspective of a British man who reflects back on a time of British power. Although this novel takes place outside the British Empire, Greene clearly uses his text to portray the changing imperial image of his nation.

9 In Greene's work, the triangulated plot line is introduced early into the text. Thomas Fowler, an aging British journalist, is the lover of the native woman Phuong at the start of the novel. Phuong, however, becomes the simultaneous love interest of Alden Pyle, the young and "innocent" American who arrives in Vietnam. With this introduction of competing male rivalry for the female object, Sedgwick's model is realized in Greene's text. The scene in which Phuong dances with Pyle exemplifies the woman's placement as an object between the two men. The reader glimpses the burgeoning rivalry that will develop between the two as Fowler claims: "I thought how much she missed in her relation to me" by watching Pyle and Phuong move across the dance floor (41). Thus, Fowler experiences the emotions of envy and jealously almost immediately when he sees Pyle approach his possession. When Pyle returns Phuong after the dance, the position of the woman is made even clearer as Fowler claims, "One always spoke of her [Phuong] like that in the third person as though she were not there. Sometimes she seemed invisible like peace" (44). This statement allows Greene to imply that Phuong serves the place of conduit between the two powerful forces in this novel.

10 Yet, Greene does not only position these two men as enemies; he also introduces the bonds of esteem and friendship between the two rivals. Although Fowler senses a threat from Pyle, he feels a simultaneous need to shelter and accommodate the innocent, young American. "I like that fellow Pyle," he tells Phuong, "I had better look after Pyle" (37). In return, Pyle feels a connection with Fowler based on respect, esteem and admiration; Pyle's words: "I feel in a way this has brought us together. Loving the same woman," convey his intense bond to Fowler. As these positive feelings mix with the feelings of jealousy and hate, the emotions between the men become much more central to this novel than the heterosexual desire towards the object. The dangerous journey which Pyle makes to inform Fowler of his intentions with Phuong reveals his need of masculine recognition. "You didn't think I'll tell her & without you knowing" claims Pyle, making it clear that his desire for Phuong cannot be complete unless it has the awareness of the other male rival (57). Greene's readers cannot ignore the intense male connection that rises out of the quest for the female object.

11 Girard's notion of the rival as "mediator" also becomes humorously evident in this novel as well. When Pyle finally tells Phuong his feelings, Fowler literally claims that he will "act as interpreter" and mediate Pyle's competitive intentions by translating them to the woman (76). After this scene which makes the rivalry extremely apparent, the competition between men grows more aggressive. Fowler even jokes that they should call off the battle and "dice for her" (78). This is not the only time when the notion of traffic in women is raised; Fowler makes comments that reference trade throughout the text such as "I can't outbid Pyle" (120). Despite the seemingly strong heterosexual desire that these men claim to have for the object, these comments promote the view that the real connection is between Fowler and Pyle. Even when Phuong does not accept Pyle's first proposal, Pyle asks Fowler "You won't let this come between us, will you?" (79). And after Pyle's death, Fowler feels Pyle's absence in his life and asks "Am I the only one who really cared for Pyle?" (22). In this novel, the bonds between men become filled with the desire that would traditionally be felt between a man and a woman.

12 Unlike Greene's narrator, who is a reflection of fading Britain, Achebe's hero is the product of a newly independent nation state. Achebe is confronting the murky politics of postcolonial Nigeria as he writes *A Man of the People*. Simon Gikandi, in *Reading Chinua Achebe*, stresses that Achebe faced great challenges in capturing contemporary Nigerian politics in his novel and that the author "struggled to find an appropriate form to represent the contradictory impulses of the postcolonial situation"(101). Given Achebe's position as an African novelist frustrated with the history of imperialism in his country, it seems surprising

that he would plot desire in a way similar to Greene. Yet, Achebe sets up a rivalry between Odili, the University educated teacher, and Chief Nanga, the government minister and politician, that resembles the rivalry between Fowler and Pyle. The tension between Chief Nanga and Odili is realized immediately in the novel as Odili expresses his concerns that the Chief uses "his [political] position to enrich himself" (2). Odili softens his harsh criticism of Nanga when the Chief invites him to share in his prosperity; nevertheless, tension reemerges when a woman comes between the two men. Elsie, Odili's former lover, is initially positioned as Odili's prize possession as the narrator claims that he "feel[s] a little jealous anytime [he] found her reading and re-reading a blue British air-letter" (25). A battle subsequently emerges over Elsie when Nanga makes the move to sleep with her right under Odili's nose. This battle is extremely ironic, however, because Odili shows he has no true regard for the woman. Once the affair takes place, Odili calls Elsie a "common harlot" despite the years of friendship that they shared (72). He feels the emotion of betrayal towards the man that he was beginning to trust; he attributes all the pain, jealousy and envy that he feels at Nanga and suddenly claims that he "no longer cared for anything but the revenge" (78). Achebe sets up the same model of desire as Greene in which the bonds between rivals become a stronger presence than the feelings toward the female object.

13 Achebe's plot in this novel moves from one triangulated structured into another. Odili seeks his revenge by desiring Nanga's "property" and he plots to steal Nanga's future second wife, Edna. The narrator characterizes the intensity of his passion for Edna as part of his overall need to politically and emotionally bring down Nanga (110). Even when Odili becomes more familiar with Edna he realizes that a part of him still wanted her "very remotely as a general part of revenge;" he tells the reader explicitly that "things seemed so mixed up; my revenge, my new political ambition, and the girl" (109-110). In addition, Nanga is revealed to lack a true love for this woman. The reader is told that Nanga wants a young wife because "his missus is too 'bush' for his present position so he wants a bright new 'parlour-wife' to play hostess at his parties" (23). The treatment of women in this novel is degrading on multiple levels, and the practice of traffic in women to facilitate male homosocial relations is also referenced in the text. This is evident as Odili and his father journey to Edna's male relatives to make the marriage exchange. Odili's decision to pay the full bride price is not based on heterosexual love but rather on the notion that he "did not want to go through life thinking that [he] owed Chief Nanga money" (148). Like Greene's novel, *A Man of the People* portrays women as objects needed to facilitate the emotions flowing between men.

14 In light of the fact that Sedgwick's theory fits so well in an analysis of both of these novels, the question of authorial motivation is inherently raised. One might ask why these two authors with clearly different political backgrounds and agendas would set up literary structures that reinforce the same gender hierarchy. I believe that the answer to this question lies in the homosocial bonds which emerge in the works. Both authors ultimately show male rivals involved in heated battles over masculinity and patriarchy. Sedgwick claims that in any male dominated society there is a special relationship between male homosocial desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power. She explains that the disciplinary use of "homophobia, ideological homosexuality, or some [...] combination of the two" serves as a way for institutions or governments to structure society (25). Alan Sinfield, in *The Wilde Century*, reiterates this notion by describing how deep prejudices emerged against homosexuals when effeminacy and queerness become virtually synonymous in the twentieth century (62). Feminizing homosexuality was a way to "demasculize" the homosexual man and promote a dominant image of heterosexuality. Sedgwick's theory undoubtedly links patriarchal power to the promotion of a powerful, masculine image which only heightens itself with the oppression of the female.

15 In *The Quiet American*, there are many instances when the competition between Pyle and Fowler emerges as a struggle to own a masculine image. Part of the reason that Fowler is so upset with Pyle is that the American's very young, vibrant image is a threat to his own waning youth and sexuality. Fowler puts into words his self consciousness as he claims: "I saw myself as he [Pyle] saw me, a man of middle age, with eyes a little bloodshot, beginning to put on weight, ungraceful in love…less innocent" (40). Ultimately, Fowler's narration presents the reader with a view of one man's internal struggle to own a strong, masculine image. William Bonney's argument in "Politics, Perception, and Gender in Conrad's *Lord Jim* and Greene's *The Quiet American*," highlights how Fowler "generates narratives" in a way that is "masculine [...] and obsessional" (114). Although Fowler tries to convince the reader that his destruction of Pyle is ethically motivated, he cannot truly mask the feelings of envy, jealousy and fading masculinity that drive his actions. The following passage is a moment when Fowler's objectives become very apparent; Fowler tells Pyle:

> I've reached the age when sex isn't the problem so much as old age and death. I wake up with these in mind and not a woman's body. I don't want to be alone in my last decade [...]. [I]f Phuong left me, would I have the energy to find another? (104-105)

Fowler reveals that his competitive obsession with Pyle over Phuong is about proving his masculinity and preserving his status rather than a real desire for the woman. Masculinity is a

large component, if not the defining component, of the rivalry between the two men in this novel.

16 In fact, the scene where Pyle saves Fowler's life brings this struggle to the very surface of the text. "Who the hell asked you to save my life," screams the journalist to the young man trying to help him, displaying how he prefers death to a life that he will always owe to the stronger man (111). The feelings of Fowler's inadequacy builds after this encounter; when Phuong asks him why he will not open the letter from his wife he replies: "I'm afraid of the loneliness, of the Press club and the bed sitting room, I'm afraid of Pyle." (117). Therefore, when Pyle convinces Phuong to leave the journalist, Fowler projects himself as more and more impotent to the reader. He narrates his unsuccessful attempt at violence towards Pyle at the office where he winds up weeping in the bathroom; he also describes how he cannot perform sexually with the prostitute as he becomes "frozen" with memory (147, 153). By looking past his front of being the "ethical journalist," even Fowler's rage at Pyle's political involvement with the bombings can be read as part of his overall competitive rage over Phuong (Gorra 143). *The Quiet American* presents the narrative of a man whose sense of rivalry over the female object is inseparable from his obsession with his own masculine power image.

17 In addition, Fowler's narration captures Pyle's struggle with masculinity. The reader views Pyle as a man desperate to preserve a noble, aboveboard image of gentlemanly conduct. For instance, Pyle tells Fowler that he will not marry Phuong until he brings her home to meet his mother and gives her a "proper" ceremony (155). Pyle's constant attention to formality and to the process of "saving" the needy woman implies a desire to bolster his own male image in the world. "You have such an awful lot of experience, Thomas," claims Pyle, "I've never had a girl. Not properly. Not what you'd call a real experience" (102). While this statement does grant Fowler some of the masculine respect he desires, it also implies that Pyle's quest for Phuong is an attempt to make up for masculine lack of experience. Pyle also reveals his own masculine motivation when he explains his reasons for saving Fowler's life to the old man; he tells his friend that he saved him because if he left him to die, "[he] couldn't have faced Phuong…when you are in love you want to play the game" (112). Pyle directly admits that his desire for the female object revolves around his need to "play" the male part against Fowler. The homosocial bonds between men reflect a battle to own a masculine image.

18 In *A Man of the People*, Achebe similarly characterizes the competition between Odili and Nanga as a struggle for masculinity and power. The desire of the two rivals to prove their masculinity to each other is evident even before Elsie enters the picture; Odili tells the reader

"Chief Nanga and I [had] already swopped many tales of conquest and I felt somehow compelled to speak in derogatory terms about women in general" (60). The men of Achebe's novel convey to the reader that earning male respect involves the ability to conquer the female. After the episode with Nanga and Elsie, Odili actually becomes obsessed with his threatened masculinity. The ability of Nanga to make him feel like an emasculated, colonized object is evident as Odili claims:

> A man had treated me as no man had a right to treat another & not even if he was master and the other slave; and my *manhood* required that I make him pay for his insult in full measure. In flesh and blood terms I realized that I must go back, seek out Nanga's intended parlour wife and give her the works, good and proper. (77)

Odili's reaction to betrayal is to reverse his emasculation by claiming his rival's political position and his woman. Yet, the reader comes to see that Odili's struggle for masculinity is not one sided, and Nanga is just as insecure. For instance, in the scene where Nanga tries to convince Odili to drop out of the race, he enters sarcastically calling "Odili, my great enemy" (116). Nanga tries to emasculate Odili by stressing his "youth" and claims "I [Nanga] am not afraid of you…Every goat and every fowl in this country knows that you will fail woefully" (116, 119). Yet, Nanga's desire to pay Odili for dropping out as a political competitor shows that Nanga is in fact threatened by the young man. In tandem with this, the violence that erupts between the two men in the scene of the political rally speaks to the violence which becomes a mask for feelings of inadequacy. During this scene of physical struggle, Odili describes how "Edna rushed forward crying and tried to get between us but he pushed her aside so violently that she landed on her buttocks on the wooden platform" (141). Edna serves as the reflector of male brutality; this scene reinforces Sedgwick's construction of triangulated desire in which the female presence heightens the emasculating effects of male violence. *A Man of the People* shows male characters using a female body to test the boundaries of their masculine strength.

19 The masculine struggles depicted by Greene and Achebe also relate to their overall messages on imperialism and patriarchy in the new world order. Greene uses triangulated desire in his novel to highlight the historical and theoretical connection between fading masculinity, power and neo-imperialism. He deliberately makes one of his rivals British and one of his rivals American, so that their battle over the native woman would recall the structure of triangular trade superimposed on Sedgwick's asymmetrical love triangle. In this sense, the love triangle can be read in allegorical terms in which Fowler represents fading masculinity *and* a fading British Empire; Pyle stands for an emerging American Empire equally fighting for the masculine image; finally, Phuong symbolizes the native state and the

feminized, oppressed body (Miller 109).[3] The ensuing triangulated battle which emerges in the novel symbolizes world powers struggling for a masculine right to control decolonized lands. Greene plots desire in this fashion to portray the way that gender roles have been and remain bound in political and international power struggles. Phuong, as a woman and a former colonized individual, is the perfect body from which Greene can reveal the place of the feminine, colonized body in the new world order.

20 In Greene's novel, Phuong is often associated with a native land that lacks action, power and intelligence. Fowler constantly speaks of his mistress as an empty and passive object and he looks to her body rather than to her mind to satisfy his desires. Fowler's simultaneous presentation of Phuong as a weak female and a passive colonized body is evident in the following passage:

> It isn't in their nature [to love] [...]. It's a cliché to call them children & but there's one thing which is childish. They love you in return for kindness, security, the presents you give them & they hate you for a blow or an injustice. (104)

By using the general terms "they" and "them" when referring to Phuong in this passage, Fowler tries to promote a strong, British image in comparison to a collectively weak, native population. Greene presents Fowler as the hopeful imperialist "protector" of the "childish" native woman and lends a paternalism to his treatment of his mistress (Couto 169). And although Pyle represents the emerging power in this novel, Fowler implies that his rival's treatment of the feminine object is really no better. Without even being able to communicate with the woman, Pyle hopes to come in and "rescue" Phuong from her chaotic native land. "I want to give her a decent life & this place smells," suggests Pyle (133). Fowler reinforces the "colonial" nature of his rival's comment with his sarcastic retort, "I suppose you'll offer her a deep freeze and a car for herself and the newest television set" (133). Yet, while Fowler tries to reveal Pyle's misplaced motives, the reader sees that Fowler desires the same exact thing. Both men compete in a gendered rivalry over a female object in a way that mirrors a global power struggle over third world lands.

21 Although one might argue that Greene's presentation of Phuong is not in line with his anti-imperial sentiments and third world sympathies, it is more likely that he is representing a situation as he views it, not as he wants it to be. Greene's support of Kikuyu in Kenya and his sympathetic presentation of the French position in this novel reveal an attitude that is tinged with the very "paternalism of empire" that he criticized in the government and settler.[4] Maria

[3] Miller supports this argument by explaining that the struggle for control over Phuong can function as a representation for a larger struggle: "Phuong is the East, the third world; Fowler the old, and Pyle the new."
[4] See Miller 99-101. Also see Adamson 138.

Couto explains that Greene's novel addresses the context of national liberation emerging from the "death-throes of the old imperialism" as well as the issue of "new and more insidious imperialism of the superpowers" (166). Greene may wish to awaken his audience to his own county's hesitancy to put down its imperial and patriarchal image with his portrayal of Fowler; this author also implies through Pyle that the masculine political structures that once fostered imperialism are being reincorporated by America as the next emergent superpower. Greene's depiction of a patriarchal struggle through the love triangle may be his attempt to address the ways in which the new superpower is recycling the age old imperial image based on masculinity.

22 This same focus on political reality might also explain why Achebe would use a triangulated model of desire in a novel about the political situation in Nigeria. Similar to Greene's love triangle, Achebe's love triangle can also be viewed in a political framework. Achebe presents Nanga as an extension of the former colonizer with his deference to European power structures, while Odili becomes part of the emerging nationalist elite. The homosocial bonds between these two men serve as evidence for a reincorporation of masculinity in the new leadership of the nation at the expense of the continued oppression of the indigenous native people, represented by the violence and degradation of Edna. Achebe's love triangle speaks to a new nation recycling gender oppression and patriarchal power to assert its emerging strength.

23 Similar to Greene's first person narrator who reveals doubts as to his own power in relation to his nation's power, Achebe's narrator conveys an anxiety about his masculine ego and his stance as a postcolonial subject (Gikandi 120-121). The deep feelings of masculine inadequacy that Odili's feels from his father who "had too many other wives and children to take any special notice of [him]" intensify after he feels the threat from men such as Nanga (28). Odili's obsession with image shines through in the following passage, as Odili claims after meeting Max's friends:

> I was anxious not to appear to Max and his friends as the easily impressed type. I suppose I wanted to erase whatever impression was left of Max's unfortunate if unintentional presentation of me as a kind of pitiable jellyfish. (79)

Throughout the novel, Odili repeatedly voices insecurity about the way others interpret his strength. In addition, the overwhelming examples of degradation to women in the text reinforce the notion that political power feeds off the continued domination of women. For example, Elsie is used as a sexual pawn in this work, as is Jean, who Odili only desires for her body. Edna is also presented as a woman unable to utilize her education and who is "sold" from her male relatives to her husband. Scholar Chioma Opara, in her article "From

Stereotype to Individuality: Womanhood in Chinua Achebe's Novels" agrees with my recognition of Edna's self effacement, and Opara suggests that Edna's engagement to the Chief "allows her selfhood to be bought by Nanga" (117). While Nanga is more aggressively demeaning to women in the text, Odili's more idealistic approach to politics is nevertheless intertwined with the notion of female oppression. Odili tells the reader that he has "twin hopes of a beautiful life with Edna and of a new era of cleanliness in the politics of our country" (131). With his admittance, it is clear that possessing the woman unfortunately becomes synonymous with the patriarchal view of power presented in this novel.

24 However, I do not wish to argue that this presentation of political power through objectification of women is necessarily reflective of sexism on the part of the author. Although Achebe is quite cognizant of structures which oppressed his nation, he may present a picture of masculine, patriarchal power like Greene because he sees it as linked to the current corruption of leadership following Nigerian Independence. Raisa Simola, in *World Views in Chinua Achebe's Works*, explains that Achebe is one of the first generation of African writers who lived during colonial times but then felt disillusioned after independence (204). While Achebe states in early essays that the African writer must be an educator to reassert the past and uplift the African population, he is noted in later interviews, such as that in *Africa Report*, as stating "The most meaningful work that African writers can do today will take into account our whole history…what it is today" (Simola 268). The triangulated plot of this novel may then represent Achebe's warning about the current use of power in the Nigerian state. Achebe's use of the love triangle in colonial terms may not be a promotion of leadership using subordination of women and maintenance of patriarchy, but rather a literary "photograph" of Nigerian politics at this confusing time. Gikandi agrees with my reading and even claims that Achebe's novel reveals how postcolonial subjects are caught in a great ironic moment, when "independence was expected to be a break with the colonial past, but ha[d] become, instead, the apotheosis of colonialist ideology and rhetoric" (110). Regardless of Greene's or Achebe's ultimate political desires, both authors use their novels to display the reality of masculinity within power structures in both fading and emerging nation states.

25 In light of this study, it appears that the postwar, postcolonial novel is inevitably forced to employ desire along the triangulated model because decolonization and revolution work upon the axis of masculine control. Both novels in this analysis link the wellbeing of the state with masculine domination and simultaneous female oppression. In *The Quiet American* and *A Man of the People*, both female objects are in fact "won" by one of the male rivals by the end of the work. The placement of Phuong into Fowler's care and Edna into Odili's has

little notion of romance; the conquering of the rival power and the superiority of the narrator over the rival is the last image in both of these different texts. While each novel does voice concern with colonialism and imperialism, (through Greene's portrayal of Pyle's politics and Achebe's portrayal of Nanga's ethics), both authors end their works stressing that patriarchy and masculine control is intertwined with political structures. Although Pyle is destroyed in *The Quiet American*, the presence that he left behind haunts Fowler's imagination; in the same way, political revolution in *A Man of the People* implies Nanga's downfall, but the reader is left doubtful that the same methods of patriarchy will not reassert themselves under new leadership. And most importantly, both works conclude by reinforcing the weak condition of the female body and great strides that would need to be taken to reverse a dominant male ideology. Graham Greene and Chinua Achebe promote the inevitable tie of patriarchal, masculine power to political and revolutionary power.

26 I am not criticizing Achebe or Greene for the approach they employed in their novels, but I finally posit a general question in light of their methodology. Is there a way to represent the real and the hopeful ideal by utilizing triangulated desire to describe the postcolonial situation? While Achebe and Greene raise awareness of power structures, how might they have employed this literary device so that reality of patriarchal power is not just revealed, but a reversal could be invoked? By first recognizing the implications of triangulated desire in the postcolonial novel, critics can bring greater attention to both gendered problems in the postcolonial situation and the political structures that keep them in place. Perhaps then we can begin to address the larger challenge, and discover if love triangle is so imbedded in European, masculine tradition, that it cannot be decolonized at all?

Works Cited

Achebe, Chinua. *A Man of the People*. New York: Anchor Books, 1989.

Adamson, Judith. *Graham Greene, the Dangerous Edge: Where Art and Politics Meet*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.

Bonney, William. "Politics, Perception, and Gender in Conrad's Lord Jim and Greene's *The Quiet American*." *Conradiana: A Journal of Joseph Conrad Studies* 23.2 (1991): 99-122.

Brittan, Arthur. *Masculinity and Power*. New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989.

Couto, Maria. *Graham Greene: On the Frontier: Politics and Religion in the Novels*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1981.

Gikandi, Simon. *Reading Chinua Achebe: Language & Ideology in Fiction*. London: J. Currey, 1991.

Girard, René. *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

Gorra, Michael Edward. *The English Novel at Mid-Century: From the Leaning Tower*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.

Greene, Graham. *The Quiet American*. New York: Penguin, 1977.

Horrocks, Roger. *Masculinity in Crisis: Myths, Fantasies, and Realities*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.

Horsley, Lee. *Fictions of Power in English Literature, 1900-1950*. New York: Longman, 1996.

Kaufman, Michael. "The Construction of Masculinity and The Triad of Men's Violence." *Beyond Patriarchy: Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power, and Changes*. Ed. Michael Kaufman. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Kent, Susan Kingsley. *Gender and Power in Britain, 1640-1990*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Miller, R. H. *Understanding Graham Greene*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990.

Opara, Chioma. "From Stereotype to Individuality: Womanhood in Chinua Achebe's Novels." *Challenging Hierarchies: Issues and Themes in Colonial and Postcolonial African Literature*. Ed. Leonard A. Podis and Yakubu Saaka. New York: P. Lang, 1998.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*.

New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Simola, Raisa. *World Views in Chinua Achebe's Works*. New York: P. Lang, 1995.

Sinfield, Alan. *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain*. London: Athlone Press, 1997.

_____. *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde, and the Queer Moment*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.