

ENGLISH: *THE QUIET AMERICAN*

Those who initiate conflict are often destroyed by their own actions.

Conflict escalates by nature and often leads to other ramifications, whether for the instigators or for the unwilling adversaries. One who initiates a discord often suffers from the consequences in the long term. In other cases, even those who do not intentionally cause harm to others may be affected in one way or another. However, one does not have to necessarily instigate dissension to become affected physically or psychologically. It is inevitable that individuals endure the complications of a dispute, regardless of their position as an aggressor or a bystander.

Individuals who spark a dispute often suffer from the ramifications in the future. Every individual will experience traumas and come across an adverse circumstance at some point in their lives. However, more importantly, they may not only suffer temporarily, but also permanently; this is especially true for those who create conflict, as they become overwhelmed by their memories. One's memories can be beneficial, when they look back and ponder upon their past in retrospect. Yet, it can also be a damaging force, when it reminds an individual of their past wrongdoings. In *The Quiet American*, Graham Greene explores the long term effects of a marital breakdown – a form of trauma, which Fowler induces upon Helen. Fowler has abandoned his past and “came East”, but ironically he again endures internal feelings of guilt and remorse when he desires to marry Phuong. The letter which Helen writes reignites his complicit feelings for deserting her, as he rediscovers his “dried scabs” and “realise how open the sexual wounds remain over the years.” Fowler is unable to resolve the emotional scars between their disintegrated relationship, and could not “blame her seeking [his] own scars in return.” Yet, this has all been sparked by Fowler's desertion of Helen. One who creates conflict may suffer from feelings of guilt and become affected by the long term complications.

One who is oblivious of their own attitudes are often overwhelmed by the reactions of others. It is a common perception that individuals often suffer the consequences of their own actions, but when one is unaware of their own behaviour, the after effects can be far more devastating. Ignorant characters are often nescient and do not recognise their own wrongdoings. Thus, they may continue doing so, to the extent of inducing devastating harm, even deaths. In these situations, it becomes unavoidable for the adversaries to respond, often leading to the detriment of the original instigator. This notion is epitomised by Pyle, a naive “soldier of democracy”, who is determined that “belief is more important than peace, ideas more vital than people.” He possesses a self righteous intransigence to impose democracy, even if this means the death for many who “died for democracy” – through bicycle bombs which the communists would be blamed for. Greene exemplifies the consequences of his ignorance when he is ultimately opposed by the Vietminh, who plot his assassination. It is a quintessential human condition to oppose change and hence individuals are likely to provide resistance against those who begin it. When an ignorant individual starts a conflict, it only becomes more the inevitable for them to be opposed, even murdered.

However, one does not necessarily have to create a discord to become affected in some way. Individuals who simply take part in a conflict may also be affected. Those who desire to create conflict are often the ones who are the most heavily affected, and may thus be clouded by their emotions, to the extent of becoming irrational. In these cases, the aggressors of the dissension are often so hot-headed and emotionally attached, that they do not feel guilty for their actions. Just like in war, the combatants simply fight towards victory, without much thought about the consequences. However, on the contrary, the ones who are dragged into the dispute are often less convicted than the aggressors, and hence remain far more rational and logical. This can cause the individual to feel more guilty and sorrowful for their involvement. Greene exemplifies this notion through Fowler, after his involvement in the plotting of Pyle's murder. Fowler is dragged into this by Mr. Heng and the Vietminh, yet he is the one who endures the psychological traumas of Pyle's death. These inner emotions are manifested in the instance where Fowler “had betrayed [his] own principles” and “become as engage as Pyle.” His actions has force Fowler himself to betray his own impervious

beliefs. Compounded by the fact that Pyle is his friend who has previously saved his life, Fowler is put under the spotlight of complicity and ambivalence: “he “wished there existed someone to whom [he] could say....sorry.” Individuals participating in a conflict can suffer from their own demeanours, just like the instigators.

Conflicts are hardly isolated and in many cases it will heighten and lead to further complications. As a result, individuals who instigate a dispute are often unable to escape their previous mistakes. This situation can become even more devastating if one is unaware of their own actions. However, ultimately one does not definitively have to spark discord to become traumatised by their own involvement.