



A Gun for Sale

Graham Greene , Samuel Hynes (Introduction)

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Raven is an ugly man dedicated to ugly deeds. His cold-blooded killing of a European Minister of War is an act of violence with chilling repercussions, not just for Raven himself but for the nation as a whole. The money he receives in payment for the murder is made up of stolen notes and when the first of these is traced, Raven becomes a man on the run. As he tracks down the agent who has been double-crossing him and attempts to elude the police, he becomes both hunter and hunted: an unwitting weapon of a strange kind of social justice. In doing so, he sets the stage for Greene's next novel, *Brighton Rock*. **This Penguin Classics edition features an introduction by Samuel Hynes.**

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A Gun for Sale Details

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From Reader Review A Gun for Sale for online ebook

David says

only graham green could make a sympathetic figure out of a hit man.

Amene says

???? ??? ????? ?????? ?? ??? ?? ???

Leslie says

4 1/2 stars...maybe even 5 stars after I have had a chance to mull it over a bit. I devoured this thriller in one gulp because I couldn't put it down. As in *Brighton Rock*, Greene has written a brilliant portrait of an anti-hero. Raven is (in my opinion) less of a psychopath and so I had more feeling of sympathy for him. I liked the way the story moved from Raven to Anne (the innocent girl caught up in the story) to Mather (the policeman hunting Raven and coincidentally engaged to Anne).

Greene's writing is wonderfully evocative and not a word is wasted or in excess. While I enjoyed his satires, his prose really shines in these thriller/crime novels.

George K. says

?γδοο βιβλ?ο του Γκρ?χαμ Γκριν που διαβ?ζω και για μια ακ?μη φορ? δηλ?νω μαγεμ?νος και ξετρελαμ?νος απ? την γραφ? του συγγραφ?α και την μοναδικ? του ικαν?τητα να περιγρ?φει τα συναισθ?ματα και τις σκ?ψεις των χαρακτ?ρων, κ?νοντας τον αναγ?στη να γ?νει ?να με τα προβλ?ματ? και τις ανησυχ?ες τους.

Η πλ?κα ε?ναι ?τι το συγκεκριμ?νο βιβλ?ο υποτ?θεται το ?γραψε για να ψυχαγωγ?σει τον αναγ?στη με μια απ? αστυνομικ? νου?ρ ιστορ?α και ?χι να τον προβληματ?σει ?πως με τα υπ?λοιπα σοβαρ? ?ργα του. Και ?μως, πρ?κειται για ?να σοβαρ?τατο αστυνομικ? νου?ρ, με μπ?λικους προβληματισμ?ς για την κοινων?α, την πολιτικ? και τις ανθρ?πινες σχ?σεις, αιχμηρ? και με βαθ?τερα νο?ματα. Πρωταγωνιστ?ς ε?ναι ο Ρ?βεν, ?νας λαγ?χειλος δολοφ?νος, που σκοτ?νει τον Υπουργ? Στρατιωτικ?ν Υποθ?σεων, μια εν?ργεια που μπορε? να οδηγ?σει στον π?λεμο. Το θ?μα ε?ναι ?τι αυτο? που ζ?τησαν τις υπηρεσ?ες του, τον πρ?δωσαν πληρ?νοντας τον με κλεμμ?να και σημειωμ?να χαρτονομ?σματα, με αποτ?λεσμα να τον κυνηγ?νε οι αστυνομικ?ς αρχ?ς. Ο Ρ?βεν θα προσπαθ?σει να ξεφ?γει απ? τον αστυνομικ? κλοι? και παρ?λληλα να βρει αυτο?ς που τον πρ?δωσαν. Θα μπλ?ξει ?μως με μια κοπελ?τσα και ?ναν επ?μονο αστυνομικ?...

Την ιστορ?α την γρ?φει ο Γκρ?χαμ Γκριν, οπ?τε δεν πρ?κειται για μια απ? αστυνομικ? ιστορ?α με προδοσ?ες, β?α και φ?νους, αλλ? για κ?τι παραπ?νω. Η πλοκ? ε?ναι ενδιαφ?ρουσα και προσεγμ?νη, με τις κατ?λληλες δ?σεις μυστηρ?ου, αγων?ας και β?ας. Την διαφορ? στο βιβλ?ο την κ?νει η

εξαιρετικ? αν?λυση των βασικ?ν χαρακτ?ρων και των σχ?σεων μεταξ? τους, αλλ? ειδικ?τερα του δολοφ?νου πρωταγωνιστ?, του Ρ?βεν, τα βασανιστικ? παιδικ? χρ?νια και η λαγωχειλ?α του οπο?ου τον οδ?γησαν σε μια ?θλια, μοναχικ? ζω?. Οφε?λω να παραδεχτ? ?τι τον συμπ?θησα ως ?να σημε?ο, παρ? τα ?σα ?κανε. Επ?σης εξαιρετικ?ς ε?ναι οι περιγραφ?ς της εποχ?ς εκε?νης και της π?λης στα Β?ρεια της Αγγλ?ας ?που διαδραματ?στηκε το μεγαλ?τερο μ?ρος της ιστορ?ας. Πραγματικ? η γραφ? του Γκριν ε?ναι το κ?τι ?λλο, διεισδυτικ?, αιχμηρ?, και με υπ?γεια ειρωνε?α. Τ?λος, η ατμ?σφαιρα αποτελε? τον ορισμ? του νου?ρ, πιο ασπρ?μαυρη δεν γ?νεται!

Σαν βιβλ?ο δεν ε?ναι τ?σο γνωστ? ?σο ?λλα του συγγραφ?α, θεωρ? ?μως ?τι πρ?κειται για ?να εξαιρετικ? αστυνομικ? νου?ρ, με κοινωνικοπολιτικο?ς προβληματισμο?ς, που θα ικανοποι?σει τ?σο του λ?τρεις του συγγραφ?α ?σο και τους λ?τρεις του ε?δους. Το βιβλ?ο γρ?φτηκε πριν ουδ?ντα χρ?νια αλλ? δεν δε?χνει καθ?λου γερασμ?νο.

Υ.Γ. ?τυχε να διαβ?σω την μετ?φραση των εκδ?σεων ΒΙΠΕΡ, η οπο?α μου φ?νηκε ικανοποιητικ?τατη για τα χρ?νια της, αν και με λ?γα (αλλ? μ?λλον ασ?μαντα) θεματ?κια επιμ?λειας. Το βιβλ?ο κυκλοφορε? και απ? τις εκδ?σεις Νεφ?λη, με τον τ?τλο "?να ?πλο για πο?λημα".

umberto says

3.5 stars

Since some 50 years ago in Thailand, a horrible Thai word translated from "gunman," that is, ?????? (meaning a hired killer who uses his handgun/firearm to kill a target victim) has been widely appeared in news reports and informal conversations. When I first read its synopsis, I didn't want to read this novel because I don't admire those guys as such; however, there are a few exceptions like the two great American gunfighters like Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday who famously defended themselves and subdued those outlaws in the name of justice and security of suffering people.

Ironically, the title itself and the story are a bit different because its readers would not find any gun for sale anywhere. I think Mr Greene has decided on something illegally mysterious and deadly regarding the title; moreover, "A Gunman for Hire" won't do, it's obviously explicit; interestingly, the US title "This Gun For Hire" was first used in June 1936 followed by the UK title "A Gun For Sale" in July 1936 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Gun_f...]. One of the reasons is that the story involves a man called Raven hired by Cholmondeley (miraculously pronounced Chumley, only two from its obvious four syllables!) who has been employed by the Jewish steel tycoon, Sir Marcus, to kill an old War Minister by an automatic. Eventually, he knows he is betrayed since Cholmondeley (Mr Davis) has paid him only two hundred phoney pounds while "It was worth more than half a million to him" (p. 161). Enraged by being double-crossed, he has no choice but be on the run from the police including police detective Mather, Anne's fiance and Saunders, his protege colleague. So Raven has become the hunter, having Anne as the shield in the midst of fragile friendship, who finally takes his revenge on Mr Davis and Sir Marcus; he himself is gunned down by Saunders.

Interestingly, I wonder why Raven keeps saying "I'm educated" [p. 11 (2), 42 (1), p. 44 (1), 93 (1), 116 (1), 117 (1)] or indirectly - he was educated [p. 85 (2), 87 (1)] totaling ten times while talking to people or being narrated, probably due to his want of formal education I think it is his habitual way in comforting or encouraging himself due to his seemingly obvious inferiority.

As a thriller, we would still find some humorous scenes, for example:

... He put his arm tentatively round Ruby's waist and squeeze her, then loosened hastily as an electrician came along. 'You're a clever girl,' Mr Davis said, 'you ought to have a part. I bet you've got a good voice.' 'Me a voice? I've got as much voice as a peahen.'
'Give me a little kiss.'
'Of course I will.' They kissed rather wetly. 'What do I call you?' Ruby asked. ... (p. 152)

This extracted paragraph is perfect since it denotes someone whose innocent appearance is worth suspecting:

The High Street was curiously empty except that there were more police about than usual; he had quite forgotten the gas practice. No one attempted to interfere with Mr Davis, his face was well known to all the force, though none of them could have said what Mr Davis's occupation was. ... Up the street from the Tanneries a medical student in a gas-mask was approaching. (p. 153)

We keep reading around four pages till we reach this part:

... Mr Davis shivered slightly and turned on his electric fire. The man in the gas-mask spoke and again the muffled coarse voice pricked at Mr Davis's memory. 'Are you scared of something?'
'There's madman loose in the town,' Mr Davis said. ... (p. 157)

Out of the blue, the name of the killer is exposed as we can see from the following.

... He (Mr Davis) was no longer in a hurry, he wasn't busy anymore. he wanted companionship. He said, 'You aren't in any hurry. take that thing off, it must be stuffy, and have a glass of port.'

...

The muffled voice said, 'The money ...'

...

'Come away from there,' Raven said. 'You've locked the door.'

... (p. 158)

My point is that from the context, the killer still wears the gas-mask and he hasn't taken it off; therefore, it's illogically to reveal his name.

There is one more thing I think such a word wouldn't do when I read this paragraph:

'You're mad,' Sir Marcus whispered. He was too old to be frightened; the revolver represented no greater danger to him than a false step in getting into his chair, a slip in his bath. ... (p. 161)

One of the reasons is that, after rereading before and after this cited page, the words mentioned as the weapon used by Raven I've found are 'automatic,' 'gun' and 'pistol', in other words, no revolver is mentioned or found as a revolver anywhere so it might have been a slip of the pen.

In brief, this novel is worth spending our time provided that we take Raven as a fictive character, an unexemplary assassin whose dangerous ideas and deeds should be taken into account with care and wisdom, in other words, justice will finally conquer.

Martin says

On first reading: Absolutely devoured this book, and definitely one to re-read. One of my favourite Graham Greene books, along with Our Man in Havana, The Human Factor, and The Honorary Consul.

On second reading: Did not enjoy it as much, revised rating down from 5 stars to 3. Wonder what the third reading will be like...

Cphe says

This isn't the best novel by the author that I've read. Decided to read this after seeing it on the Guardian 1000 list.

Liked the premise of the story, an assassin who is double crossed by his puppet masters. Found parts of this quite unbelievable and those parts mostly involved the female lead.

Enjoyed the atmosphere of pre WW11 and actually ended up feeling some empathy for Raven, the main character. Thought the psychology of Raven's character better presented than any other.

Relatively quick read, entertaining in parts but the tension of the story was not maintained throughout.

???? ?????? says

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Dan Schwent says

When a hare-lipped assassin named Raven is paid for a job with stolen cash, he becomes wanted for robbery and goes on the run with a hostage named Anne.

I was not a tremendous fan of *This Gun for Hire*. The book read like it had an identity crisis of sorts, like it didn't know whether it wanted to be a straight up thriller or literary fiction. I don't feel like it did either particularly well.

The premise is great. I love the idea of a hitman double crossed by getting paid with stolen cash the police had serial numbers for and then looking for vengeance. Raven is very interesting protagonist, an ugly man in an ugly world. I liked the characters of Anne and Raven quite a bit and had high hopes at the start. The book just never really grabbed me. The explorations of the characters bogged down the thrilling bits to the point where I was doing housework instead of reading.

That's about all I have to say. I got a pretty meh feeling from this book and was glad when it was over. Two stars. It was not without its moments.

amapola says

Quando un libro racconta due storie e non una sola

Amo Graham Greene e possiedo molti dei suoi libri, oltre ai due Meridiani che contengono tutte le sue opere, ma quando mi aggirro tra le bancarelle dell'usato e mi capita di trovare una vecchia edizione dei suoi romanzi non resisto alla tentazione di portarmela a casa. Ognuno ha le sue manie.

Una pistola in vendita è un gran bel giallo, con una trama ben congegnata e un protagonista indimenticabile, a cui Greene ha saputo conferire uno spessore umano che ben difficilmente si incontra nella letteratura di genere.

Trovato su una bancarella dell'usato, me lo sono portato a casa e quando l'ho aperto ho trovato questa dedica:

8/8/1967

Alla Mamma, senza la cui affettuosa assistenza sarei stato assistito dall'infermiera carina.

Carlo

Era l'agosto del 1967. Probabilmente Carlo ascoltava spesso questa canzone nuova di zecca
<https://youtu.be/nFaBaflaT-g>

Naturalmente il libro ha un posto speciale nella mia libreria

Jason Koivu says

Good old fashion crime noir that still holds up today to the test of time.

This was my second Graham Greene and it was better than the first (*The Man Within...*which is unfair to judge him by. It was his first book and even he said it was poop.) I shouldn't have waited twenty years between the two!

This Gun For Hire is actually *A Gun For Sale*, but whatever the title it has all the noiry hallmarks that defined the era, formed the Hollywood version of crime noir and thus spread the good word back to the people en masse. Hell, I even read this stark thriller in black and white!

Okay. The plot. A hired killer gets double-crossed and goes after the guy that stiffed him, all while being chased by the coppers. A woman accidentally gets swept up in it. A little Stockholm syndrome later and now she's fully involved.

But the book is farther reaching than that. War profiteers come into it. Moral ambiguity abounds. Plenty of bad people get theirs in unexpected ways. It's all very surprisingly satisfying actually!

Bryn Hammond says

Short novel, read again in an afternoon.

Enlists sympathy for its assassin Raven, with his background of a hanged father, a mother who cut her throat on the kitchen table and a 'home'. Anne befriends him and he trusts for the first time in his life.

A social-conscience tearjerker in the guise of a thriller.

Cathy DuPont says

[image error]

Jesse Field says

Thanks to Shirley for letting me select from her paperbacks something to read on the flight back to China. Believe it or not, I had not read anything by Graham Greene, though I sort of felt I would like his work. As with Michael Chabon's Two Gentlemen of the Road, *A Gun for Sale* is self-conscious genre fiction, fitting characters to a plot with rules, yet with such humor and pinache that we laugh and get dragged right along at

the same time, feeling for young Anne even as we yell at her not to be friends with the assassin, and supporting the stolid detective Mather even when we see his value in order and loyalty is misguided and downright unimaginative, the worst sin in Graham's work. Raven, Mr. Davis, and Sir Marcus are villains drawn as vividly as if this were a graphic novel, each deliciously evil in their own way. Most poignantly, the text apparently emerges in 1936, giving us a fevered English dream of one folly of a world war in the recent past, and another looming, unpreventable, on the horizon. The controlling idea here is a deliberate balance of pessimism and optimism over the human condition that despairs of our foolishness yet finds redemption in the smallest things, like the love of a bully for his wife, or the restraint of an entire community from destroying an annoying little "yap yap yap" dog, such as rich, spoiled wives of dully profiteering husbands are wont to keep.

Bettie? says

[Bettie's Books (hide spoiler)]

Tfitoby says

There's just something incredible about the writing of Graham Greene. I don't hesitate to make the claim that he is quite possibly the greatest writer in the English language during the 20th century.

A Gun For Sale is a deceptively simple story of a double crossed assassin out for revenge but Greene was a skillful analyst of the human condition and so the real meat of the novel comes from the conflicts of his characters; both external and internal cause equal amounts of pain, discomfort and in smaller doses, pleasure.

The book was the basis for the impressive 1942 classic noir This Gun For Hire, starring Alan Ladd and Veronica Lake and co-written by the great noir author W. R. Burnett, this film is full of quality although naturally the action was moved from the North of England to America. There's a rather fun bit that features mistaken identity due to a gas-mask drill. I've not seen anything like it before or since and naturally there's a completely uncalled for scene featuring Veronica Lake singing a song quite badly whilst dressed as a leather clad fisherman.

The other great pleasure of this novel is the use of location and the manner in which Greene evokes the choking fog and the grey light of a miserable Northern England, it's a little cliche in film circles to say things like the location is the star but in literature only a truly great writer can make that so with just a few seemingly offhand phrases.

BrokenTune says

"MURDER DIDN'T MEAN much to Raven. It was just a new job . You had to be careful. You had to use your brains. It was not a question of hatred. He had only seen the Minister once: he had been pointed out to

Raven as he walked down the new housing estate between the small lit Christmas trees, an old grubby man without friends , who was said to love humanity."

Another one of Greene's crime thrillers - complete with murder, a man-hunt, a girly side-kick, an evil mastermind, and a main character who is torn apart by life's indifference.

"The only problem when you were once born was to get out of life more neatly and expeditiously than you had entered it."

I'm so ready to move past this "early" stage of Greene's writing. Luckily, I think there's only Brighton Rock left before embarking onto to a different theme.

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

Joseph Sciuto says

Graham Greene's "A Gun for Sale" is quite entertaining, well written, and gripping from beginning to the end.

Raven, the main character, is a hit man. He carries out the execution of the Minister of War and in so doing also kills his secretary who happens to be still at work when he arrives and is a witness to the killing.

The repercussions of the murders goes way beyond what anyone might imagine, and puts the country on the brink of war. Raven, is the type of man, who asks no questions. He is hired, carries out the job, is paid and disappears, except this time he is paid with stolen, marked, money.

Raven, is an ugly man, with a hare-lip. He's an outcast, without a friend, leading a lonely life whose only real affection is for a cat who doesn't look or see him as a deformed creative. He is the character that carries the story and through chance encounters, dreams, and reflections we come to understand and sympathize with him on all levels, but especially as a man who lives with a deformity that society shuns and little children look away in horror.

I enjoyed this book very much. It's a wonderful mystery but, more than that, it is the depiction and study of a human being who at first we abhor but with greater understanding we come to have great compassion for.

Travis says

I'm not quite sure what criteria Graham Greene used to draw the dividing line between his "entertainments" and his serious works. In many ways, this novel was quite similar to Brighton Rock, which was his next novel and classified in the "serious" group. This earlier work had a little bit more gunplay and a little less focus on interpersonal relationships, but I often found myself thinking that I was reading a rough draft of Brighton Rock. A Gun For Sale is not an entertainment in the sense that it's light-hearted and humorous, like Our Man in Havana; more the opposite - it was so serious in its tone that I often thought it bordered on camp. But is it fair to call a pulp fiction written in 1936 camp? Probably not. It's not stereotypical gangster fiction,

but rather prototypical gangster fiction. I think I've decided that Greene called this one an entertainment simply because it's an inferior work. Most of the Brighton Rock ideas are there - a protagonist conflicted by his Catholic upbringing, an eternally optimistic female foil (or skirt, to use the parlance of the times), and violence as a means of conflict resolution. The parallels are so extensive that both Pinkie from Brighton Rock and Raven from A Gun for Sale killed a man named Kite at some point in their backstory. But whereas Brighton Rock was a complete and coherent novel, some parts of A Gun For Sale just didn't work. Greene was at his best in this book when he was writing about the characters' internal conflicts and motivations - the brief interlude regarding the medical student was brilliant (though it felt out of place in this story). This kind of writing is what makes his serious works so great. But Greene just couldn't quite pull off the hardboiled crime bits. Even the first few sentences I found immensely awkward - "Murder didn't mean much to Raven. It was just a new job. You had to be careful. You had to use your brains. It was not a question of hatred." Greene is no Raymond Chandler when it comes to crime fiction. It helped Chandler that he didn't make Phillip Marlowe a Catholic. I've read enough Greene to know that Catholicism can really screw with your head.

ΠανωςK says

Καν?-δυο απιθαν?τητες (sic) στην πλοκ? ?πως και καν?-δυο απροσεξ?ες στη μετ?φραση/επιμ?λεια δεν με?ωσαν ο?τε στο ελ?χιστο την απ?λαυση που πρ?σφερε αυτ? το βιβλ?ο.
