**Green, Henry (1905-1973)**

Henry Green was the pen name of Henry Yorke, a well-regarded novelist working in the mid-twentieth century. Living in London, Yorke worked much of his life as a businessman for his family's engineering firm. He published nine novels between 1926 and 1952. In the later part of his life he was affected by worsening alcoholism, and became increasingly housebound. He died in 1973.

Born to a family with aristocratic connections, Green was educated at Eton, which he described as "a humane concentration camp", and Oxford, where he was a contemporary of Evelyn Waugh and Anthony Powell and where he published his first novel. *Blindness* (1926) examines the effects of a blinding injury on a young man's development into an artist. In 1929 Green married Mary Adelaide ("Dig") Biddulph.

Most of Green's novels draw on autobiographical experience. *Living* (1929), a depiction of factory life in the midlands, is informed by a period Green spent working on the factory floor of the family firm. *Caught* (1943) makes use of his work with the London Fire Service. Although Green's early writing dealt with similar subjects to his contemporaries’ (working-class life, the threat of war), it did so in distinctive ways. *Living* and *Party Going* (1939) employ an unusual syntax, in which grammatical articles are used sparingly if at all. The prominent use of gerunds (“doting”, “loving”) is a noticeable Green trait.

Green's prewar work is informed by the socially conscious ethos of that era. *Living* (1929) observes differences and parallels between factory classes, *Party Going* (1939) the perplexities and failings of a group of wealthy travellers centered around a glamorous socialite in a fog-bound railway station peopled by a sometimes threatening crowd.

A trio of war-time novels provides unusual views of the Second World War. *Caught* (1943) reveals intrigue in a London fire station, and the opportunities for ignoble and unheroic behaviour there. *Loving* (1945) deals with semi-feudal relations in an Irish country house, where roles are played out in a social order threatened with collapse. It was Green's most commercially successful novel, and was made into a film in 1995. *Back* (1946) presents a disturbing portrait of the difficulties of the return to normality for those affected by war.

In *Concluding* (1948) Green offered a social allegory set in a training institute preparing its students for life in an administered, bureaucratic postwar society. Both *Nothing* (1950) and *Doting* (1952) depict family dramas of upper-class life in a changed world where social identities and conventions can no longer be relied upon.

Much of Green's fiction is concerned with the growing uncertainty in personal relationships and identity, together with the oblique ways in which insight into reality is gained, and provides a significant bridge between modernist and more conventional narrative.

Fearing he would be killed in the coming war, Green wrote a memoir *Pack My Bag* (1940) in the late thirties. After *Doting* (1952) he published only occasional writing, collected in *Surviving* (1992), edited by Matthew Yorke.

**Key Biography:**

Jeremy Treglown*, Romancing*.

**Chronology of all Works:**

*Blindness* (1926)

*Living* (1929)

*Party Going* (1939)

*Pack My Bag* (1940)

*Caught* (1943)

*Loving* (1945)

*Back* (1946)

*Concluding* (1948)

*Nothing* (1950)

*Doting* (1952)

*Surviving* (1992)