"The Spy Who Came in from the Cold" by John le Carré: the Ironic Story of the Spy Who is Crushed by "The Rolling Stone" of his own British Agency

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Abstract

On the 3rd of October, 1977, Time magazine published in its issue a feature by Stefan Kanfer, containing a biographical background of David Cornell, alias John le Carré, his work, and its aesthetics, entitled: "Master of the Spy Story: John le Carré Strikes Again". The new strike by le Carré was the publication of his new "spy story", The Honourable Schoolboy. Prior to this, he published his memorable "spy story", The Spy Who Came in from the Cold, described by a fellow-novelist, Graham Greene, as the "best novel I have ever read." This novel is analysed briefly in the light of this interview and biographical background by Kanfer in his article, to underscore le Carré's care and use of the essential elements of the novel: consummate characterization, intricate but logically flowing plot, enchanting description of nature including human nature, and realistic observation of the life of spies abroad.

The theme of this novel is a tragedy, not only because the protagonist dies miserably with his girl-friend by the Wall of Berlin, but for being treacherously used by his own agency as a dispensable tool for the execution of "The Rolling Stone" project, under which he is brutally mangled.