A Sort of NEWSLETTER

Spring 2001

THE GRAHAM GREENE BIRTHPLACE TRUST

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Editorial

It is amazing how bold, even ruthless, one becomes when the favours to be asked are on behalf of a charitable organisation, such as the Trust.

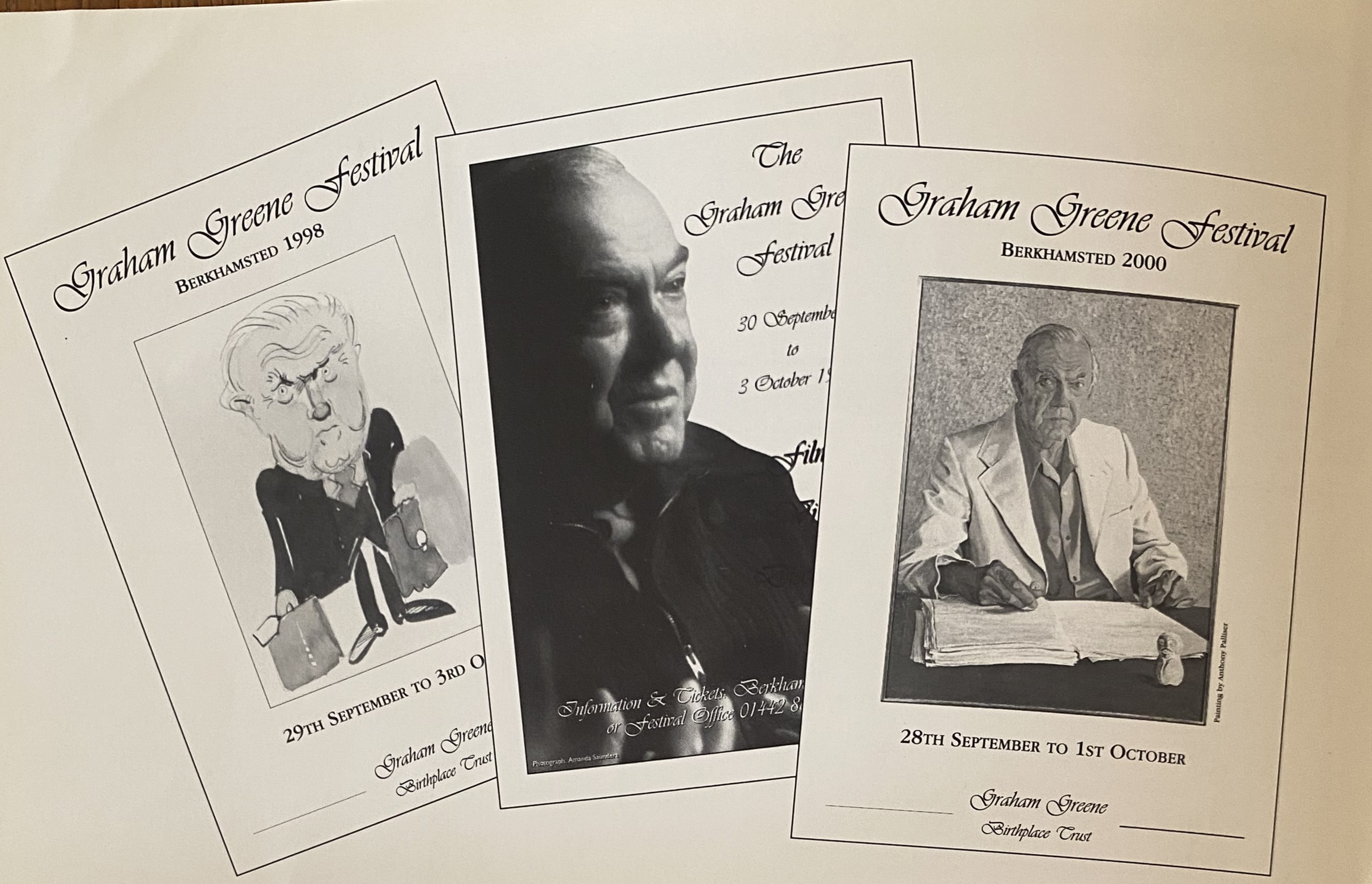
3 April 2001 saw the tenth anniversary of Graham Greene's death; I therefore wanted to make the Spring issue rather special, and with the articles on offer inside, I think I have achieved that.

What I wanted was two points of view, namely the professional literary view, and that of the educated reader. With the aforementioned boldness to the fore, I approached the fountainhead, and Norman Sherry very kindly contributed a long article, the first part of which you will find here. I also asked a man who modestly says he normally only writes boring medical reports, Ramón Porta, whom many of you have met at one of the Festivals.

When you have read this issue you will, I hope, agree with me that they both deserve special thanks for their time and generosity. It is my pleasant duty to record here our thanks to all those who contribute to this Newsletter.

Yan Christensen

No responsibility will be accepted for any errors or omissions, or comments made by writers or interviewees. Views expressed are not necessarily the views of The Graham Greene Birthplace Trust



FESTIVAL 2001

Once more the Festival Director, David Pearce, is privileged to be able to introduce to us a speaker who knew Graham Greene personally. That is always a special treat, and this time we can look forward to a talk by the *Time* magazine correspondent, Bernard Diederich, who will also propose the Birthday Toast. Many of you will have read about the recently issued *Travels Without My Aunt*, and we shall be able to meet the author, Julia Llewellyn Smith and hear her talk.

Roger Watkins will talk about Greene and the Theatre; and we are pleased to say that Martin Corner will be back at the Festival with a talk on 'Pathos in Greenes Fiction.' As before, films will add to the festive spirit of the occasion.

APOLOGIES

We owe an apology to Cedric Watts for an error in the autumn issue's report of his talk at the Festival. Too drastic editing of the very full report resulted in a mix up which erudite readers will have spotted. John Donne is the early poet whose writing inspired Greene, and he is emphatically not the same as John Dunne whose twentieth century ideas on precognitive dreams also influenced him.

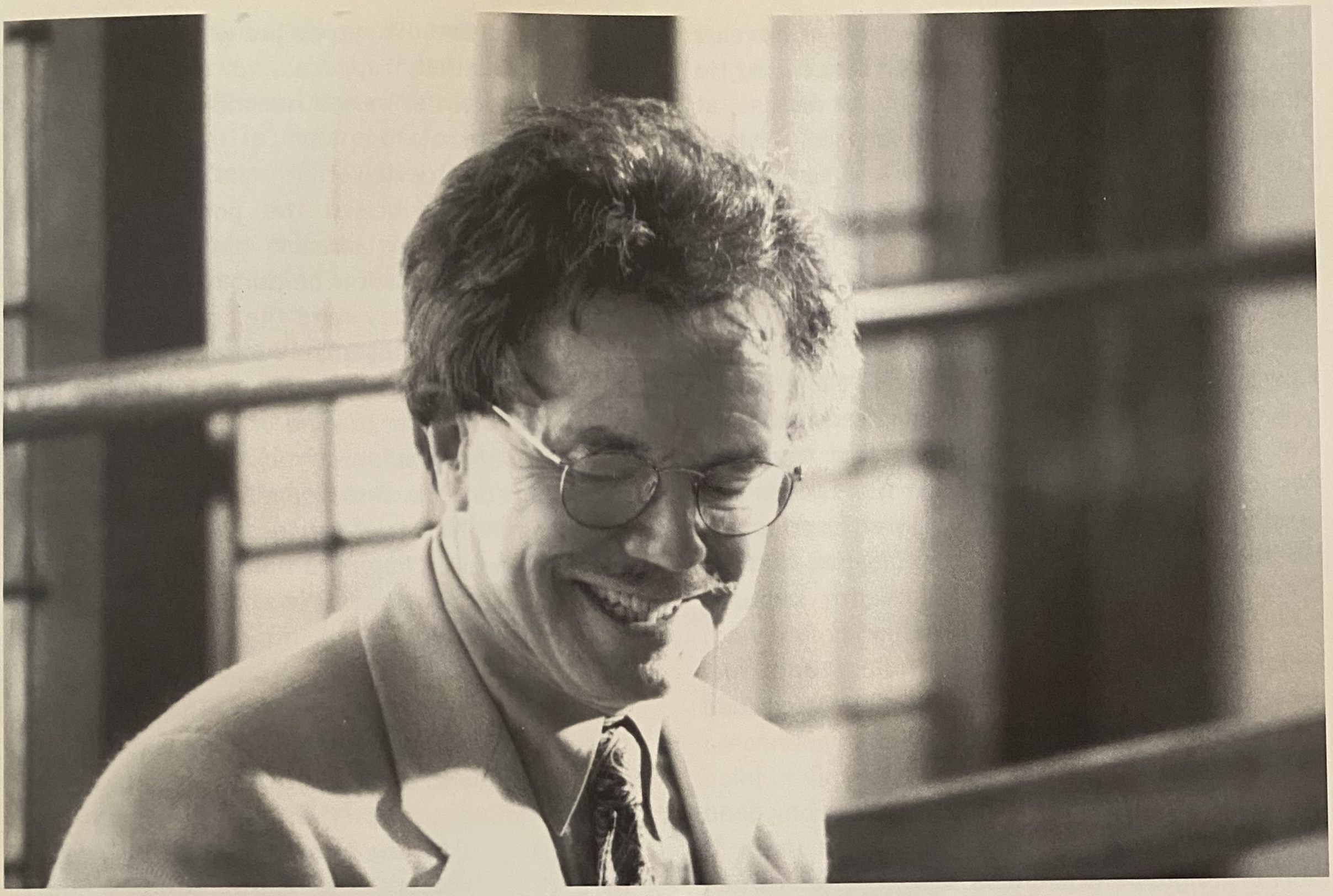
SPECIAL FEATURE

We are privileged to have been given permission to include the following article by Graham Greene's official biographer, Professor Norman Sherry. Space does not permit us to print the whole piece, but more will follow in future issues.

PART ONE

With the arrival of the new millennium, it behoves us to look back at the 20th century's literature. In doing so we encounter Graham Greene, a name which bears witness to at least half a dozen of the most remarkable novels of our age. Though there may be some modest disagreement by critics as to which are the best six, they are in my view: *Brighton Rock* (1938), *The Power and the Glory* (1940), *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), *The End of the Affair* (1951), *The Quiet American* (1955) and *A Burnt-Out Case* (1961).

Greene's achievement is reflected in the variety of his professional life: publisher, editor, film and book reviewer, intelligence agent, travel writer, critic, essayist, biographer, playwright, poet, compulsive writer of letters to newspapers. But these activities were ancillary to his prodigious work as novelist.



Norman Sherry

In that field he created seedy, sometimes pathetic, often tenuous survivors in a hostile world: Dr Czinner *(Stamboul Train)*, Conrad Drover *(Its a Battlefield)*, Anthony Farrant *(England Made Me)*, Raven *(A Gun for Hire)*, Pinkie *(Brighton Rock)*, The Whisky Priest *(Power and the Glory)*, Scobie *(The Heart of the Matter)*, Harry Lime *(The Third Man)*, Sarah *(The End of the Affair)*, Querry *(A Burnt-Out Case)*, Jones *(The Comedians)*, Father Rivas *(The Honorary Consul)*, Castle *(The Human Factor)*. What was it that led him to write of those deeply divided creatures, who never seem to be rescued except on the wrong side of the grave?

Greene had a deep concern for the underdog, the hunted man, and the downtrodden everywhere. It is the staple of his fiction. He wrote to *The Times* criticising the then Home Secretary for the methods of interrogation used against IRA prisoners, revealing his secret rage, never far below his courteous demeanour:

> *'If I, as a Catholic, were living in Ulster today I confess I would have one savage and irrational ambition to see Mr Maudling pressed against a wall for hours on end, with a hood over his head, hearing nothing but the noise of a wind machine, deprived of sleep when the noise temporarily ceased by the bland voice of a politician telling him that his brain will suffer no irreparable damage.'*

He was fortunate in that events conspired to make him rebel against his own class. He was opposed to the Empire, opposed also to the public-school standards of honour, the honour of School and House which he thought were out of keeping with adult manners, teaching only a narrow patriotism. Greene's instinct for rebellion was made apparent in a speech he gave when receiving the Shakespeare Prize awarded by the University of Hamburg in 1969. He spoke of Shakespeare as the poet of the establishment who showed no sympathy for Southwell, a fellow poet, disembowelled for the treason of being a Catholic. 'If only Shakespeare had shared his disloyalty, we could have loved him better as a man,' Greene said. Expressing a basic faith, he continued: 'It has always been in the interests of the State to poison the psychological wells ... to restrict human sympathy.' In contrast, it is the story-teller's task 'to elicit sympathy and a measure of understanding for those who lie outside the boundaries of State approval.'

What was it made this man the kind of novelist where sin is the normal climate of life on earth? He was born on 2 October 1904 let me be precise, at 10.20a.m., the fourth child of Charles Greene (then a school and housemaster and soon to be headmaster at Berkhamsted School). It was a difficult birth and his mother, who had had a number of miscarriages, had been appalled to find herself pregnant again. He was born three years after the death of Queen Victoria, when D.H. Lawrence was nineteen, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce both twenty two. His mother, her husband's first cousin once removed, was a first cousin of Robert Louis Stevenson. His uncle was Sir Graham Greene, one of the founders of Naval Intelligence. His family could be traced back to the Norman Conquest and, since the eighteenth century, their history had included banking, brewing, sugar estates in the West Indies, and real eccentricity an eccentricity which did not exclude Greene himself.

Greene was a strange and disturbing boy, and there was something about him which made it impossible either to know or understand him. His aunt Eva (almost a hundred years old when I interviewed her, but clear of mind) was mystified by him and unhesitatingly described him as a young child: 'He was very different from any other child I have ever known. I just never knew whether he was as a child pleased or unhappy, approved or didn't approve.' And, revealing her anxiety after so many years, she continued: 'I never knew. I never knew. I never knew.'

But many people found him extraordinary. Without a qualm Eva's daughter, later Countess Strachwitz, travelled with Greene into areas of Liberia which had never before seen a white man or woman (locals tried to rub their skins expecting them to turn black). Out of that trek came Greene's *Journey Without Maps* (1936), one of the best travel books of the century. In an interview she recalled to me her cousin's nature: 'He had a clinical observation of things; his concern was to note your reactions to things; his brain frightened me, it was sharp, clear and unsentimental in its observations.'

What made Greene's novels different was his passion for technique: his determination to set out the problem or theme. But Greene did not offer any easy solutions, or indeed solutions at all. Even his famous Catholic novels are without bias for he is fundamentally opposed to the propaganda novel. The writer raises questions: he does not answer them.

Although as reviewer in the pages of *The Spectator* he criticised the popular novel, he wanted to achieve success himself, only on a higher level. The writer he admired in the thirties was Aldous Huxley and he came under his influence of the poet Rupert Brooke:

> *'It seems queer that he of all people in the world, should show so much the influence of Rupert Brooke. One would have thought that mentally they were miles apart. And yet I don't know. They both had the same joy in mixing up the beautiful and the disgusting on the same page.'*

Here, hidden in a private letter to Vivien, Greene found his direction, the mixing of the beautiful and the disgusting in one. But it was not so much that he had found a way of writing but that he had found support for the way he wished to write.

Always Greene knew what he was doing, evidence of a mind, as his cousin had indicated, 'sharp, clear and unsentimental in its observations.' He wanted success and his entertainments border on being thrillers. One of these, *The Ministry of Fear* is a masterpiece of its kind. And even his earliest novels have qualities of the thriller: *The Man Within* (1929); *Stamboul Train* (1932); *It's a Battlefield* (1934). He is working towards the crime novel and reaches it with *A Gun for Sale* (1936), but with a substantial difference.

In writing *Brighton Rock*, Greene was attempting a novel outside his basic experience. The material had to be found. He writes to Vivien (and you can tell that he is soaking up the dialect and the speech pattern used by the semi-criminal classes):

> *'I must tell you of the incident that befell me yesterday afternoon, of the drunken jockey, who would be straight with me as long as I was straight with him which remark forced me, out of the mere joy of Buchanism [John Buchan, The Thirty Nine Steps], to give him a false name and address, on his parting shake of the hand, and his straight it is, Mr. Gough. We shall meet again. And my fear*

now that the Sabini gang will be on my steps since the horrid realization that he was not drunk at all. If I am found with my throat cut call the police to inquire of Jockey Caley, Greenery Cottage, Park Lane, Newmarket.'

The tone is youthful (he was just 21) but it does show how he was turning to as full an accounting of experience of jockeys and the Brighton racetrack as he could manage in order to write from a sense of inside knowledge.

As Greene began *Brighton Rock* in July 1936, he is still seeking 'low life.' Greene is on record as saying that Brighton 'in part belongs to an imaginary geographical region.' Greene knew Brighton well, no town at that time having had such a hold on his affections, and in fact he kept close to its topography. In his autobiography, *Ways of Escape*, Greene says 'The Brighton race gangs were to all intents quashed forever as a serious menace at Lewes Assizes a little before the date of my novel.' No sooner had the account of the race gangs been reported in the *Brighton Argus* (on 29 July 1936) than Greene wrote to his brother Hugh (later to be director general of the BBC): 'Ive got to go to the Brighton Races ... I wonder if you and Helga [Hugh's wife] feel inclined for a day of low sport.' From that visit, and his intimate knowledge of Brighton, Greene created an ingenious plot.

Pinkie, the villain hero, a Catholic determined to sin unto death, was based on a race gang leader called Spinks but known as Spinky from which Greene derived the unusual name Pinkie.

The barmaid Ida, who perhaps accidentally steals the show, is as significant a figure in the novel as Pinkie. Her origin is found in two persons. One was the blowsy film star of the day, Mae West, and joined to her and her willingness to sing slightly bawdy songs in bars was Dorothy Glover, Greene's lover at the time. The fact that the portrait of the barmaid Ida, is distinctly unflattering, is itself an interesting fact given his closeness to Dorothy; yet they had only recently met, and so it may reveal initial reservations about her.

'She was cheery, she was healthy, she could get a bit lit with the best of them. She liked a good time, her breasts bore their carnality frankly down the Old Steyne, but you had only to look at her to know that you could rely on her. She wouldn't tell tales to your wife, she wouldn't remind you next morning of what you wanted to forget. '

What is strange about *Brighton Rock*, and what helps to make it one of the incredible novels of the century, is the unexpected grafting of a religious theme on to battles between gangs. Greene was working out his own religious beliefs which at this time were extreme. He found the background in Brighton; he found the characters among the race gangs but the theme is quite alien to the characters, though clearly something central to Greene himself. What we have is the conflict between moral worlds: the world of good represented by Rose, and of evil, represented by Pinkie. Greene is working out the relationship between Good and Evil, God and Satan, and the precarious balance between the two, from the point of view of a Catholic convert. He was tapping his own fundamental view of mankind and newly formed religious beliefs. Greene sought to demonstrate the limitations of the religious beliefs as these are espoused by Ida, religious beliefs that do not accept the existence of innate evil. His views are curiously hard-headed in the thirties.

A driver and a member of the Toc H told Greene how he performed innocuous services for people in hospital, reading to sick men in bed, the bringing of flowers, the daily good deed, and in his diary, Greene notes :

They are doing good, but it is good to the individual; they exaggerate the importance of the individual ... they are as harmless and useless as their non-sectarian prayers; they have no enemies, in the same way as the devil has none.

It is even clearer in Rose Macaulay's account of dining with Greene:

Graham Greene is somewhat different! I was dining with him last Friday ... I was upholding the Anglican point of view against Graham's assertions that only R.C.s were capable of real sin because the rest of us were invincibly ignorant.

So Ida is invincibly ignorant. She has no religious sense she is for life with a capital L:

> *Life was sunlight on brass bedposts, Ruby port, the leap of the heat when the outsider you backed passes the post and the colours go bobbing up. Life was poor Fred's mouth pressed down on hers in the taxi, vibrating with the engine along the parade.*

For Greene Ida had no idea of the spiritual life, of heaven or hell. She believes 'only in ghosts, ouija boards, tables which rapped and inept little voices speaking plaintively of flowers.' And Greene's contempt is apparent in the crematorium when the clergyman (when Ida goes to Hale's funeral) tells the congregation that 'our belief in heaven is not qualified by our disbelief in the old medieval hell. We believe that our brother is already at one with the One. The certainty that our brother is at this moment reabsorbed in the universal spirit.' He touched a little buzzer, the New Art doors opened, the flames flapped and the coffin slid smoothly down into the fiery sea.'

Ida's view of life and death is protected not only by spiritualism but also by sentimentality. She considers that papists treated death with flippancy, 'life wasn't so important perhaps to them as what came after. For Ida death was the end of everything.'

Opposed to her secular view is Pinkie's Catholic heritage which includes a firm belief in Hell: 'These atheists, they don't know nothing. Of course there's Hell. Flames and damnation ... torments.' Greene then had less a belief in God than the inversion of this: *'Credo in unum Satanum'*. As a boy Pinkie wanted to be a priest, now he is a murderer, loathing sex and female flesh. He remembers his father panting like a man at end of a race and his mother making a horrifying sound of pleasurable pain. The notion of marriage is intolerable to him: 'He didn't want <u>that</u> relationship with anyone: the double bed, the intimacy, it sickened him like the idea of age. He crouched in the corner vibrating up and down in bitter virginity. To marry it was like ordure on the hands.' Pinkie's view of sex is like the Satanist Baudelaire: 'The sole and supreme pleasure in love lies in the absolute knowledge of doing evil.'

Central to *Brighton Rock* is the struggle between good and evil, between a vice that really demands to be called satanic (Pinkie) and virtue (his young wife Rose). Trying to corrupt his wife, Pinkie says to her:

> *You don't want to listen too much to priests. They don't know the world like I do. Ideas change, the world moves on ... His words stumbled before her carved devotion. That face said as clearly as words that ideas never changed, the world never moved: it lay there always, the ravaged and disputed territory between two eternities. They faced each other as it were from opposing territories.*

Pinkie would no doubt agree with Greene that the world is 'all much of a piece,' engaged 'everywhere in the same subterranean struggle There is no peace anywhere where there is life.' There are quiet and active sectors of the line and Greene could not keep away from the active sector. He saw life as a continuous battlefield. This is why he seemed always to have been on the spot at the right moment wherever there was a major upheaval, situation of danger, the more danger the better. He had an uncanny sense of where trouble would be and found it.

Hale is killed but then in order to save himself, Pinkie begins to murder his own gang. The novel starts out as simple feuding between rival gangs, but that is not how it ends. Instead of continuing the gang war Pinkie turns against his own, killing Spicer, excluding Cubitt, and cleverly devising a suicide pact with Rose, with the proviso that she shoots herself first. 'Life was good walking outside the white sun-drenched wall ... towards the finest of all sensations, the infliction of pain.' He enjoys playing with poor Spicer:

> *'You'll have to disappear, Spicer.'*
>
> *'What do you mean?' ... 'Disappear?' ...*
> *'You wouldn't do anything'*
>
> *'Why,' the Boy said, 'what do you think I mean? I mean take a holiday' ... 'And where will you go, Spicer?' His mind was quite made up, and for the second time in a few weeks he looked at a dying man.*
> *He couldn't help feeling inquisitive.*

At a time when Rose begins to suspect she might be pregnant and thinks: 'A child ... and that child would have a child ... it was like raising an army of friends for Pinkie.' Pinkie has decided to pretend to a suicide pact with her. He persuades her to write a suicide note: 'Say you couldn't live without me, something like that.' Going down the stairs to her he considers what he will say to the authorities and his desire to do evil does not waver. Nevertheless, there is this sense of more than human powers hovering 'the huge darkness pressed a wet mouth against the panes and again he felt the prowling presence of pity.'

They drive away from the hotel and God's angel comes to him in the form of wings:

> *An enormous emotion beat on him; it was like something trying to get in; the pressure of gigantic wings against the glass ... if the glass broke, if the beast whatever it was got in, God knew what it would do. He had a sense of huge havoc the confession, the penance and the sacrament an awful distraction and he drove blind into the rain.*

The words of the Mass touch him for the last time, but he gives her precise instructions: 'All you need do is pull on this. It isn't hard. Put it in your ear that'll hold it steady. When its over, I'll come back and do it too... It'll be too dark for me to see much.'

Professor Norman Sherry

And now for the educated reader's view.

WHY I AM A GREENE ENTHUSIAST

During the past three years, especially during the Graham Greene Festivals, I have often been asked why and how I became a Greene enthusiast. Confronted with the question, I learnt that the answer was not so simple as one would initially think. It has given me the occasion to reflect on it and to travel back in memory to my very first Greene novel.

It was *The Human Factor*. It must have been 1978 or 1979 and I remember that I enjoyed the book and, later, the film. I knew nothing about Greene's life or work and I realise now that I must have given a very superficial reading of the book, which I read as a spy story. *The Third Man* followed, but I did not get hooked on the author. It was after reading *Getting to Know the General* that I became an avid reader of Greene's novels, plays, short stories and all I could find by him.

Getting to Know the General was given to me by a friend from Panama, a passionate supporter of General Torrijos, whom he had met. During the early and mid-1980s I met some Panamanians in Madrid who openly showed their admiration for the General and their grief at his death. I knew very little about the country and its politics and I began reading the book with a sense of curiosity, but with no expectations. The result was that after reading this book I set the goal of reading everything I could find by Greene. *Getting to Know the General*, the story of a friendship, is also the story of trips, of peculiar encounters and unexpected events. I was absorbed by the description of the preparation for the trips, by the detailed description of airports and places, by the characters, not fictitious in this case, but real ones. Why Greene gave support to a military dictator still is a matter of controversy, but I cared very little for politics, I was taken by the sense of anticipation, as if I was going to travel instead of Greene. I am fond of travelling and, very likely, this shared interest with Greene made me appreciate the book more than its literary value probably deserved.

I have no doubt that my initial interest in Greene's novels arose from the fact that they made me travel mentally to different and remote places. If one loves to read and to travel, one certainly finds more opportunities to read than to travel and reading Greene's novels was my personal way of escape. Reading and travelling in one's mind were eventually followed by travel to some of the places visited by Greene and that was indeed very rewarding. Being at the top of the bell tower of the cathedral at Phat Diem, I had the impression that the countryside before me was very much the same that Greene saw more than forty years earlier, and described in *The Quiet American* and magazine articles, except of course for the war paraphernalia. The massive cathedral stood among low, poor houses, set along a few streets spread on a plain that extends toward the South China Sea. In Ho Chi Min City, I was very moved to see that the statue of the Virgin Mary still stood in front of the red-brick cathedral and that the inscription 'Regina pacis,' that Greene found so paradoxical in war times, was still there. So was

the Holy See of the Caodaist, west of Ho Chi Min City, in Tay Ninh, near the Cambodia border, that Greene disliked so much. On the other side of the globe, in Buenos Aires, it only takes a short walk to find Florida Street and The Richmond, a cafeteria mentioned in *The Honorary Consul*, where Dr. Plarr's mother enjoyed eating cream cakes. Now I could share them with my colleagues after the busy sessions of a professional congress. How gratifying it was to see that the precise descriptions in the books were faithful to the original.

The accuracy of the descriptions is a very important feature of Greene's style and this fact was duly noted during the First Graham Greene Festival in 1998. Martin Corner emphasised Greene's powerful descriptive prose and compared it with that of today's novels. Greene could attain an extraordinary local accuracy, because he had been in the places he described and it made his books readable and believable.

By the time Greene died, I had read most of his novels and a good part of his other writings. It was then that I became interested in the man, the author, the traveller, the Catholic convert. It was then that I began reading about Greene. It was then that I learnt that Greene gave himself to us by drawing from his own life and experiences. My admiration for the books was extended to the author and from then on I found a second, much deeper meaning in the books I had so much enjoyed as entertainment and for escape.



Ramón Rami Porta centre, listening to Marie McQueeney

Rereading Greene's books with some knowledge of his life and of what he thought gives a new dimension to the first, superficial reading. On rereading two of his novels in preparation for the Fourth Graham Greene Festival, I found some interesting examples of this. Greene was afraid of moths and so was one of his characters: [Minty] 'was afraid of moths.' He had also feared death by drowning and he lent this feeling to Anthony, in *England Made Me*: 'He had always feared the water he dreamed of death by drowning.' Isn't it Greene who, through Minty's eyes, systematically observes a spider kept under a glass? Greene's descriptions speak for his faculty for observation, which caused a certain distress to his cousin Barbara. She wrote, quoting from her own diary, in her report of their trip to Liberia *Too Late to Turn Back*: 'If you are in a sticky place he [Greene] will be so interested in noting your reactions that he will probably forget to rescue you.' In *Travels With My Aunt*, isn't it Greene himself who says 'I enjoy the travelling, not the sitting still' through Aunt Augusta? It is well-known, and Father Durán emphasised this in the Second Graham Greene Festival, that Greene never stayed too long in the same place, that he rarely spent more than a few nights in the same hotel, always wanting to move on. There certainly are more examples of Greene's own life in the lives of his characters. Someone with the knowledge and time would probably find hundreds.

Greene had a deep knowledge of human nature. He met all types of people in his travels. He observed and listened. That's why his characters do not live fictitious lives, but very real ones. This is something I learnt to appreciate in his works: was there evasion? Yes, but at ground level, with real characters. There are Pinkies nowadays and there are criminals younger than Pinkie. His reflections on many aspects of life can be seen in normal people. One doesn't need to be a hero to be a Greene character or, maybe, one does. If so, it only means that there are many heroes among us. Greene wrote in 1940 in *The Power and the Glory*: 'When you visualised a man or a woman carefully, you could always begin to feel pity that was a quality God's image carried with it. When you saw the lines at the corners of the eyes, the shape of the mouth, how the hair grew, it was impossible to hate. Hate was just a failure of imagination.' In 1999 Rudi, an Albanian Evangelical volunteer, who worked for the Kosovo refugees, wrote in one of her e-mails: 'Some nights ago, BBC World gave a programme about

Milošević, and to my surprise, deep in my heart I felt such a compassion for this man, because in his eyes and smile I saw the beauty of God's image...' I was astonished, looking at my computer screen as if I were receiving a message from Greene himself. Isn't it remarkable, the similarity of both reflections! Rudi had not read *The Power and the Glory*, but summarised in a marvellous way volumes of theology, as Greene had done.

The way Greene introduced theology, the keystone of most of his books, not only the 'Catholic novels,' impressed me very much. Theology was working in the most dramatic and extreme situations. Greene found virtue and grounds for salvation in the seediest character, for whom there was always hope of God's mercy through love, the greatest virtue. As a Catholic, I found this treatment of theology fascinating. I have read uncountable times the final chapter of *Brighton Rock*, written in 1938, more than twenty years before Vatican Council II. It shows how much ahead of his time Greene was. But the lines that impressed me most emotionally, to the point of gooseflesh, were those whispered in Latin by the last Pope in *The Last Word* when he is about to drink a glass of wine offered by the general who has kept him in prison for twenty years. For those of us who grew up in the Catholic faith and liturgy, the unexpected ending of this short story brings our dormant memories back. It also is an explicit reminder of the power of words said by a priest, who transforms a glass of wine into the real presence of Christ. Greene learnt more than the basics of Catholicism and he learnt it well and used it well, too, to convey a message of hope, which, as Father Durán put it, is a reward of our faith.

Since *The Human Factor* my enthusiasm for Greene has moved from a very superficial interest in mere plot to an interest in the author, in his knowledge of human nature and in the way he deals with personal relations with fellow human beings and with God. So far, the culmination of my enthusiasm has been to see the launching of the Graham Greene Birthplace Trust and its Festivals. This has given me the privilege of meeting other Greene enthusiasts, who, though dispersed geographically, remain united by a common interest.

Ramón Rami Porta

Ramón Rami Porta is a Friend of the Trust and has attended every Festival so far. His enthusiasm and knowledge are evident from the above and we have every reason to believe Berkhamsted figures in his diary for September!

IN GREENE'S FOOTSTEPS IN LIBERIA

Graham Greene's book *Journey Without Maps* tells of his travels with his cousin Barbara through Liberia in the 1930s an especially enterprising journey then because at that time, apart from Abyssinia, Liberia was the only African country where white men did not rule.



John Cook with compass in the elephant grass

Fifty years later I spent some time in Liberia and neighbouring Guinea trying to find a route for a new railway, and there was not a great deal of difference in the problems in getting around then from those which Greene experienced. And what with the troubles there now, I don't suppose things have changed much over the last two decades.

There are hardly any metalled roads except in the coastal region. There is a railway, built to carry iron ore from the Nimba mountains to the port of Buchanan, and a few typical African tracks of red laterite, just about passable by four-wheel drive vehicles; otherwise you have to find your way along footpaths through the jungle or savannah. The numerous streams have to be jumped or splashed through; the rivers you are ferried over in a canoe or on a raft where there is no rope bridge.

We had maps of a sort as Greene probably did despite the title of his book, but they were of very limited use in rain forest. How do you know where you are if you can see no landmarks? You can use a compass and try and measure how far you have gone, but that is about it; mostly you are in the hands of your guides. They lead you along narrow footpaths through the jungle, one of them in front armed with a big cutlass for slashing a way through the encroaching undergrowth. Further inland the jungle turns to scrub, then elephant grass, but this is over head-high so you cant see your way through that either.

Approaching the hills, landmarks begin to appear, but it is not possible to take reliable compass bearings on them because there is so much iron in the ground. Unlike Greene, though, we were never very far from civilisation of some sort, and today finding your way around would be so much easier with the modern lightweight satellite navigation systems.

All this brought home to me what an adventure Graham Greene undertook. Sherry's biography tells of Greene's experiences with the wild life, cockroaches the size of small mice and moths like little bats. We met all these; like him we too came across missionaries.

For a time we stayed at a mining camp, and there one evening four Catholic White Fathers joined us for supper. They just came out of the bush in their spotless white habits, and afterwards they disappeared back again. In another area deep in the Liberian jungle we met a young American Baptist minister. He obviously had funds for he had cleared an airstrip and operated a light aircraft and a helicopter, visiting villages over hundreds of square miles, spreading the Gospel. He flew us around while we were there and was very helpful. A few years later I learned that he was one of the first to be murdered in the troubles that have dogged Liberia for some fifteen years now. I don't know what became of the White Fathers.

John Cook

John Cook is a Friend of the Trust and a former mayor of Berkhamsted.

CORRESPONDENCE

Please use these columns to express views, discuss themes, comment on the news and views of others, or simply to tell us you are there.

The Trust has received an appeal to which it cannot, by the terms of its constitution, contribute but we are pleased to pass on the following

The name of Graham Greene has often been mentioned in our Parish in Clapham. This is due to the fact that in one of his novels, *The End of The Affair*, the Catholic Church in Clapham mentioned therein is in fact our St Mary's Church. In the novel the Church was described as the 'dark church at the corner of Park Road...' (at page 109). The Redemptorists Congregation have run St Mary's Church for nearly 150 years and at page 152 a reference is made to '...one of the Redemptorists in... the dark church' It is quite evident that Graham Greene knew Clapham quite well, as he himself at some point had lived in the area.

St Mary's Church is currently being renovated and the cost of the renovation is just under £300,000. We are desperately in need of funds to meet the financial obligations. Graham Greene correctly described St Mary's Church, among other things, as a dark church. Some fifty years later it has hardly changed its character; so apart from necessary repairs we are also endeavouring to make the church brighter.

The project is already well underway, and we should be most grateful if you would pass on this appeal to anyone who might consider making a donation to St Mary's Church towards the renovation work.

Father Ralph Heskett, CSsR
Parish Priest
St Marys Roman Catholic Church
8 Clapham Park Road
London SW4 7AP

QUIZ ANSWERS

Once more, those who entered did very well indeed. The three winners, names below, will hear separately from the Secretary about their prizes. Among entries that did not win were complete answers and some very near misses. Mike Hill has promised to carry on the tradition, so there's always next year.

Answers

1. The Heart of the Matter
2. Chagrin in Three Parts
3. The Complaisant Lover
4. The Third Man (Le Troisieme Homme)
5. The Name of Action
6. In the School Chapel, Berkhamsted School
7. School House, Berkhamsted School
8. Kings Road
9. Bankstead
10. 1998
11. Haiti
12. (Il) Rosaio
13. The Lawless Roads
14. Monte Carlo
15. Malaya
16. The Confidential Agent
17. The Tenth Man
18. Its a Battlefield
19. Stamboul Train
20. The Ministry of Fear
21. Augusta
22. Milly
23. Elizabeth Bowen
24. Dorothy Craigie (nom de plume of Dorothy Glover)
25. Martine (Guy)
26. Neil Jordan
27. The Honorary Consul (US title Beyond the Limit)
28. The Power and the Glory
29. The Third Man (The review was in the communist newspaper Der Abend)
30. Alfred Hitchcock
31. Kenneth Richmond
32. The Times
33. Eyre and Spottiswoode
34. The Anglo-Texan Society
35. Washington, USA
36. Fidel Castro
37. The Viper of Milan
38. Eric Gill
39. The Lover of Leeds
40. Robert Louis Stevenson (The quotation is from the essay From Feathers to Iron)
41. A World of My Own
42. Lord Rochester's Monkey
43. Getting to Know the General
44. Shirley Hazzard
45. The Sign of Four
46. A Gun for Sale
47. The Ministry of Fear
48. The Blue Film
49. The Quiet American
50. The Soupsweet Land

THE WINNERS are

Rudolf van Dalm, The Netherlands
Roger Smith, Grantham, UK
Jon Wise, Gravesend, UK

Berkhamsted Hall

Some readers may have been puzzled by the inclusion in the Winter Newsletter of a Christmas card entitled 'Berkhamsted School - The Hall.' What was its relevance to Greene?

Edward Greene, brother of Charles Greene, Grahams father, came to live in the Hall sometime between October 1911 and August 1912, that is when Graham was seven. According to Graham, 'There were six children. The same number as in our family, and in ages they were inserted between us, our family starting first, as though my uncle who was the younger brother had suffered from a competitive spirit and wanted to catch my father up. My own particular friend was Tooter...' (A Sort of Life, p.16)

Graham was a frequent visitor to the Hall: '...there was a glamour never to be recaptured in secret picnics on long sunny mornings on the roof of the Hall...' 'I would sit up there with my cousin Tooter, consuming sweets bought with our weekly pocket money and discussing possible futures as a midshipman in the Navy or an Antarctic explorer, none of them to be realised, while we watched the oblivious figures in the yard and stables below from our godlike secrecy and security." (SOL pp.27-28)

'We would visit [the Hall] on Christmas Eve for the Christmas tree, my elder siblings staying for Christmas dinner. I used to be embarrassed by the carols in German round the tree because I was afraid I might be expected to sing too.' (SOL p.16)

According to Richard Mabey, the well-known writer on countryside matters, the Hall, 'to judge from surviving photographs' '...was a gloomy and graceless pile' (Home Country p.16). Soon after the First World War the western half of the Estate was sold by Edward Greene as a site for the first Council Estate in Berkhamsted. Some ten years later the eastern half was sold for housing for the rapidly growing number of middle class families seeking superior detached housing.

The Hall itself plus some five acres of land was leased to Berkhamsted School with effect from May 1928 as premises for the Preparatory School. Antony Hopkins, the Musician and a Friend of the Trust, was at the School during this period. He writes: 'It was a blissful time; a small school with a happy atmosphere. The extensive grounds provided the opportunity for endless games of "Cops and Robbers"'.

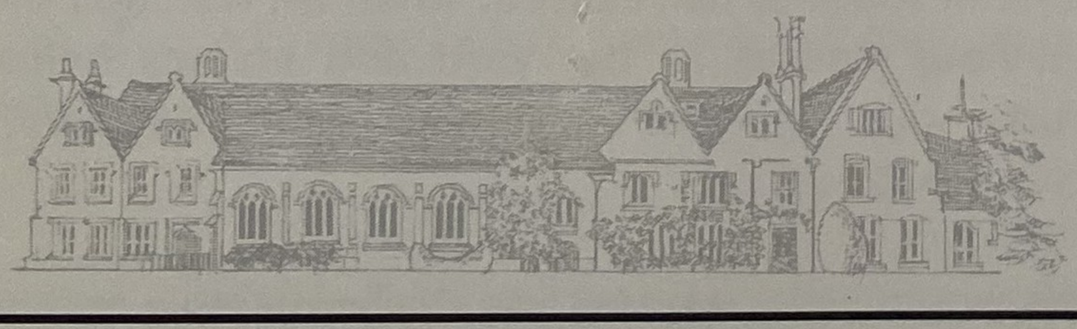
The School had an option to purchase the freehold of the Hall from Edward Greene which it exercised in January 1932. Four years later, during the Christmas holidays 1935, substantial dry rot was discovered and the building had to be demolished. The site is now occupied by the playground of Swing Gate Lane First School.

Ken Sherwood

GREMLINS

Those scourges of printers and editors alike have been at work on some of the names mentioned in the last issue. In the News of Friends section by some mischance Norman Sherry became Norman Greene (!), and the author of i.a. an occasional paper, Cedric Watts, became Cecil. We apologise to both victims of the gremlins.

Unfortunately space does not permit the inclusion of press cuttings in this issue, but do keep sending them, as well as news of anything of interest to you.



Occasional Papers et al

The following are available from the Secretary @ £2.50 (incl postage) for the papers; others as priced.

Bill West's Inaugural Lecture

Graham Greene and the Berkhamsted Connection by John Davison

The Comic Sense of Graham Greene by Neil Sinyard

Darkest Greeneland: Brighton Rock by Cedric Watts

The Berkhamsted GG Trail (25p)

Compact Disc:
The Voice of Graham Greene £10

Video of 1998 (£8) **and 1999** (£10) Festivals

THE TRUST

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COMMUNICATIONS

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We are very grateful to Jenny Thomas for permission to use her original drawings
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