A Sort of NEWSLETTER

Summer 2001 THE GRAHAM GREENE BIRTHPLACE TRUST £1.50 Free to Friends

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Editorial

It's summer in Berkhamsted, and the travelling fairs are visiting Hertfordshire to tempt children and those of us who have retained a child-like sense of fun. But there are other treats in store: there is now less than two months until the 4th Graham Greene Festival, which this year takes place on

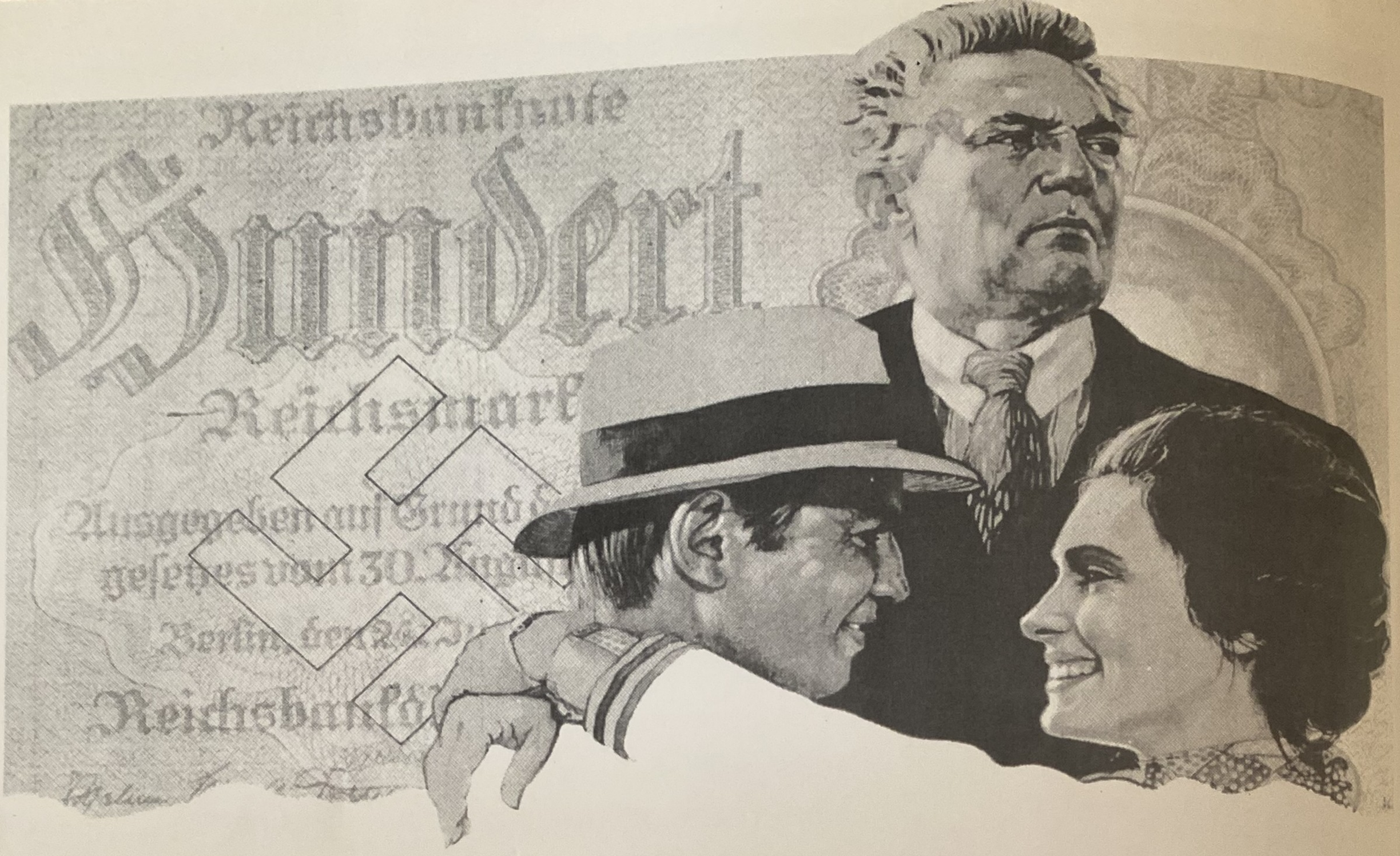
27 - 30 September 2001

This is surely a must for your diary that takes precedence over all others. Births, deaths and marriages? Postpone them! Speaking at another event? Cancel it! Having your hair cut? Come as you are!

Tickets are selling fast and if you intend to save by getting a season ticket you should not delay. Some events are very popular and when one is sold out season tickets cannot of course, be issued. So act now. And if you have not yet renewed your subscription, now is the time to do that and to try to recruit a friend to become a Friend.

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

Part of poster from the film *"England Made Me"*

Arrangements are all but complete for the Fourth Graham Greene Festival, which will take place from **27-30 September.**

The aspect of organising that has surprised and cheered me immensely has been the readiness of those who were familiar with Greene to take part in our programme and to assist in any way. It is more than a readiness; it is a warm enthusiasm that in itself reflects aspects of Graham's character that I am only just coming to appreciate. It is a response that I have found in everyone with whom I have dealt: academics, writers, actors and family and friends of Graham. He was clearly a man, who for all his apparent reserve, even aloofness, was capable of inspiring great affection and loyalty.

Bernard Diederich, *Time* magazine's correspondent, who knew Graham well and who introduced him to the regimes in Panama, Cuba and Haiti, replied to my invitation to speak with such a heart-warming letter of acceptance that I realised the great privilege of piecing together this Festival programme for the man whose work we admire and whose character intrigues us. Odd as it may seem, I am here writing this preface for our Festival in what was once the Greene family bathroom in School House. That in itself gives the past a distinct immediacy.

Of Bernard Diederich, Greene wrote that he was 'the indispensable historian for Central America', and part of the account of their companionship may be found in Greene's book *Getting to Know the General*. Bernard is coming from Florida to speak to us on the Saturday evening and to propose the Birthday Toast. Members of Graham's family will be present and the occasion promises to be memorable. Also on that evening, Roger Watkins, the previous Festival Director, will be giving us his thoughts on 'Graham Greene and the Theatre' with readings from key plays.

That afternoon Professor Judith Adamson of Montreal will be talking on aspects of the women characters in the novels. Judith is another who has turned an unlikely possibility into the pleasure of reality; she has written about Greene, has lectured in this country, and comes fresh from the publication of a recent book, *Love Letters*, on the letters of Virginia Woolf's husband.

On the morning of the Saturday Dr Martin Corner will talk on 'Pathos in Greene's Fiction'. Martin will be remembered for his contribution to our first Festival. He will be followed by Julia Llewellyn Smith who will speak about her own retracing of Greene's journeys which she records in her book, *Travels Without My Aunt*, published by Michael Joseph last autumn. She quotes Greene saying,



Graham Greene and Peter Duffell

'It's not that I enjoy puddling in the mess, but if there is a mess I feel it's our duty to look at it.' In following this 'puddling' she has written, according to *The Independent*, 'a poignant book'.

The Friday evening before brings a little jeu d'esprit in the showing of the films *Travels With My Aunt* and the short, little known, but Oscar winning film, *A Shocking Accident.*

On the first day of the Festival a tour of Greene locations in London will be led by Maire McQueeney who so vigorously marshalled us and entertained in Brighton two years ago. Then on the evening of that Thursday 27th, the film *England Made Me* will be shown.

The film and the novel will be the subject of Friday's programme. The film was one of which Graham himself particularly approved, and that makes even more surprising the fact that there is no readily available copy. Peter Duffell, the film's director, and I have spent four months trying to locate one, and although we seem to have succeeded, I am told that there is some question mark about the quality. However, I begin to believe that this may be a rare chance to view it. That observation is intended both to whet appetites and to condition you to patience should the splices break! Speakers on the making of the film and the involvement of Greene will be Peter Duffell himself and Quentin Falk. Professor Patrick Salmon of Newcastle will consider Greene's Swedish enthusiasms. The book is set in Sweden, although the film is located in Weimar, Germany. Neil Sinyard, whose closing talk last year is remembered with enormous pleasure, will share his personal interests in the novel.

The Festival concludes on the Sunday (30th) with several events leading up to lunch in Old Hall which was a holiday play-place for the young Graham Greene. I am very pleased that Mr Rick Gekowski, a rare-book authority, will talk that morning on collecting Greene's books. It will not have escaped attention that early editions command high prices and we are assured of an amusing and original angle from our speaker.

We are very fortunate to have as venues the fine, newly refurbished Clock Room of the Town Hall, the School halls, and the Kodak cinema. These represent other aspects of the generous goodwill that exists. There is all the promise of entertaining and authoritative speakers, and of the renewal of friendships that have been made over the previous years. It now needs but your support to make the Fourth Festival memorable.

David Pearce

Festival Director

REVIEWS

The Brighton Rock Picture Book

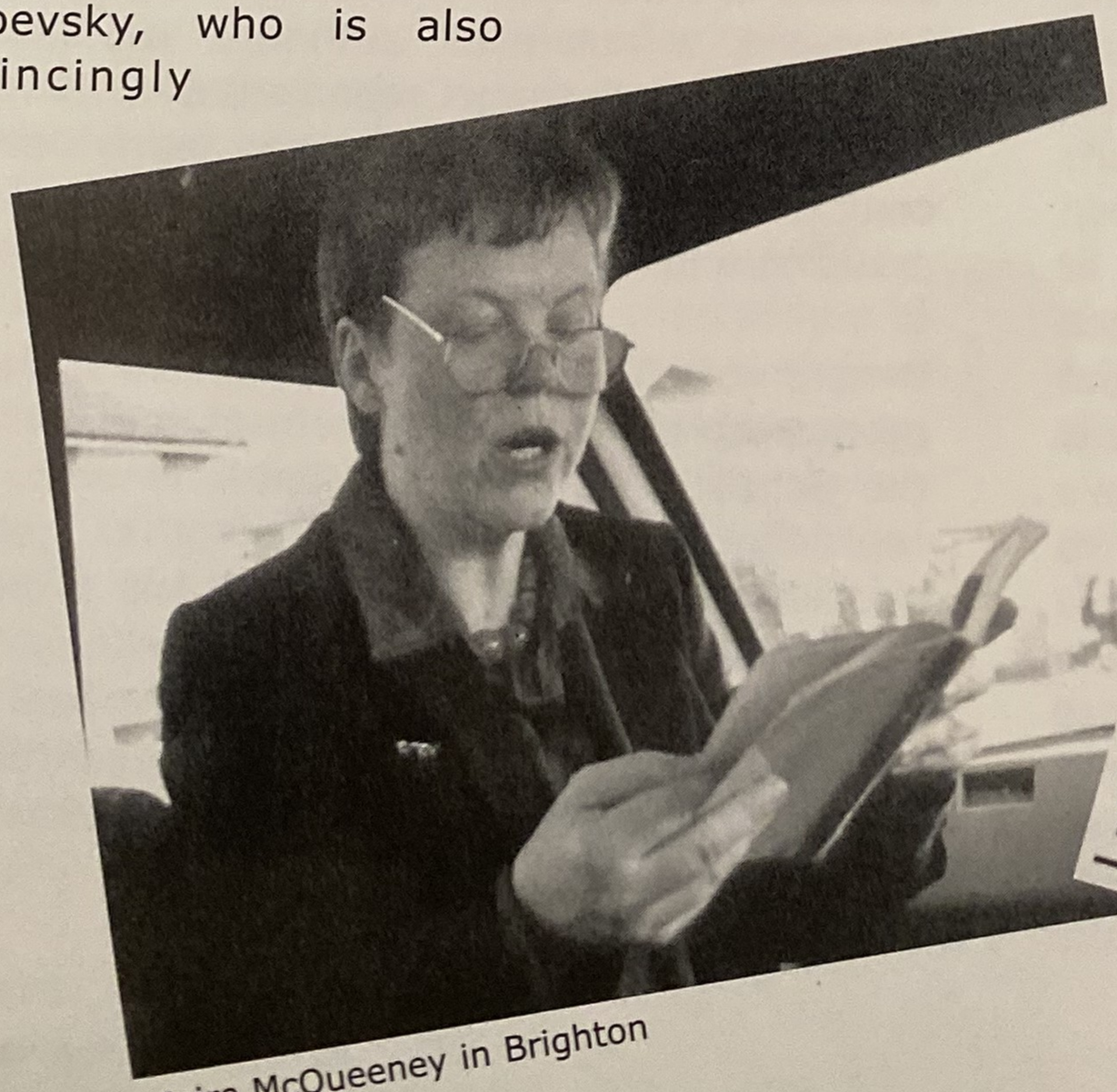
By Maire McQueeney
(Dining Table Press £7.99)

So You Wanna Be A Director

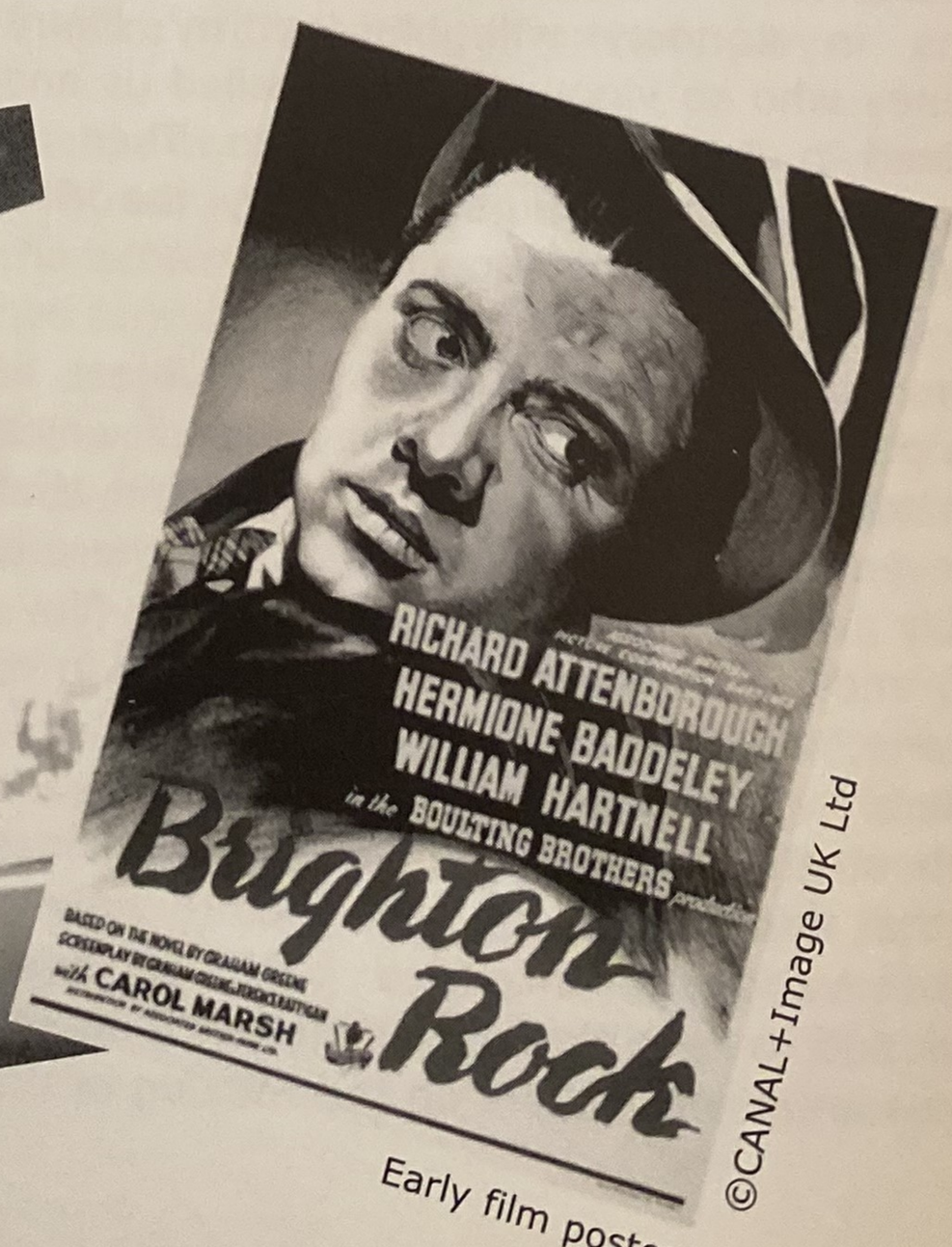
By Ken Annakin
(Tomahawk Press £16.99)

For those of us who have had the pleasure of hearing Maire McQueeney's talk on Graham Greene's Brighton, her book on the making of the film of *Brighton Rock* will be self-recommending. It is worth buying for the illustrations alone, which go way beyond the usual publicity stills to include frame reproductions and sometimes revelatory captions. (Fascinating to read, for example, that the Big Band arrangement in the scene at the pier between Pinkie and Rose was the first film music assignment of John Addison, who was later to become a proficient film composer and win an Oscar for *Tom Jones*). However the commentary is also pleasingly quirky, with lots of unusual detail about both novel and film. Although it makes no attempt to be an academic text, it establishes the artistic contexts most skilfully. Modest and to the point, the text is also deceptively resonant, particularly in its literary allusions. It demonstrates that there is more of the spirit of T.S. Eliot in the pages of the novel than one might have suspected: similarly, a casual reference to *The Winslow Boy* compels one to consider anew the significance of Terence Rattigan's credit on the screenplay. Even a passing reference to the writer Maurice Baring (in the context of the novel's water and Catholic imagery) caught my eye, as I remember Baring as a brilliant critic of Dostoevsky, who is also convincingly cited as an influence on Greene's depiction of the tormented criminal mind. The only flaw is a suggestion of haste at either the proof reading or copy editing stage, which has led to some misprints slipping through. Mainly this densely informative volume offers a refreshing and offbeat perspective on familiar terrain.

A question for Greene aficionados: leaving aside Carol Reed, which director has made the best film version of a Greene work? My instinctive answer would be Ken Annakin, for his 1957 adaptation of *Across the Bridge* starring Rod Steiger, a rarely seen film but one which is a favourite of Steiger's, is regarded as a masterpiece by Mike Leigh, and apparently figures on the personal Top Ten list of no less a cult icon than Quentin Tarantino. It bears out Greene's own supposition that the best adaptations are often based on short stories rather than novels, because these allow for imaginative expansion of the original rather than contraction. What is remarkable about Guy Elmes's adaptation of *Across the Bridge* (which benefited from the consultation and endorsement of Greene's great friend, John Stafford) is that his enlargement seems so true to the spirit of Greene's work, with its complicated and convoluted plotting, the mishmash of languages, the sensitivity to place, the theme of crossing borders. In some ways, the film seems closer to the atmosphere of Greene's *The Power and the Glory* - the short story was written around the same time - than any film version yet made of that novel. Steiger's towering performance of a tormented and reviled outsider, whom everyone tries to trap, and who finally betrays himself through a perverse act of love, suggests he could really have got inside the soul of the whisky priest.



Maire McQueeney in Brighton



Early film poster

©CANAL+Image UK Ltd

It is in this short story that Greene talks of 'our baseless optimism that is so much more appalling than our despair' (which is essentially the substance of his indictment of Ida in *Brighton Rock*). Given his vituperative comments on other film versions of his work, Greene was surprisingly silent about Annakin's extraordinary achievement - a work like no other British film of the time and even anticipatory of Orson Welles's *noir* masterpiece *Touch of Evil* a year later. I wonder if he ever saw it?

The eighty-six-year old Annakin has just published his autobiography. Now of an age venerable enough not to worry about pulling his punches, he has composed a saucy, sprightly, richly entertaining reminiscence of his life as a British and Hollywood film-maker. The book is of some considerable interest to Greene enthusiasts and scholars, not only for what it says of *Across the Bridge*, but also for his very funny account of working with Greene on the 1956 screen version of *Loser Takes All*. As he often did, Greene had wanted Trevor Howard to play his hero, and Orson Welles to play the Korda-like tycoon. Annakin agreed, and also wanted Audrey Hepburn for the female lead. In the event, they had to make do with Rosanno Brazzi, Robert Morley and Glynis Johns. Greene's screenplay contrives some nice aphorisms for Morley, such as his comment on wives: 'Life can be very peaceful without them'. However, he is unwise enough to put into Brazzi's mouth a sentiment shared by many of the film's audience: 'I've had enough of this nonsense'. I have always thought this was one of Greene's most underdeveloped stories, and a 1990 film remake, directed by James Scott, who had made a superb short film of *A Shocking Accident*, fared no better. Annakin thought the failure of the film was due to 'wrong casting' and the novel's topsy-turvy moral standpoints, which he felt puzzled and alienated audiences.

Yet, as the old maxim has it, a good director is one who learns as much from his failures as his successes, and it is clear Annakin learned a lot from Greene. He confesses to being a little intimidated by him - 'You could never make a loose statement or observation without his picking it up and putting you through the hoop if your thought was lazy, untidy or ill-informed' - and often feeling a little like a grammar-school boy being grilled by a university don. But he offers fascinating first-hand observations of Greene's working methods and his powers of observation, quoting Greene as making a distinction between the way the backgrounds of his novels come from personal experience but the characters come from his creative imagination (unlike Somerset Maugham, he adds). It is a compelling cameo in an enthralling memoir.

Interestingly, Annakin was later to encounter Alexander Korda, whom Greene had satirised in the story. Korda bore no malice and indeed offered his own view of why Greene is so difficult to adapt for the screen. 'If you were seeking a big commercial success,' Korda told Annakin, 'it would never come with a Graham Greene satire. He's almost a genius, but sometimes too clever-clever for the average cinema audience'. Discuss. It might sound a bit glib, but, come to think of it, is it not a shrewd prediction of the fate that would later befall such promising projects as Carol Reed's *Our Man in Havana*, George Cukor's *Travels With My Aunt...?*

Neil Sinyard

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

When I lived in London during the 1960s I became friends with a family who were avid readers. So much so, that they banned television as their family were growing up. As a result, conversation in the home was always lively. The mother of the family was a particular fan of Graham Greene. She was a convert to Catholicism and a fierce Defender of the Faith. It would be glib to say that she was an 'intellectual Catholic' - but at the time, Greene's work provided much fodder for what used to be called 'thinking Catholics'.

I should also say that around that time Greene seemed attracted to evil, trying perhaps to understand it. His character of Pinkie in *Brighton Rock* seemed Evil incarnate; nothing that I ever came across later as a court reporter told me more about the fragility of human nature to go this way or that, than did Pinkie in *Brighton Rock*. Greene also wrote extensively of repression in what we now call the Third World. He wrote - it seemed to me - of people lost to human love because of their attachment to a political ideal or the criminal life. So you can imagine the rich to-and-fro discussions which Greene provoked in that household. On one such occasion, she rooted out a copy of his first novel, *The Man Within*, and lent it to me.

It happened that a few weeks later, Greene himself was giving a rare public appearance. He was uncomfortable in that long gap that seems to stretch in response to 'any questions' from the public. I asked what Greene took to be a sensible question. Had he, in his own life played Russian Roulette, as in that short story of the depressed boy who takes his brother's service revolver and puts one round in the chamber? He said he had. Afterwards, because I knew the publisher of his books through my work on a newspaper, I was invited to meet Greene in - yes - the Green Room of the theatre. I asked if he might sign the copy of his first novel, which of course I just happened to bring along.

A week or so later, I was back for dinner in my friend's home. What did I think of his first novel, she asked. All the while the returned book lay, unopened, on her mantelpiece where I had left it. She was avid to hear of his talk, the questions asked. She would like to have gone, but, well with a young family... I told her 'open the book on the mantelpiece. She didn't get it at first, puzzled, as if I had left a pound note inside to pay for my dinner. When she saw the name on the fly-leaf, her pleasure was such that even now, all those years on, well...

Kevin O'Connor, Dublin

with her own high standard. So it was that for hours two guilty people faced each other daily. We must have talked about many things, but I can remember none of our conversation. I can only recall the long moments of frozen immobility before the question mark of her poised and hesitant brush.

Only when it was all over did we have a happy relaxation one afternoon visiting with Nicolas Hill the Matisse chapel at Vence.

Graham Greene

A Query

The Secretary received the following:-
'I am writing from the US, wanting to know about a book, 110 Airports, which William Cash refers to twice in his new biography. I've not heard of this book and I'm wondering how difficult it is to find (I've had no luck so far here in The States)? Who published it and was it under another title here?'
T.A.W.

Ken Sherwood replied that he thought the reference was a lovers' joke between Greene and Catherine Walston. That may well be so, but does anyone know? What are your views?

MISCELLANY

Greene & Caroline Hill

Dr Neil Brennan, New York is compiling a vast bibliography and asked the Trust to assist with a piece written in connection with Greene sitting for a watercolour protrait by Caroline Hill. The piece appears in a catalogue from 1985; the protrait was then in The Crescent Art Gallery, Scarborough. Greene wrote:-

I owe it to my friend, Tom Laughton, that I once had the frightening pleasure of sitting for a watercolour portrait (an excellent one as it turned out) by Caroline Hill. I hadn't realised how very different sitting for a watercolour would prove to be from sitting for an oil. There is no way you can paint over a watercolour to correct an error - you have to start the portrait all over again, and Caroline Hill was a perfectionist.

Long before twenty sittings were finished I began to develop a strong sense of guilt. I felt I was occupying far too much of Caroline Hill's valuable time. She on her side, I think, had a similar feeling of guilt because she wouldn't compromise

IN THE PRESS

The Editor cannot keep up with the entire International Press, so please help by sending any press cuttings you would like to see reported. An English précis in case of the more exotic languages would be appreciated.

Financial Times February 2001

Ethan Casey, an American journalist, whom some of you will remember from the Festival 2000, interviewed Norman Sherry for the 'Breakfast with the FT' column. The third volume of *The Life of Graham Greene* is due out in early 2002 and Norman Sherry believes it will be the best of the three. It includes a chapter 'Sometimes Seraphic, Sometimes Darkly Damaged' which will be a psychological portrait of the author as his biographer knew him. Norman Sherry mentions in the interview his pleasure at having been a speaker at last year's Festival.

Film

Earlier this year several papers wrote about the new Australian film version being made of *The*

Quiet American. The director is Phillip Noyce; Sir Michael Caine stars as the war correspondent, Fowler, and Brendan Fraser is Pyle. Phuong is played by a Vietnamese newcomer to the screen, Hai Yen. The scriptwriter, Christopher Hampton, who knew Graham Greene, believes he would have been happier with this than the 1950s version.

TV

The BBC celebrated the tenth anniversary of Graham Greene's death with an evening dedicated to the author, including a new documentary *The Greene Factor*.

New Book

Unfortunately we were unable to obtain a review copy of *Travels Without My Aunt* by Julia Llewellyn Smith, but as she will be speaking at this year's Festival, readers will be able to compare notes with the generally favourable reviews that appeared in several papers and periodicals.

***The Times* Archive**

Early in his career, Graham Greene was a journalist and worked as a home sub-editor for *The Times* 75 years ago. His obituary appeared in the paper on 4 April 1991 and 10 years later *The Times* made much of its Graham Greene archive available on the internet. Included is the handwritten letter of resignation of 7 October 1929. Heineman had offered Greene £650 a year for two years in advance and he made the commitment to full-time novel writing on that basis.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

The above carried on 20 June 2001 an article by the German critic and writer Paul Ingendaay about Graham Greene and Berkhamsted. From the English language edition we note that Ingendaay says at first that Greene has gone out of fashion, but he visited Berkhamsted and the school, where he spoke to David Pearce, the Festival Director. The article examines Greene's background and discusses some of his books; Ingendaay comes to the surprising conclusion that *Monsignor Quixote* is the best.

***The Observer* 8 July 2001**

An article by Vanessa Thorpe tells of documents uncovered in Rome, which indicate the alarm felt by the Vatican on publication of *The Power and the Glory* in 1940. The book in fact came close to being banned when the Holy Office considered the book 'dangerous'. The future Pope Paul VI was the only highly placed cleric who spoke in Greene's defence. Cardinal Griffin of Westminster called in Graham Greene and asked him not to allow reprints. A letter from the author to the Holy Office explains his aim of contrasting the power of the sacraments and the Church with the merely temporal power of the State.

Suggested links:
www.observer.co.uk/uk_news
http://members.tripod.com/~greeneland.

THE TRUST

ABOUT THE ORIGINS

The Trust owes its existence to the dedication of the founding trustees whose interest in literature generally and Berkhamsted's most famous son in particular gave the impetus to the Birthplace Trust.
Here the Trust Secretary, Ken Sherwood, tells of his meeting with Graham Greene

Greene Brothers
Give School Heads a Tanning

I first met Graham Greene in 1974. He and his younger brother, Hugh, had agreed to talk to members of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association about their schooldays. There was one stipulation - they would give only 10 days' notice of their visit!

In mid-August a letter arrived suggesting an evening at the end of the month. In the short time available the Kings' Hall (now demolished) was booked and four posters prepared. Those four posters were sufficient to draw a full house for what was reckoned to be one of the most memorable meetings in Berkhamsted that year. Even Peterborough in *The Daily Telegraph* mentioned the forthcoming event. As the Association's Chairman, I fortunately remembered that Graham Greene disliked being filmed and turned down a request from the BBC to televise the evening. The Headmaster of Berkhamsted School, John Spencer, was the guest of honour. I introduced Graham and Hugh and then withdrew to one side of the hall to join my family.

The brothers exchanged a few pleasantries as they recalled events of fifty to sixty years back. The six years' difference in their ages meant that they had relatively few memories in common. The evening seemed to be well set for a couple of hours of pleasant reminiscences that would be interesting, but nothing much more. They then invited the audience to participate. Little did

anybody anticipate what was going to happen next.

An elderly lady got up. 'Mr Greene, you said my father was a sadist!' Graham replied 'Indeed, I did not!'. The argument grew fiercer. Groans came from the Greenes. As Chairman, I wondered whether I should intervene. Suddenly I realised, as did the audience, that our elderly friends had resumed their childhood roles and were arguing as they may well have done in real life. As if in a time machine, life in Berkhamsted School some sixty years earlier was being re-enacted by the original participants before our very eyes! The argument went on for some twenty minutes. It turned out that the lady in question, a Mrs Wales, had travelled from Eastbourne on the strength of the paragraph in *The Daily Telegraph*. She was the daughter of one of the Junior School housemasters, a Dr. Simpson. He had been appointed by Dr Fry, Charles Greene's predecessor as headmaster. Graham had indeed branded Dr. Fry as a sadist. Feminine logic had led Mrs Wales to the conclusion that the appointment of her father by an alleged sadist was the equivalent of calling her father a sadist.



Graham Greene is fourth from left in the front row, sitting in front of his father.

Mrs Wales admitted that when her father was chastising one of the boys, she stood outside his study so she could tell the other boys whether or not the boy cried. There was laughter when she admitted being birched herself when caught listening at her father's door. After such an outburst, the rest of the evening was comparatively dull!

Ken Sherwood

Footnote: The heading to this piece is taken from *The Berkhamsted Gazette* of 6 September 1974 which featured the meeting in its lead article. Norman Sherry also refers to the occasion in his Greene biography.

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

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

SPRING EVENT

2001 Wednesday 4 April - ***May I Suggest***
A dramatic presentation of some of Graham Greene's letters to the Press (originally presented at the 1998 Festival)

FUTURE FESTIVALS
2001 Thursday 27 - Sunday 30 September

2002 Thursday 26 - Sunday 29 September

2003 Thursday 2 - Sunday 5 October

2004 Thursday 30 - Sunday 3 October

WEB SITE
Do not forget to visit the web site of the Trust which is on: **www.grahamgreenebt.org**

e-mail address of the Trust Secretary
secretary@grahamgreene.org

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