A Sort of Newsletter

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GRAHAM GREENE BIRTHPLACE TRUST

Autumn 2008

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Website

Do not forget to visit the website of the Trust which is on www.grahamgreenebt.org

Editorial

Thank you to all the people who bought raffle tickets. The raffle was a success and we especially want to thank the generous donors: The Folio Society; Little Brown; Optimum Releasing; Signal Books; Anne Vickers and Vintage Books.

Dermot Gilvary was this year the real driving force and his fresh approach and hard work were gratefully recognised by all. He was kind enough to acknowledge the support he gets from others – including Trustees, those who man the stalls, stewards who are at the doors to check tickets, some that pour coffee or wine; we appreciate and thank them all. I am especially grateful to those who volunteer (although they may argue with that word) to report the talks.

Finally we are all grateful to our sponsors, Greene King, the brewers, and The Tablet publication; the latter also generously make copies available free to Festival goers. The generous help and donations made this surperb Festival possible.

Yan Christensen

Newslettereditor@grahamgreenebt.org

Your comments and letters are always welcome.

There are 10^{11} stars in the galaxy. That used to be a huge number. But it's only a hundred billion. It's less than the national deficit! We used to call them astronomical numbers. Now we should call them economical numbers.

Richard Feynman, physicist

REVIEWS

Reporters in alphabetical order: Yan Christensen, Hope Gilbert, Susan Johnson, Donna Osthaus, John Partridge, Ros Partridge, Jenny Sherwood, Hazel Ward.

BRIGHTON ROCK, Film
Introduced by Dr Charles Drazin

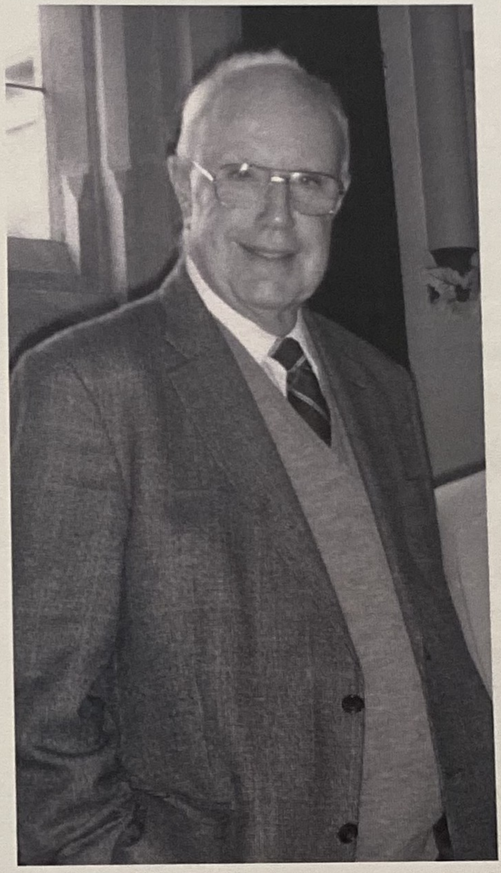
Dr Charles Drazin observed that *Brighton Rock* was at an intermediate stage in Greene's involvement with the cinema. Initially he was an experienced film critic. With *Brighton Rock*, he worked with the more experienced Terence Rattigan on the screenplay and with John Boulting as director. The third stage was reached with his partnership with Carol Reed in *The Third Man*. The film is also notable for the emergence of the young Richard Attenborough as a leading actor. Greene initially disliked the performance of Hermione Baddeley but was later won round. Dr Drazin also remarked how Greene named his leading characters with colours - Pinkie Brown and Rose.

Much of the film was shot on location in Brighton but most was shot in the studio. The seediness of Pinkie's and Drewitt's houses is admirably caught. It is contrasted with the grandeur of the Cosmopolitan Hotel. This is a dark film. Pinkie is the young gang leader who slashes and kills apparently without remorse. He is a Catholic who has lost his belief in Heaven but retains it in Hell. Ida, the vulgar and easy but good-hearted music hall actress, believes that justice must be done to the killer of Hale. Good/evil is contrasted with right/wrong. Rose, the innocent Catholic girl from the same poor background as Pinkie, decides that she would rather die in mortal sin with him than live without him. She is saved by Ida when Pinkie tries to persuade her to commit suicide. Pinkie, when cornered, falls from the Pier and drowns.

The final scene of the film differs - apparently with Greene's approval - from the book. In the film, when Rose plays the record which Pinkie made for her in which he says that he hated her, the record sticks and repeats the word "love". In the last paragraph of the book, Rose is walking home to seek comfort by playing the (undamaged) record.

Original Innocence: Greene's Children- The Reading of the Nature of the Child
Talk by Professor Peter Hollindale

In *The Quiet American* Fowler says, 'Find me an uncomplicated child'. All Greene's writings seem to suggest that, almost from birth, children are extraordinarily complex, whereas we adults get simpler as we get older.



Peter Hollindale

Professor Peter Hollindale got the main part of the Festival off to a most engrossing start, when he explored this complexity and enabled his audience to see Greene's children, many of whom they already know well, afresh.

But innocence can be damaged. He illustrated this mainly from Greene's boys, as the boundary between girl and woman is more blurred. However he did describe two of these 'girl-women', differently deprived, who appear in *The Power and the Glory* : The Whisky Priest observes his own seven year old illegitimate daughter, Brigitte, 'sharpened by hunger' and is appalled by her maturity. Coral Fellowes suffers through having been forced into premature maturity by having to take responsibility for her own parents. One boy is an exception; Pinkie, deprived by an unspeakable childhood, could be described as 'boy-man'.

Greene's boys remain children for longer, but can be damaged by being deprived of their innocence. In the short story, *Under the Garden*, William, aged seven, whose rationalist parents discourage all but the most utilitarian pursuits, discovers a new dream world beneath the garden pond. At thirteen he records his memories of that already receding world. Many years later, after the death of his dominating mother, he is compelled to revisit his childhood home, half convinced of the reality of an imaginary world in which he was not allowed to indulge

The dark short story, *The Destructors*, is an example of the boy, Trevor who, starved of affection although not material things, dominates a street gang, with psychotic leadership. Through interest in his architect father's work he has the knowledge and control of his unruly workforce to destroy a house effectively and without detection. This is not done 'for a laugh', it is a cynical and joyless exercise, yet the child in Trevor breaks through when the early return of the owner prompts the response, 'It isn't fair'.

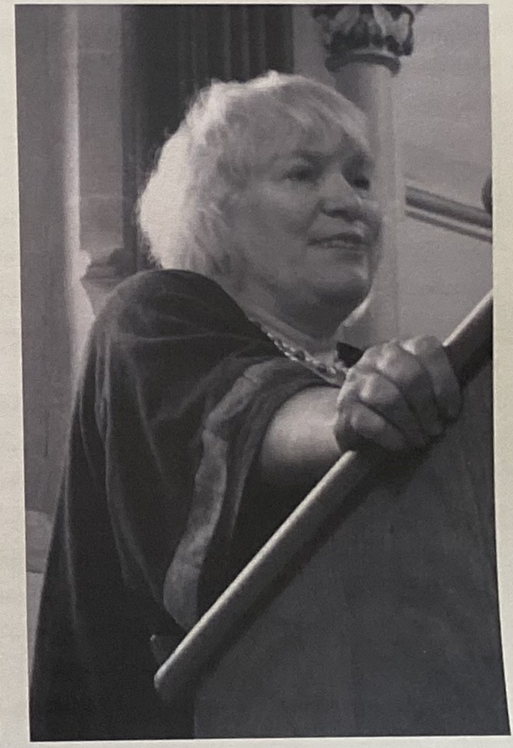
Philip, seven year old central character of *The Basement Room*, becomes an unwitting witness to the butler's affair and finds himself obliged to lie on his hero's behalf. He witnesses all the incomprehensible horrors of fear, lies, sex, violence and finally death. 'Life fell on him with savagery'. Innocence was snatched from him. Sometimes the passage of time can take away what was innocent. In *The Innocent*, a man returns to the town in which he grew up, for a weekend with a casual female acquaintance. Memories flood back but the pure expression of boyhood love which he remembers having made for a little girl is revealed as a crudely shocking drawing, still left where he had concealed it thirty years before. Thus the innocence of the child is destroyed by the perception of the man.

Professor Hollindale gave a talk which invited the audience to enjoy again, sometimes painfully, the children who play so great a part in Greene's writing. He demonstrated with clarity the importance of allowing a child to develop in loving but not over censorious surroundings and how delicate a thing is innocence: how easily it can be destroyed, by neglect, hardship or psychological, spiritual or emotional deprivation. All lessons we profess to have learned in this sociologically aware age, but which can most effectively be brought home to us by the writing of a great novelist; especially when interpreted by such a compelling lecture.

Sometimes I think God was not entirely serious when he gave man the sexual instinct...Nor when he invented moral theology

Brighton Rock and the Short Stories
Talk by Libby Purves

We are all used to hearing Libby Purves on the radio or reading her books and articles so it was a delightful change to see her in person at this year's festival. If we expected to be amused by her wit and informed by her erudition we were not disappointed. She admitted that the invitation to speak had forced her to return to the works of Graham Greene, that she had first read as a teenager, and confessed that whilst in the Lower Sixth *The Destructors* had prompted her to organise an event in her convent school that must have surprised the good nuns! A cradle Catholic, she was educated at convents around the world where she encountered a wide interpretation of Catholic teaching from an obsession with the evils of spiritual pride and the consequences of mortal sin to the more enlightened views of the Sacred Heart nuns in Kent. It is fashionable for Catholic female novelists today to write about the damage they suffered in their convent schools; refreshingly Libby Purves can recall her experiences with amused affection. She referred to the great influence the contemporary Church had on the Medieval literature that she read whilst at Oxford, women's inferiority and the sinfulness of sex being a common theme and Hell an awesome reality to those who strayed. In contrast Greene was a convert to Catholicism which she described as a mixed blessing for the Church! Whilst some have been attracted to the Faith as a result of reading his Catholic novels others have found the views unappealing and, in a secular age, incomprehensible. The Catholic Church's emphasis upon purity and virginity certainly rubbed off on *Brighton Rock's* central character, Pinkie, who displayed a warped and unhealthy attitude towards sex and an aversion to, and distrust of, all women. Reflecting on his character she saw his brutal destructive behaviour as flowing from his absorption of the belief that if Catholics are called to a higher destiny their transgressions must lead to a deeper hell. This behaviour, she maintains, is reflected down the generations by such figures as



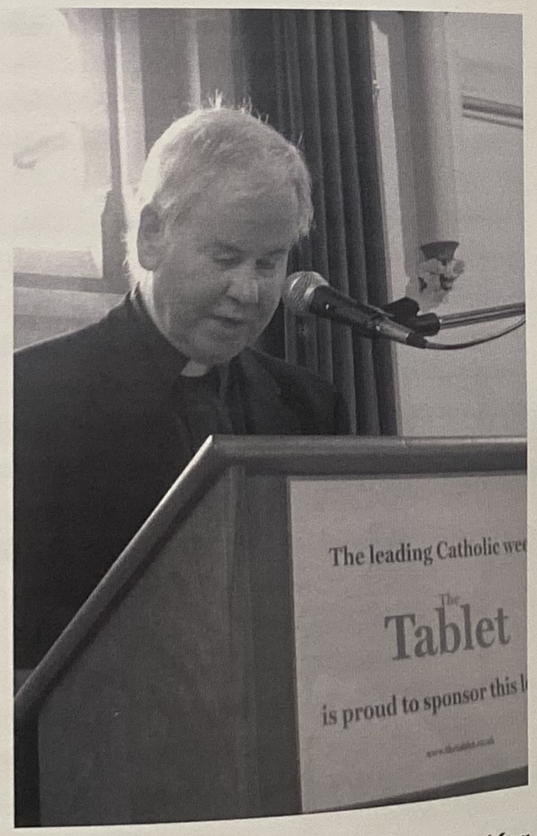
Libby Purves

Sid Vicious, Johnny Rotten and the knife-wielding youths of today. More surprising was her opinion that Pinkie's horror of his world is mirrored in the destructive, murderous actions of modern Islamists with their denial of women's rights and their desire to destroy what they regard as corrupt western civilization. In the short story *The Destructors* Greene's Trevor is another young gang leader, bent upon violence, who came, like Pinkie, from a troubled background. His plan to dismantle a fine old house was, curiously enough, an act both destructive and creative. The feral gang of children who carried out his plans were transformed into an orderly team under his direction. Like Pinkie, Trevor sought revenge upon his world through the destruction of beauty and the corruption of innocence. Libby Purves illustrated her talk further by reading extracts from other short stories; *The Blue Film, Proof Positive* and *May we Borrow Your Husband* that provided evidence of what she described as the yuk factor in Greene's treatment of women, sex and death as well as his hatred of the carnal. Nevertheless, she concluded that without this dysfunction we would have been denied his finest works.

Greene and The Catholic Revival in English Literature 1845-1961
Talk by Fr Ian Ker

Ian Ker's talk bore the title of his book of 2003 where other authors are also discussed. The chapter on Graham Greene was the one treated here.

Greene's reaction to his experiences at school meant that he came to believe in Hell quite early although he was less sure of Heaven. When he started to take an interest in Catholicism its stark belief in Hell appealed to him and he became intellectually convinced, although his emotional belief came later, after his travels in Mexico. At that time – the Mexican authorities' persecution of the Church, and the Spanish Civil War – Catholicism had a



Ian Ker

high profile and Greene felt the time was right to include Catholic characters into his novels, something he did to great effect, particularly of course in *The Power and the Glory*. Mortal sin is absolutely central to *Brighton Rock* where Pinkie comments that 'Romans' have a greater capacity for evil than others. The idea of good and evil is here contrasted with that of right and wrong.

Greene said that he enjoyed reading theology, but the speaker pointed out that some of his utterances on the subject are contradictory: in later interviews he stated that he did not believe in Hell despite available quotations from his earlier works. He also commented that he did not believe that adultery was a mortal sin unless it was committed for the specific purpose of defying God. There could be many reasons for adultery, but that must surely be one of the rarer ones.

Greene may have become a 'wishy-washy' Catholic, but that will not deter us from enjoying his novels including the 'spiritual thrillers'. For a fuller discussion of the subject do read Ian Ker's book.

GRAHAM GREENE'S EVOLUTIONARY THEOLOGY
Talk by Dr. Darren Middleton

Dr Middleton started his interesting talk with the blow to Traditional Christianity by Darwin's theory of evolution and the attempts by some Christians to construct new evolutionary theologies. This started with Newman but found its more modern expression in the process theology of guided evolution of Teilhard de Chardin. He rejected the traditional Absolute Unchanging God capable of effecting change in the world in favour of a God as part of the evolutionary process. Dr Middleton then described how this theory is picked up in two of Graham Greene's novels in *A Burnt Out Case* and *The Honorary Consul*.



Darren Middleton

In *A Burnt Out Case*, there is a discussion on the nature of God between Querry and Dr Colin. Initially Dr Colin expresses a belief in evolution and progress. When Querry is unimpressed, Dr Colin then adds that he has 'a very small hope' that Christ is part of the evolutionary process. In *The Honorary Consul*, Father Rivas rejects traditional seminary teaching because it did not touch on 'the horror' e.g. pain and sickness in the slums. It was easier to believe in an evil God. He believed that God combined good and evil. God made us in his own image. Our evil is His evil. God fuses good and evil in one divine character. Every evil act of ours strengthens His night side; every good one strengthens His day side. Evolution will end one day with goodness like Christ's. Chardin describes this as the Omega Point.

In A Sort of Life Greene writes '... in January 1926 I became aware ... of something we call God though now I dislike the word ... and prefer Chardin's Omega Point'.

Many a long dispute among divines may be thus abridged: It is so. It is not so. It is so. It is not so.

Benjamin Franklin

Films – *This Gun for Hire* and *The Destructors*
Introduced by Dr Charles Drazin

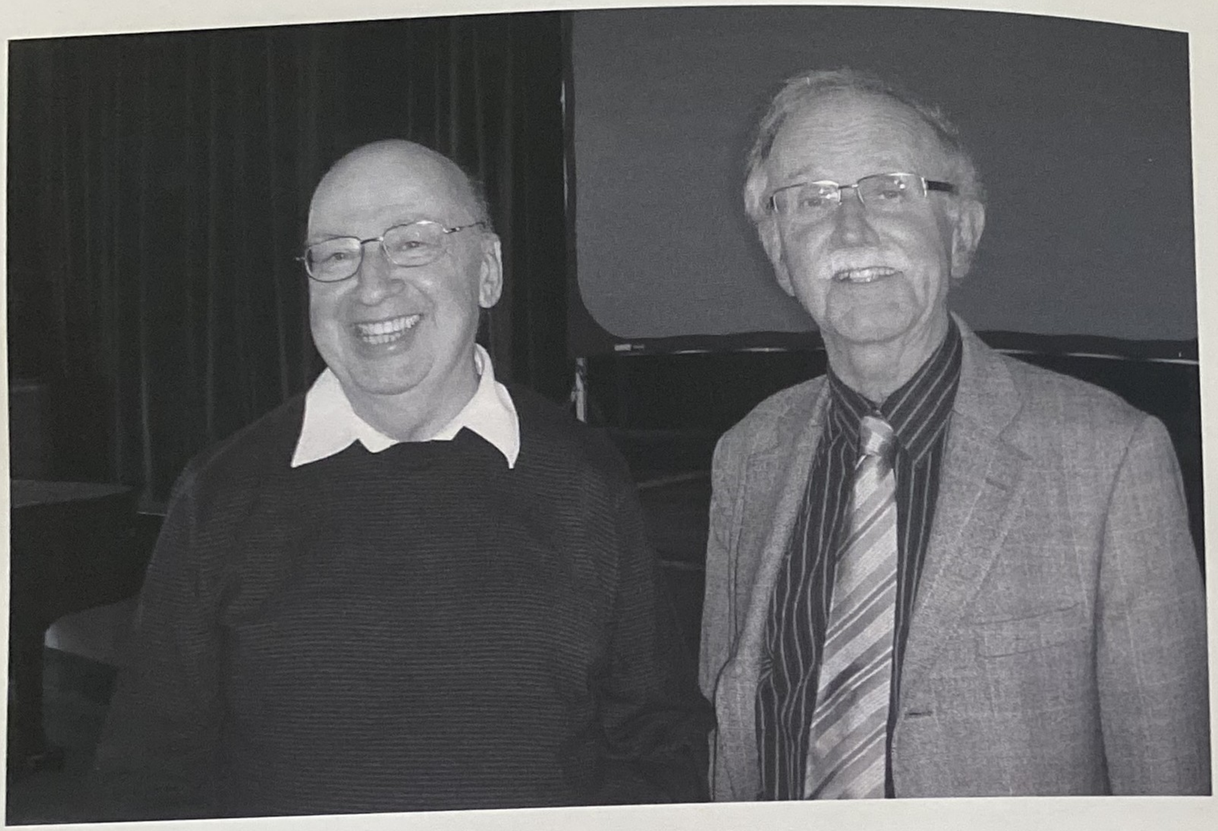
Rather surprisingly Dr Drazin detected a link between these two very different films *The Destructors*, one of the *Shades of Greene* series made for television in the 1970s, and *This Gun For Hire*, a Paramount production made in 1942 based on the Greene novel *A Gun For Sale*. Whilst the first of these focused on the wrecking of a fine old house by a gang of children in bomb-damaged London, the second was based only loosely upon Greene's novel gutted by Paramount, leaving only the shell of the original novel. *The Destructors* is a hugely enjoyable film, directed by Michael Apted with some impressive acting from a young cast. It is perhaps a pity that the house was not the fine Wren building Greene wrote about but the photography realistically conveyed the atmosphere of the drab post-war years in London. *This Gun For Hire* changed the face of American cinema in the '40s and became the source material for *film noir*. Greene had sold the film rights to Paramount in 1936 and did not like the production that was released just as America entered the Second World War. The setting moved from Nottingham to Los Angeles and the political scene from arms dealing in contemporary Europe to fifth columnists supplying poison gas to the Japanese in post Pearl Harbour America. Whilst the popular Veronica Lake was chosen as the box office draw to play the part of Ellen Graham (Anne Crowder in the novel) it was Alan Ladd whose film career was launched by his fine performance as the crippled Raven. Would his star quality have been affected had he been shown with a hare-lip rather than a deformed hand? *This Gun For Hire* was a prequel to *Brighton Rock*, written two years later, and the similarities between Pinkie and Raven are marked; both had damaged childhoods, both were violent gangsters and cold-blooded killers driven by a hatred of their world. There is even a similarity between Rose and Anne Crowther (Ellen Graham in the film). Another outstanding performance was Laird Cregar as Johnson, aka Gates (Cholmondely in the book). These were two fine films from which we emerged feeling that we had indeed visited Greeneland.

The Riddles of Graham Greene
Talk by Professor François Gallix

Professor Gallix decided to change the title of his talk – and there may indeed be too many GG riddles to cover in one Festival – and he talked about some of the riddles of *Brighton Rock*. As a researcher and scholar he regretted that the original manuscript is missing, but he had consulted the archives in Austin, Texas and could tell us that the film script is extant. *Brighton Rock* and *The Power and the Glory* were the books that truly made Greene's reputation, and the former in particular contained several mysteries. Greene considered that a writer owes it to his readers to trail clouds of smoke and that leaves a lot of open questions, e.g. is this a detective story? GG thought the first 50 pages were, but not the rest because Pinkie 'took over the story'. The title itself is memorable and one eventually realises that it refers to the murder weapon; it is however a title the flavour of which it is almost impossible to translate and we were given some examples of what various translators had made of it. *A Gun for Sale* is in a sense the prequel, and Raven is what Pinkie might have become.

Greene was full of riddles, masks and mysteries as his biographers would undoubtedly agree. His connection with the Secret Service, including his relationship with Kim Philby, illustrates this. Despite his fame he was a very private man, and disliked being filmed for interviews, although he did appear anonymously in a feature film.

Neither critics nor readers agree on their favourites or Greene's 'best book', but surely this interesting talk about Graham Greene and *Brighton Rock* will have sent many back to their book shelves to re-read this one.



Neil Sinyard and François Gallix

Feuds, Frauds, and the Great Sausage Scandal: *Some reflections on the strange tortured friendship of Graham Greene and Noel Coward*
Talk by Professor Neil Sinyard

Neil Sinyard introduced his talk by saying that even if we found it boring the title would at least intrigue us. There was of course no question of being bored! The talk was illustrated by a brief extract from the film *Our Man in Havana* when Hawthorne (Noel Coward) recruits Wormold (Alec Guinness) in the Gents. The significance of this clip, with its various undertones, 'You're an Englishman, aren't you?' and why Neil chose it to illustrate the 'tortured friendship' between Greene and Coward becomes clear as the argument develops.

The 'tortured friendship' began in the early days of Greene's work as a film critic. Coward was not the only victim of Greene's vitriolic criticism. There was the well-known reference to Shirley Temple, which was to land Greene in trouble. Greene's hostility appeared almost irrational; he seems to have gone out of his way to take shots at Coward, to have, as Norman Sherry had written, an 'almost insane urge to lash out.'
Coward retaliated with his *Ballad of Graham Greene*, referring to Greene's having 'such quantities of spleen', and so making the criticism 'more nakedly personal.' GG was particularly critical of *Blithe Spirit*, calling it 'a weary exhibition of bad taste,' and criticising his 'inability to feel.' The antagonism between the two had arisen without their having met. It is difficult to say how it had arisen or what was its basis. Had Coward's homosexuality something to do with it?

Coward was a 'bitter opponent of appeasement'. He hated Neville Chamberlain. In 1938 he was recruited by a branch of the Civil Service and sent on secret fact-finding missions, yet he was criticised by GG for his 'comfortable patriotism in Australia,' away from direct danger.

In October 1947 Noel Coward was invited to a private showing of *The Fugitive*, adapted from the book by Graham Greene. Coward's comment was 'Mr. Greene has a most unpleasant mind.' In return Coward's *Peace in Our Time* received a hostile review. It was criticised for its 'poor characterisation of the lower echelons of society.'

On 11 January 1949 Graham Greene and Noel Coward met for the first time at Albany. Coward was to comment, 'Actually he was rather nice.' When *The Third Man* was being cast David Selznick wanted Noel Coward to be Harry Lime. Greene himself wanted Orson Welles to play the part. There is no doubt that meeting one another had thawed relations a bit. Coward wrote 'Graham Greene was very agreeable.' It would be true to say, however, that 'the beastliness was forgiven but not forgotten.'

Noel Coward played Hawthorne in *Our Man in Havana*, a film adaptation which Greene did not like. Nevertheless, Noel Coward certainly felt that working together professionally had helped and that this called for a kind of celebration. '...I fear that you and I got off to a sticky start.' He was later to call Greene 'one of the finest writers in the language we both share'. We do not know what the response was but he did send Coward a signed copy of *Our Man in Havana*.

From this point on it could be said that the two were reconciled up to a point, although criticism of each other's works continued. Both suffered losses at the hand of the financial shark, Thomas Rowe, in the Great Sausage Scandal of 1964, Graham Greene much more so than Noel Coward.

Why was there such friction between Greene and Coward? Their

respective talents were different – as Neil Sinyard put it: 'Coward had a talent to amuse, and Greene a talent to abuse'.

And, yes, we did get the explanation for the Great Sausage Scandal – but you had to have been there. ed.

The Quiet American
Talk by Gail Vida Hamburg



Gail Vida Hamburg

Ms Hamburg is a journalist and lecturer and her novel *The Edge of the World* was on sale at the Festival bookstall. The book is, by her own admission, very influenced by *The Quiet American* which she saw as greatly relevant to the present and she commented that few novels shed such light on USA's situation now. In fact Alden Pyle seemed to personify the US. She also had a theory that Pyle was based on a real person, an American who had been in Vietnam at the appropriate time. This talk was probably more political than we are used to at the GG Festival and the speaker clearly felt strongly about her adopted country's foreign policies.

She drew a direct line from the Puritans – chosen by God to settle the new Jerusalem – to present-day America, the melting pot where patriotism is a strong factor already from the first generation of immigrants. The American Dream takes hold and encourages a feeling that what America does is right, together with a determination that the rest of the world should follow its pattern.

Gail Vida Hamburg felt that she shared with Graham Greene his journalistic instincts together with a certain feeling of exile; although in GG's day there was much one could choose not to see that is not possible now with the news coverage we endure, and she mentioned some examples of heart-breaking news we have all heard and seen. Although the draft has now been abolished one can certainly understand the emotions of a mother of sons on the prospect of the involvement of US in more wars.

The speaker quoted from *The Tale of Genji*: 'There must never come a time when people do not know about this'.

My brief career as a novelist
Talk by Chris Mullin MP

Mr Mullin seems to be a jolly man; self-effacing and laid back. He needed to be - he was in the Foreign Office when George Dubya came to power. In his very entertaining talk he defined himself as 'liberal, green, and a democrat' which just about sums up everything George is not.

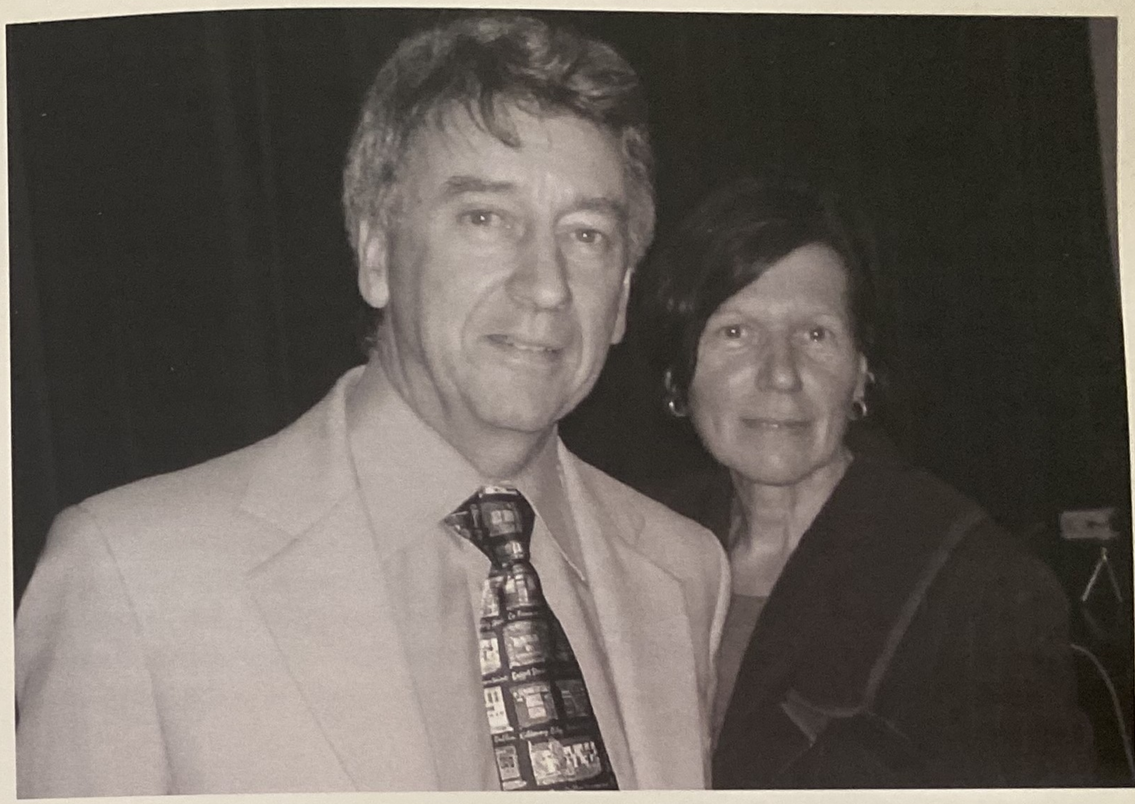
Chris Mullin is a lawyer by education, a campaigning journalist by trade, an author by choice, a politician by conviction and a Catholic by upbringing. He shared a lot of experiences with GG: both were unhappy at school; both sub-editors as young men; both had early literary work rejected; both had a sense of mischief. They shared so much that Chris Mullin always thought they shared the same prejudices – until he found out that GG had, in all probability, voted Conservative in 1945! They had visited the same countries, and produced novels that were extraordinarily prescient. The speaker saw GG, along with John le Carré, as a great influence on his work. He thought his own novels not up to Greene's standards, but that he shared GG's ability to conjure place like a character; and to write concisely, probably as a result of their shared training in journalism. He said he enjoyed the notoriety that denunciation of his novels and articles produced: 'A good denunciation is better than a thousand eulogies'. His first novel *A Very British Coup* in 1982 (about a left-wing Labour Government brought down by a right-wing Establishment conspiracy) was a best-seller whilst/through being criticised by *The Sun* and Sir Ian Gilmour (a minister in the Heath and Thatcher governments).

His second novel, *The Last Man out of Saigon* was an attempt to write a novel about the Vietnamese war as an antidote to all-action novels. As a result it was denounced in the *Daily Mail* and, while an option on the film rights had been purchased, no actor nor financiers dared to make it. His third novel *The Year of the Fire Monkey* (about a 'sleeper' - planted in the administration of Chairman Mao after the Dalai Lama

had been forced to leave Tibet in 1959 - and intended to kill Mao many years later; and the frantic efforts of the then US administration to stop the assassin after China and the US became friends) was less successful. It was not, evidently, condemned by the press!

Chris Mullin considered writers had a longer shelf-life than politicians, unless those politicians were exceptional. He thought his novels and campaigning journalism (for instance, for the Birmingham Six) would outlive his work as MP for Sunderland South and his stint in the Africa Department of the Foreign Office, of which he was particularly proud. He had been an active member of the Labour Party since 1966 and, most ominously for his colleagues, has been keeping a diary since May 1994, when John Smith died. His small comment about Peter Mandelson's third return to the Cabinet ('a very clever man, but briefs behind colleagues' backs and goes gaga in the presence of the rich') might be a taste of publication to come. His friendship over 30 years with Tony Benn indicates the type of diary it might be – mischievous and enthralling by turn. He spoke of writing a sequel to *AVBC*, but his diaries might be an even greater coup for his publishers.

My two fingers on a typewriter have never connected with my brain. My hand on a pen does.



Dermot Gilvary and Brigitte Timmermann

'I never knew the old Vienna before the war, with its Strauss music, its glamour and easy charm: The Vienna Sigmund Freud left behind in 1938, and Graham Greene rediscovered in 1948'
Talk by Dr. Brigitte Timmermann

Dr. Timmermann, using for her title the introduction to *The Third Man*, reminded us that the film was not just shot in Vienna: Vienna is at the very centre of the film, so she chose to approach the film through the social, historical, cultural, and political atmosphere of the city.

Graham Greene wrote the 130 pages of this 'entertainment' in just 2-3 weeks. He and Alexander Korda had made a brief visit to Vienna to consider the city as a location for the film, and Greene returned later with Carol Reed.

It was Sigmund Freud before World War II who had made Vienna an icon of intellectualism and a centre for psychoanalysis. *The Third Man* was also to make Vienna a landmark name.

The Vienna that Greene says he never knew was the Vienna of 'wine, women, and song' – an 'imperial city of dreams'. People from all over the Hapsburg Empire came for its gaiety, glamour, and charm. However, Freud lived in the Vienna of a 'Golden Autumn', when traditional values were being challenged and the old order disintegrating. Intellectual and artistic pioneers such as Freud, Gustave Klimt, Egon Schiele, Gustave Mahler, Alban Berg, and Max Steiner created new art. Elizabeth Montagu, associated with the cultural Saltsburg Festival, was Greene's guide and entrée to this Vienna.

In February 1934, there had been a civil war. Kim Philby had been involved in the left wing fight against the government. Dr. Timmermann believes that incidents in Vienna involving Philby were the genesis of the plot of *The Third Man*. On Philby's registration card from this time, it is clear that Philby's first name was Harold (Harry). He had married a woman like Anna Schmidt to get her out of the clutches of the police and he later betrayed her, as Lime does in the original story. Lime, of course, is a shade of green.

In 1938 Austria ceased to exist and became a part of the Third Reich. As a result, there was a 'brain drain'. Freud was able to get to England. His sisters died in the internment camps. All intellectual life was destroyed.

Liberation came in 1944/45 with 53 USA air raids and a ten-day battle with the Red Army during which 50,000 persons were killed. One-third of the city was in ruins. In February 1948 Greene arrived in a city that was now governed by the Four Powers. Incidentally, the British sector was commanded by a Major Galloway (Calloway from the film?) The Russian kidnapping of Lime's girlfriend Anna was eliminated from the story – it was too propagandist for the time. The filmmakers wanted to entertain the audience.

Carol Reed changed Greene's ending when the story was filmed. Greene eventually agreed that Anna's walking past Holly Martins out of the cemetery without a glance was a brilliant dénouement. The film became a raving success worldwide except in the Vienna of the time where people asked, 'Where is the operetta music, the schmaltz, the glamour, the easy charm?'

Stamboul Train
Talk by David Pearce

The music of Honegger's *Pacific 231* provided a dramatic start to David Pearce's lecture on *Stamboul Train*, music which GG listened to in 1931 in the confined back-of-beyond Cotswold cottage where he and an expectant Vivien lived close to bankruptcy; music which expressed the excitement which Graham desperately lacked and looked for – 'something hard, non-sentimental and exciting'.

With three failed books behind him Greene needed to make money and to turn failure into success. By the spring of 1931 he had the plan for an 'entertainment' – a novel centering on the Orient Express, a train which crossed boundaries, where one travelled alone and yet with others – paradoxes which fuelled the creative urges of GG's life. Yet suddenly he started to write a biography of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester. He was drawn to a character who 'is the devil and yet has something of the angel yet undefaced in him' – a talented sinner. The book *Lord Rochester's Monkey* was not published for a further 43 years but we must set it alongside *Stamboul Train* because in 1931 they lay alongside in the author's brain.



A daughter, a grandson and an ardent admirer

In entertaining fashion David Pearce then clattered 'over the points' of the gripping story. In his discussion of the novel's popular appeal he showed how Greene rejects the glamorous appeal of the train, making us aware of third class, sweaty smells, a scraping guitar. 'Greeneland', David asserted, has infiltrated Le Grand Express Européen! Sex is similarly reduced to discomfort and pain in a sleeping car; lesbianism; lascivious fondling; the physicality of lust offset by 'kisses, always kisses'. Humour abounds too, farcical, funny, vulgar and desperately sad at the same time. The characters fascinate, tug and repel – a successful formula that Greene will hone for the future. The events move fast – murder, arrests, a trial, shootings, a rescue attempt. The context of place, the envelope of reality the reader recognizes even though Greene couldn't afford to travel further than Cologne.

'Everything is lyrical in its ideal essence; tragic in its fate; and comic in its existence.' In contrast, Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* provides reassurance and security. *Stamboul Train* is about uncertainty - frontiers that we are forced to cross: actual frontiers and

frontiers of the mind. Frontiers are two sided, like the green baize door, and Subotica on the boundary of Hungary and Yugoslavia is the key border for Coral, Czinner, and Myatt. Frontiers emphasise opposing ideologies, class and cultures and this is where GG is at home. Jewishness in the novel is the symbol of an unsettled Europe, restlessness and rejection. Greene is concerned to see how Jews, and others, manage to hold on to what they are. Myatt: 'I am not a Christian, Mr Stein. I don't believe charity is the chief virtue.' Fidelity to his nature, to money, to common sense makes him a survivor and survival may be the chief virtue. It is the mindless characters who are anti-Semitic. The more perceptive, like Coral, accepts the difference. Greene chooses the name Carleton, his grandfather's and his brother's name, to bring, as it were, Myatt into the family. (And is Grünlich – Greeneish – Greene himself 'taking pride in his methods, omitting nothing which was necessary and adding nothing which was superfluous'?)

David Pearce concluded that *Stamboul Train* is not just a thriller or an entertainment. Greene's themes are being forged. He is now a novelist with something to say with striking vigour. With its aspirations, anxieties, unexpected delays, the journey is a paradigm of life. Greene offers no certainties, no solutions. But Graham Greene – 'Remember me' is 'going all the way'. How gloriously he was to do that!

Cedric Watts: 'Graham Greene and the god Janus': A Summary

Cedric Watts gave a talk entitled *Graham Greene and the god Janus*. The Roman god Janus is two-faced: he looks in opposite directions at the same time; so he presides over thresholds, and January is named after him. Being two-faced, he can be deemed the tutelary deity of paradoxes or apparent self-contradictions. Watts argued that Graham Greene's deepest imaginative devotion was not to the God of Roman Catholicism but to the god Janus. In his life, Greene was deeply paradoxical, terming himself a Catholic, a Catholic atheist, and an agnostic; sometimes professing belief in God, hell and the devil, but later expressing doubts about all three. He was a paradox in his private life, claiming that adultery made him a better Catholic, while betraying the women to whom he expressed his deepest devotion. In politics, he spoke well of communist leaders such as Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro, but sent secret reports on them to his masters at the Secret Intelligence Service. While working for the Secret Service, he often expressed strongly left-wing views (but said he would have voted for Margaret

Thatcher). A secret agent is necessarily two-faced, a follower of Janus; and Greene, though an agent for many years, mocked and assailed his employers by means of the novels *Our Man in Havana* and *The Human Factor.* Furthermore, at their best, his literary works always offer large paradoxes. Theologically, Greene exploits the conflict between terrestrial morality and God's transcendence. In *Brighton Rock*, one paradox lies in the possibility that the wicked Pinkie may attain salvation. *In The Power and the Glory*, the seedy 'whisky priest' may be a saint in the making. *In The Heart of the Matter*, Scobie, who deems himself damned, may be saved. Even Greene's avowed doctrine, 'the virtue of disloyalty', is a creed of Janus, for to be loyal to the principle of disloyalty is to enter a paradoxical realm. In short, Greene's fascinating life and challenging works reveal a long-term devotion to Janus, the deity who presides over paradox.

MISCELLANY

The Nunkie Theatre Company is presenting "Oh Whistle..." based on the ghost stories of M R James, at The Baron's Court Theatre, London between Tuesday 9 December and Sunday 4 January.

Every Christmas, M R James (1862 -1936) would write and perform new tales, to entertain friends in his rooms in King's College, Cambridge. A century later, these tales still have the power to terrify and amuse. This unique interpretation gives seasonal theatregoers the opportunity to experience these eerie masterpieces in the manner in which they were originally enjoyed – as ghostly confections, told to a rapt audience.

For literature lovers, M R James is as quintessential a part of Christmas entertainment as the moral tales of Dickens. You just can't beat a good ghost story on a chilly winter's evening!

We should like to offer to Friends of the Graham Greene Birthplace Trust the opportunity to attend this unique performance at the special group offer of 20% off full price tickets for groups of 10 or more.

Please quote 'Graham Greene Birthplace Trust' when you book

Marketing Manager

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.

Hearing Brigitte Timmermann's interesting talk at the Festival reminded me of something of a personal nature. In post-war Austria there was naturally a great deal of poverty and many refugees. In fact there were one million Displaced Persons in Austria at the time. My brother-in-law was one of them.

As a small child he was sent with his sister by the Red Cross for several summers to a farm in Denmark. 'Vienna children', as they were known, were a feature of Danish life at the time. When this very young boy returned home after the first summer, he could speak only Danish. His very excited parents met him at the train station, and he was puzzled because he could not understand a word of what they were saying.

He and my sister, his wife, were able to contact this wonderful family a few years ago.

Donna Osthaus

Thank you very much for the edited Interview conducted by me with Laszlo Robert on Graham Greene's visits to Hungary. It is a pity that I cannot attend the Festival this year, but I will try to do my best to attend the 2009 event.

I found a quite dark sentence from *The Power and the Glory* as the epigraph on the first page of Dennis Lehane's book: *Darkness, take my hand* (Bantam Books, London, 1997) which is an extremely good crime novel. Unfortunately I have both books in Hungarian, therefore citing them here would have limited value for the average reader of the GG Newsletter. It also would not be advisable to re-translate them to English as I am afraid not even Graham Greene himself would recognise the original text. The only solution is to have a look at the Crime Section of Berkhamsted Library or find an unsold copy of DL's book at Waterstone - and then you have the original citation.

Please, pass my best regards to all the festival-goers whom I know or who remember a Hungarian chap, looking like a doctor and with a Hunglish accent.

Tamas Molnar

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.

Graham Greene continues to be mentioned wherever books are discussed – and films, of course. *The Telegraph* mentioned in August that there are plans afoot for a re-make of *Brighton Rock*.

The original film was mentioned in the obituary of the writer John Summers, who at an early age had pulled off the journalistic coup of an interview with Richard Attenborough who had then just starred in *Brighton Rock*.

In no particular order, some of the points noted were that one writer claims to have been inspired by *Stamboul Train* to tackle a Trans-Siberian Journey. And here is a quote from the internet: I plan to set up a Nottingham **Graham Greene** Society with the objective of erecting a plaque at the top of Goodwin Street. Anyone interested in supporting us please contact me. Andrew Schlich. Link to the original item ...

http://area4history.wordpress.com

Someone had remembered *J'Accuse – The Dark Side of Nice*. Another mention is that in 1983 when William Golding won the Nobel Prize for literature, "the smart money" had been on Greene.

Another quote from an anonymous blogger: Reading Graham Greene is kinda like eating ice cream: it's really good in the beginning, you're full by the middle, but you can't stop and it's those last bites that seem to taste the best

From Friends in USA comes this: Two references to Graham Greene recently: One in *The Economist*, August 9th issue, in an article about Paraguay: 'Apart from featuring in a couple of novels by Graham Greene, Paraguay has rarely attracted the attention of outsiders'. The second in *The Washington Post*: in an editorial by Michael Gerson, who was a speechwriter for our current president, George Bush; the subject of the editorial was faith and suffering, the highest ideal is suffering for others....he references at length *The Power and the Glory*, the whiskey priest, etc. The editorial ran Wednesday, August 6, 2008.

At Bloomsbury Auctions this year a first edition of *Rumour at Nightfall* fetched £12000 despite being torn and weather damaged; the attraction was undoubtedly rarity as very few copies remain.

We all know that Greene was a man of paradoxes, so it should be no surprise to read in a published letter from David Lodge (former Festival speaker) that although GG is generally perceived as being left-wing he is quoted as writing 'The Socialists are such bores' and he celebrated the Labour defeat in 1959.

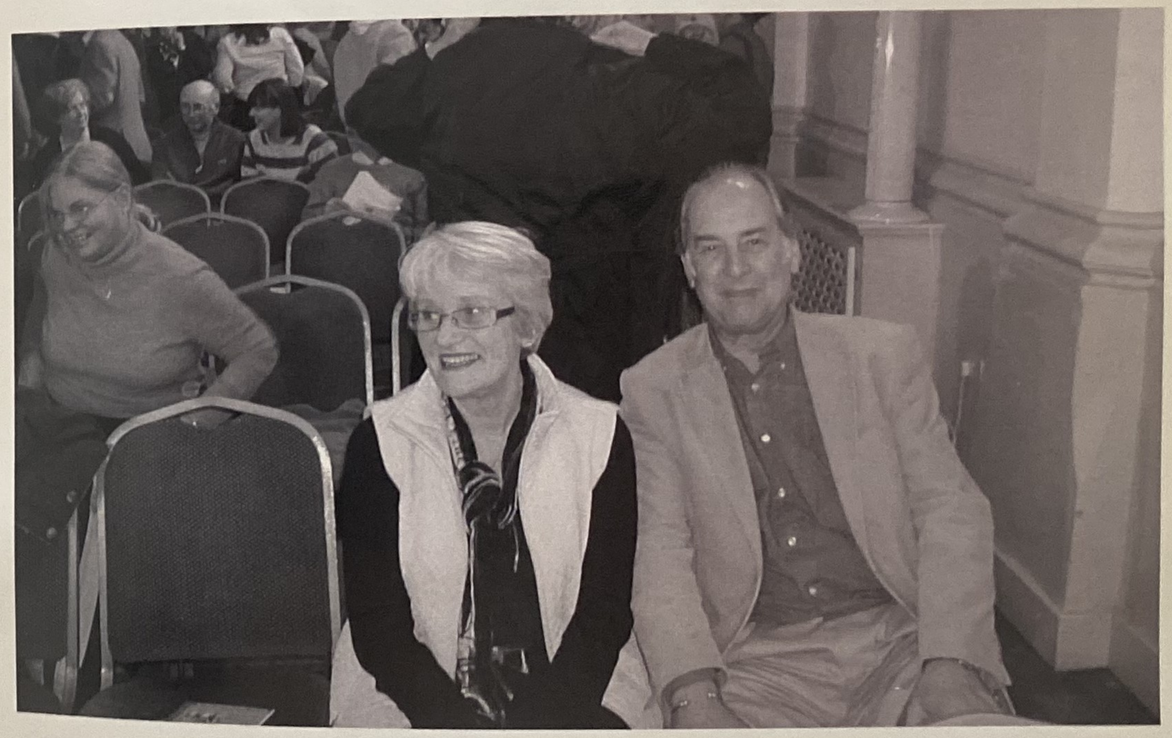
The Bucks Herald reports the Oxfam find of a signed copy of Graham Greene's limited edition *The Bear Fell Free*. Festival goers will have seen it in the Berkhamsted Oxfam shop where it was for sale at £1100. We know the signature is genuine, but not whether it has been sold.

Reading Circle List 2009

January	A Sense of Reality
February	Things Fall Apart by C. Achebe
March	The Mimic Men by V S Naipaul
April	Blood River by Tim Butcher
June	Son of the Circus by John Irving
July	Mister Pip by Lloyd Jones
September	Dombey & Sons by Charles Dickens
October	Pnin by Nabokov
November	Anna of the Five Towns by A Bennett
December	Changing Places by David Lodge

TALEPIECE

I wrote to some Friends at the end of 2007 to wish them happiness and peace (a word wonderfully reminiscent of Scobie's tortured existence) for 2008. I mentioned that I was currently reading *Monsignor Quixote*, and that I was starting to wonder whether my long time favourite, *The End of the Affair*, hadn't been the wrong favourite all along. I was finding *Monsignor Quixote* much more powerful than I remembered from my previous reads, and then I said that I sometimes thought that it's wrong, in any case, to have favourites. David Pearce emailed me and, after lamenting the failure of the Don Quixote tour, saying that he thought the coach travelling was probably too much, and that the journey should ideally be done in an old Seat, laden with Rioja, told me that I was wrong on both counts, and that *A Burnt-Out Case* was



Hope Gilbert and Martin Jenkins

really the great book, or was it, he wondered, *The Power and the Glory*? (I have to say that I wondered whether David wasn't simply reliving the glory of his stage appearance, at a Festival a little while ago, in the role of Querry, that occasion when I told him that he'd

been wasted as a school master, and that he should have trodden the boards).

A Burnt-Out Case and *The Power and the Glory* are, of course, magnificent, stunning pieces of work, but I think, after all's said and done, that *Affair* is still my favourite, but now I put *Monsignor Quixote* in as a close second, with its wonderful journeys into the thoughts of these two men, so different, yet so alike. Here again is Greene's never ending enthusiasm for the marriage of Marxism and the Roman Catholic Church.

I know that the *cognoscenti* will have it that *The Power and the Glory* is his greatest work, but we can all, luminaries or not, have our own views on that. I recently listened to Graham Greene's interview with David Lodge, in which it was interesting to hear GG say that he considered his best work to be *The Honorary Consul*. This was recorded when it was his latest published work, so probably somewhere around the mid seventies. I wonder whether or not he changed his mind as the years went by.

Martin Jenkins



Festival Bookstall

The Graham Greene Birthplace Trust

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