A Sort of Newsletter

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GRAHAM GREENE BIRTHPLACE TRUST

Winter 2008

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

Editorial

Mild as it was, the winter is nearly over and the snowdrops are here to remind us that spring is on the way.

Too early to think of autumn you may think, but someone has to and Dermot Gilvary, the new Festival Director, has already done a lot towards making it another wonderful Festival this year. It always amazes me to know just how early a programme has to be arranged and by this time something is invariably already in place. There are still things to be done: a few speakers may not have committed themselves yet, but most have and by the looks of things 2008 will once more be a Festival to remember. There will be something for all you Radio 4 listeners and something for the theatregoers and much, much more. Put it in your diary now to make sure you do not miss it.

To while away the weeks you might try The Quiz. This time, I think, it casts a wider net and even I was able to answer several questions before sneaking a look at the answers which Mike Hill had thoughtfully given me. So I cannot enter, but you can! Please do.

Yan Christensen

The best smell is bread, the best taste is salt,
and the best love is that of children

Newslettereditor@grahamgreenebt.org
Your comments and letters are always welcome.

Graham Greene and Jon Snow: Paradoxical Affinities

Jon Snow is known to millions of people as a television personality: a roving reporter, interviewer, and, for a long spell, the presenter of the Channel 4 News. His autobiography, *Shooting History* (London: HarperCollins, 2004) reveals some remarkable affinities with another roving reporter, Graham Greene. Each was the son of the headmaster of a public school; each experienced, as a pupil, divided loyalties and the horrors of being bullied; each rebelled against privilege, seeking to help the underprivileged and disadvantaged; each was tall, gangling, and attractive to women; each travelled the world, seeking dangerous places and meeting autocratic leaders; and each had contact with S.I.S. (the Secret Intelligence Service), though Snow's contact was brief, whereas Greene's was lengthy. Not surprisingly, Snow reveals that he greatly admired Greene's writings.

Frequently, as one reads Snow's autobiography, one is reminded of Greene. Snow says, for example, that his boarding school was 'a strange environment in which to grow up. My father, as headmaster, was God. He was an enormous man, six feet seven in his socks...To me he was strict, dependable, and at times remote. I was a very inadequate son of God. In the ever-present school community, I felt exposed and commented upon.'

The book has an Appendix in which an interviewer says to Snow: 'Do you think the fact that you were bullied at school had any part in giving you a world view informed by justice and equality?' Snow replies: 'It's hard to know, but I guess it must have done since it did seem grotesquely unfair at the time... I do have a strong sense of justice and injustice and I think it's forged by a privileged boy colliding with the harsh realities of the outside world.'

After the early years at Ardingly College, Snow entered Liverpool University but was expelled after taking part in a turbulent left-wing demonstration. On voluntary service abroad, he greatly enjoyed his time in Uganda, and later, as a news reporter, he travelled widely in Europe, Africa and America, repeatedly being reminded of Greene's descriptions. Thus in Suchitito, a town in San Salvador, 'the church itself was yet another page from Graham Greene – white stucco walls, brilliant in the morning sun, casting sharp purple shadows'.

Like Greene, Snow was sympathetic to Liberation Theology and critical of the C.I.A.'s rôle in aiding right-wing leaders in Central and South America.

When asked to join S.I.S, Snow read Kim Philby's *My Secret War*, and deduced from it that 'to be a good spy...you'd have to be a double agent of some kind, and that it would then completely consume your life'. Thus Greene's friend, Philby, unwittingly deterred Snow from emulating Greene as an agent.

Nevertheless, when Snow refers to 'my own literary hero Graham Greene', the reader may speculate that Greene's life and works have helped to shape the career of this intrepid and much-travelled newsman.

Cedric Watts

God save us always from the innocent and the good

THE QUIZ 2008:

Graham Greene and Books

Oh, yes, it's that time of year again. Do have a go at this one; you are all well-read people and this one is more general than most of the ones we have had. The prize is a season ticket covering the 2008 Festival, but it is not just a cliché - it really is not the winning that matters, it is taking part. Do not let modesty deter you – send your answers by **15 April 2008 to**
Mike Hill, The Fairways, Keighley Road, Denholme, Bradford, BD13 4JT

In a letter written in 1980, Graham Greene concluded with the remark '... but then I am not a literary man.' This is akin to the Pope claiming that he is not a Catholic. As Neil Sinyard says in *Graham Greene: A Literary Life,* '...he's full of literature. When reading a book of his, one feels as if one is reading several books, so packed are they with allusions, parallels and evocations: they breathe the air of a cultured man steeped in the literature of his and earlier times.'

So here to prove it is a quiz on Greene and books, based on 20 of his novels.

1. Who is Father/Monsignor Quixote's illustrious 'ancestor'?

2. In which novel is Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* used as the basis for a book code?

3. Which Greene novel has a section called 'A Load of Books'?

4. What is the occupation of Jorge Julio Saveedra in *The Honorary Consul?*

5. Which writer recommends the novels of Zane Grey and is asked about the stream of consciousness and James Joyce?

6. Which Greene character has written the novels *The Ambitious Host, The Crowned Image* and *The Grave on the Waterfront*, and is working on a biography of General Gordon?

7. From which Shakespeare play did Greene get the title of his novel *The Name of Action?*

8. Which English novelist saw in Quin Savory, in *Stamboul Train*, a portrait of himself?

9. Who is determined to apply the theories of York Harding, the Harvard professor who wrote *The Role of the West and The Advance of Red China?*

10. In which novel does a university professor of medieval French literature, known simply as D., arrive in Britain to purchase coal?

11. In *A Burnt-Out Case*, Parkinson misattributes to Shelley the line 'My name is writ in water.' The full quotation is 'Here lies one whose name is writ in water', an epitaph another poet wrote for himself. Who was the poet?

12. In *Loser Takes All*, Bertram makes a narrative comment that Rousseau 'might have written that man was born rich and is everywhere impoverished.' Of which actual quotation from Rousseau is this a humorous variation?

13. In *The Power and the Glory*, the priest reads this line of poetry in one of Coral Fellows' books: 'For men may come and men may go'. Who wrote the line?

14. In *The Heart of the Matter*, who 'liked poetry, but he absorbed it secretly, like a drug'?

15. In *Brighton Rock*, Hale is to be addressed as 'Kolley Kibber' by those who wish to win a prize. This is a play on the name of which English poet?

16. In *England Made Me*, Krogh gives Hammarsten 25,000 crowns with which to produce his eccentric version of a Shakespeare play. What is the play?

17. In *The Captain and the Enemy*, who has read *King Solomon's Mines* four times?

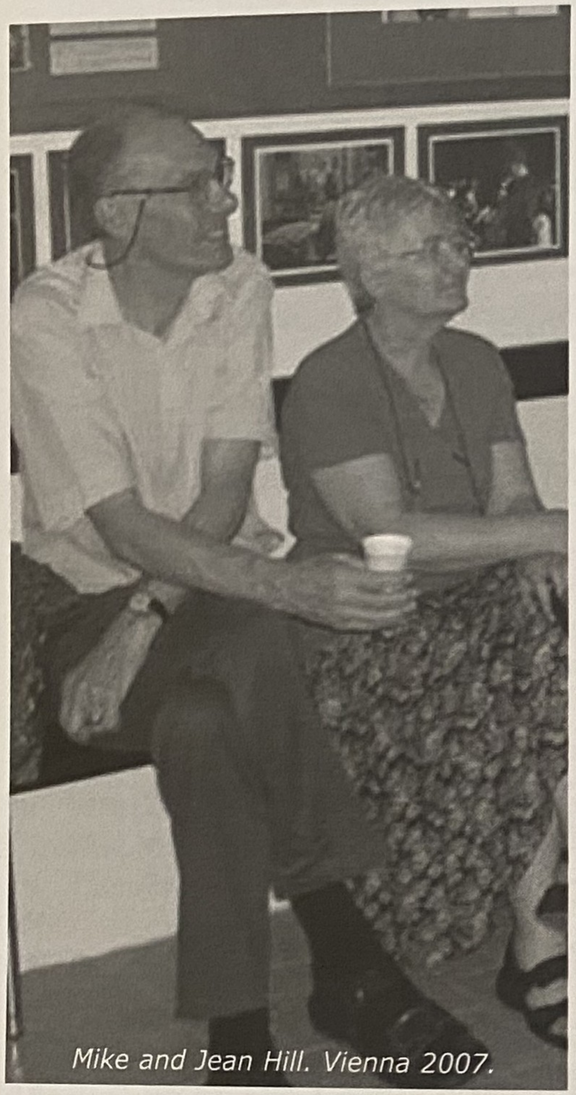
18. In *The Comedians*, whose bookcase contained *Les Misérables, Les Mystères de Paris,* several of Gaboriau's 'romans policiers', Renan's *Vie de Jésus* and Marx's Capital?

19. In which Greene novel of the 1960s are there references to Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, E. Nesbit, Sir Walter Scott, Marion Crawford, Tennyson, Wordsworth, Browning, Thackeray, Thomas Hardy, Charles Dickens, James Joyce, Shakespeare, R.L. Stevenson, Charles Read, Wilkie Collins, Sancho Panza, Don Quixote, Macbeth, *The Merchant of Venice, Hamlet, The Second Mrs Tanqueray*, Palgrave's *Golden Treasury, Guy Mannering, Rob Roy, Treasure Island, Vanity Fair, Alice in Wonderland, Marmion, The Newcomes, Esmond, Lord Ullin's Daughter* and *Maud?*

20. In which Greene novel of the 1970s are there references to Tolstoy, Restif de la Bretonne, Trollope, Hemingway, Ian Fleming, Browning, Chekhov, Marx, Hegel, Robbins, Georgette Heyer, Shakespeare, Dickens, Daniel Defoe, Swinburne, Lovelace, Tristan, Anna Karenina, James Bond, Mr Slope, Mrs Proudie, Melmotte, *Clarissa Harlowe, War and Peace, Monsieur Nicolas, The Way We Live Now, The Warden, Barchester Towers, The Three Sisters, Communist Manifesto, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Oliver Twist, Hard Times, Tom Jones, Robinson Crusoe*, Penguins, Everyman, World's Classics, Macmillan and Loeb?

You don't weep unless you've been happy first; tears always mean something enviable

MISCELLANY



Mike and Jean Hill. Vienna 2007.

Friends

It is with considerable regret that we have heard of the death of two Friends of the Trust, Alan Dickman and Stanley Sharpe, both of Berkhamsted. They will be missed and our thoughts go to their families.

We are, however, delighted to be able to report that after a long and serious illness Mike Hill's wife Jean – well known for her smiling face and cheerful assistance at Festivals – is now beginning to recover and should be home from the hospital by the time you read this.

Fact or fiction?

Graham Greene's *Ways of Escape* was published in 1980 and is usually described as an autobiography; yet in my opinion at least one episode included in the book ought to be regarded as fiction since it appears to be the result of Graham's ever fertile imagination. I refer to the last paragraph of Chapter Six.

Graham has been describing meeting, after a gap of many years, his fellow undergraduate at Balliol, Sir Robert Scott, who was now the British High Commissioner for East Africa. Robert was fond of

impersonating well-known characters. It would seem that Graham frequently provided the scenario for an impersonation.

Graham writes: 'Another incident returns to mind - that occasion outside Berkhamsted Town Hall when he wore a heavy moustache and appeared as Rudyard Kipling making an appeal for the Boy Scout movement and a retired admiral called Loder-Symonds took the chair until he noticed that something seemed somehow to be wrong'.

Graham gives no hint as to what appeared to be wrong and his description comes to an abrupt halt. Looking at the paragraph some eighty years later it would seem that it was Graham's description that was 'wrong' since the incident described seems very unlikely to have taken place.

Back in the 1920s occasional livestock auctions still took place outside Berkhamsted Town Hall and it would have been easy enough to 'borrow' the auctioneer's stand from which to launch an appeal if one wanted to do so ; however it seems a very strange way to launch an appeal; more importantly Scouts were taught to be resourceful – if they wanted funds they would launch a special 'bob-a-job' week and earn those funds by their own labour. So far as I know the Greene family had no links with the local Scouts.

Admiral Loder-Symonds does appear on the Navy List in the 1920s but his home appears to have been at Hinton Magna in Berkshire. I can only assume that his son was another of Graham's colleagues at Balliol and perhaps even impersonated his own father! I can find no other connection between the Loder-Symonds family and Berkhamsted.

Kipling's connections with the Boy Scout movement are well-known – not least his description of 'Kim's game' which was a regular feature of meetings of my Hertfordshire scout troop at the end of 1940s! Of course there may be some who will disagree with me – if so I look forward to reading their defence of GG's memory in a future edition of the newsletter.

Ken Sherwood

Point me out the happy man and I will point you out either egotism,
selfishness, evil – or else an absolute ignorance



The reading circle

Reading Circle 2008

Some of you will know that a group of us meet ten times a year to discuss a book we have read. We acknowledge an affiliation to the Graham Greene Birthplace Trust, but we do not read only books by that author, although during the last 8 – 9 years we have probably read all his fiction, and the one we have on this list is certainly a repeat. We also read contemporaries and influences on or by Greene; this year you will see that we have selected two books connected with speakers from the 2007 Festival – *Restless* by William Boyd whose talk we enjoyed, and *Gormenghast* by Mervyn Peake whose son, Sebastian Peake, was also a popular speaker.

The list is chosen for the whole year ahead – why not read along with us and let us have your comments for the Talepiece.

January - *Office Life* by Keith Waterhouse
February - *The Master and Margarita* by M. Bulgakov
March - *Restless* by William Boyd
April - *The Power and the Glory*
June - *Gormenghast* by Mervyn Peake
July - Short Stories by Anton Chekhov
September - *Cakes and Ale* by Somerset Maugham
October - *Waterland* by Graham Swift
November - *Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver
December – *The Little World of Don Camillo* by Giovannino Guareschi

We are all of us resigned to death, it is life we aren't resigned to

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.

I would like to call the attention of the readers of *A Sort of Newsletter* to a typographic error on page 7, paragraph six, of the Autumn 2007 issue. It says that 'Burgess had brought Greene some silk shirts from Malaga'. Malaga is on the southeast coast of Spain. The right place where the shirts were from is Malaya (present time Malaysia), where Burgess had held a teaching position. As soon as Greene saw the shirts, he cut the cuffs with a razor to find the opium pellets his friend Trevor Wilson had hidden in them. Nowadays, Malaga being where it is, the shirts could carry much worse drugs than opium, so the error is not that big, but for the sake of precision it is better to amend it.

Ramón Rami Porta

Apologies for the error – always pleased to have corrections – ed.

THE TRUST

Lost and not yet found – an update

In the Winter 2007 issue of ASON I listed a number of videos and books that had been lost. The *Arena* videos – described in my article as 'the second loss' - have now been returned and the book *Mornings in the Dark* has also been found. The other missing items have still not surfaced. They are unlikely to have been thrown away. Please do look again in your Greene books and video collections to see if you hold any items that you cannot recall buying. A copy of the article will be sent free of charge to anybody who has destroyed the original.

Ken Sherwood

Heresy is only another word for freedom of thought

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.

The Google subscription yields daily references to Graham Greene but do remember that cuttings are always welcome, and we do know that there are some out there. Greene novels are being read constantly as the bloggers remind us: one refers to Shusako Endo as 'the Japanese Graham Greene'. Another reminds us of the humour of GG.

One blogger says that Norman Sherry's biography reads 'like a rushed job' and admits that sounds odd considering how long it took to come out.

There is some speculation whether GG's trip to Mexico was just an excuse to get out of the way while the Shirley Temple trial was going on (frankly the timing was more likely to have been a coincidence).

There are several notes from people who have been to Vietnam where they were reminded of or discovered *The Quiet American*.

It really is interesting to see the comments of people discovering GG for the first time and others who list one of the novels among their all-time favourites. Somewhat repetitive, but the sheer volume of such comments is an indication of the continued popularity and relevance of the author.

Quite inventive was the comment of one blogger: 'I am going on the Graham Greene diet: you eat one meal a day, and if you get hungry between meals you drink tea and read Graham Greene. He did not think of it, I did'.

It is clear from the various entries in blogs that Richard Greene's volume of GG letters is widely read: very many quotations and comments could only have come from there, so not only has Richard scored a hit, but it seems very likely that there is now renewed interest in Graham Greene.

The local *Gazette* quotes from an interview elsewhere with singer and actress Jane Birkin to the effect that it was Graham Greene who gave her her big break. She thought she was auditioning for something else but found herself acting out the part of a deaf-mute in Greene's *Carving a Statue*. She says'...a man with extraordinary blue eyes said: It doesn't matter – she's perfect'. The man was Graham Greene. Jane Birkin is also a campaigner on behalf of the Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi – a very 'Greene' thing to do.

The author Frederick Forsyth has been less than complimentary about GG in a recent article, a copy of which unfortunately I have not to hand. In *The Daily Telegraph* of 13 February Simon Heffer comments on the Government idea of 'five hours of culture' by wondering how Chaucer et al managed without 'poetry workshops' and further asks '..how on earth did we get Jane Austen, George Eliot, Dickens or Graham Greene?'

TALEPIECE

What have you been reading? This is where readers can have a say about literature, whether connected to GG or not. Tell us what you have been reading and what you thought of it. Treat this as an informal Reading Circle where you can express your views about literature modern or classical, serious, thrilling or funny.

Ramón Rami Porta writes:

I recently read *Edmund Campion* (1935) by Evelyn Waugh and was struck by the similarities between this biography and *The Power and the Glory* (1940), the novel Greene wrote based on his experiences in Mexico in 1938. The persecution of Catholics by the civil authority, the hiding of the priest by pious parishioners, the secret masses, the intensity and fervour with which the persecuted priest, travelling in disguise, administered the sacraments, so well described in *The Power and the Glory*, had their antecedents in Elizabethan England. Like the nameless whisky priest of *The Power and the Glory*, Edmund Campion had enjoyed the comforts of a better life both home and abroad, but returned to England to fulfil his mission as a priest: to give spiritual support to those Catholics loyal to their faith. Like the whisky priest, Campion paid for his boldness with his life, after being tortured. But again, like in *The Power and the Glory*, where the nameless priest is replaced by another nameless priest, Edmund Campion's work was followed by Henry Walpole, who, after witnessing Campion's execution became a priest, and thirteen years later was also executed. In the la

part of *The Power and the Glory*, we see how people had been changed by the whisky priest. Such an irreverent figure had had his influence in the souls of those who had been in contact with him. God's grace can work like that. Waugh tells us that *'When the spectacle (Campion's execution) was over...several thousands were turned to the Faith by the events of that day'*. Greene had acknowledged the similarities between Father Miguel Pro and Campion in the prologue of *The Lawless Roads* (1939), and I have no doubt that the biography Waugh had written was in his mind and, like *The Beetle*, might have had some influence in the writing of *The Power and the Glory*.



Three little maids at Berkhamsted School...

The Graham Greene Birthplace Trust

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Literary Editor: Neil Sinyard

Correspondence to Yan Christensen, 9 Briar Way, Berkhamsted HP4 2JJ, England

Trust Office: Graham Greene Birthplace Trust, Rhenigidale, Ivy House Lane, Berkhamsted, HP4 2PP

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or interviewees. Views expressed