

# REVIEW

## Judith Adamson

Jon Wise and Mike Hill, *The Works of Graham Greene, Volume 2: A Guide To The Graham Greene Archives*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015.

ISBN: 978-1-4725-2819-3, 357 pages.

Jon Wise and Mike Hill are too modest when they say their book “is not a biography nor is it a literary criticism” of Graham Greene’s work. A literary criticism, maybe not, but it is certainly a biographical bibliography with sometime critical insights—a comprehensive guide to nearly sixty repositories of Greene’s papers in Canada, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It includes an engaging synopsis of most of their contents; this means that as well as directing readers to the location of his papers, their book reveals a great deal about Greene’s life and work. It is elegantly written, easily accessible to general readers and invaluable to literary researchers. For years we have marveled at Greene’s productivity; this chronicle adds to the more commonly known list of his archived journals, diaries, notes, correspondence and the innumerable drafts and manuscripts of his published work, many fragments and letters along with abandoned, unpublished or unfinished stories, poems, plays, film scripts, and novels. In an undated typescript at the University of Georgetown, the compulsively self-critical Greene admits to being “an obsessive writer . . . I cannot support idleness (even these words which I write now are an escape—better than writing nothing).”

Greene began selling off his manuscripts and papers in the early 1960s and did so on a

regular basis for the rest of his life, encouraging his family, friends and lovers to do likewise with the letters, manuscripts and inscribed editions he had at one time or another sent them. Papers were sold to university archives and dealers, sometimes with embarrassing results. In May 1964 the *Daily Mail* mocked Greene when the manuscript of *Carving a Statue* was auctioned off by Sotheby’s four months before the play was staged. Greene apologized to his agent and subsequently sold other manuscripts prior to publication.

Soon after he appointed Alan Redway as his bibliographer in 1949, Greene learned that Neil Brennan had independently taken up the same work. He told Redway that “bibliography has always had a certain fascination for me;” he introduced the two men and helped them itemize differences between his various editions, bindings and textual changes, reminding them not to forget the blurbs he had written for *A Burnt-Out Case* and *Travels With My Aunt*, among other books. A stickler for detail, he argued that these seemingly insignificant pieces should be listed as part of his work. In those days scholars shared bibliographies they had compiled themselves, and before Redway and Brennan could finish, Roland Wobbe published *Graham Greene: Bibliography and Guide To Research* in 1979, and in 1981 A.F. Cassis followed with *Graham Greene: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism*. By then Greene’s bibliographic interest must have waned: when John Bray, a serious collector of his work, later asked him to send Wobbe a get-well message, Greene declined. Redway died in 1983 and Brennan in 2006, their work unpublished. Quoting Greene, Wise and Hill’s epigraph reads: “What a life a bibliographer’s must be!”

At Columbia University they have found a cache of one hundred letters, postcards

and telegrams between Greene and Mercia Ryhiner Schwob Tinker Harrison (she eventually married Rex Harrison) dating from 1954 to 1990. The letters suggest “an intense passion” not discussed by Norman Sherry or Michael Shelden. The two met in the Far East and were together in Bangkok, Penang, and Singapore. In 1954 Greene wrote that he longed to see her again and that the only two people he loved were “you and Catherine.” In the ‘60s he arranged for her to stay in his villa at Anacapri and offered advice on writing about love after reading a novel she had written: “the colder and the more detached your writing is the more warmth it can convey to a reader.”

Wise and Hill’s other discoveries are many: probably the only original text of *Stamboul Train*, a 73,000-word manuscript of the 1924 novel, *Prologue To Pilgrimage* (usually called Anthony Sant) about a black boy born to white parents, another unpublished novel of 82,000 words from 1925–6 called *The Episode*, and a novel of 18,000 words titled *Lucius*, which seems to date probably from the 1950s. They found a seven page fragment of another abandoned novel called *Fanatic Arabia*, which they claim was written in 1927–28; a twenty-seven page unpublished piece called *A Man of Extremes*, which appears to feed into *The Comedians*; eight pages of a melodrama in three acts called *The Clever Twist*, which they say was clearly intended to be a significant piece of writing, another untitled piece of eleven pages that may have been intended as a novel; and many abandoned stories.

Of equal interest are the diaries and journals from Greene’s travels, which are housed at Georgetown University. As Wise and Hill say, travel was an escape for Greene. In 1938 he went to Mexico, some claim, to avoid attending the libel trial over

his *Wee Willie Winkie* review in *Night and Day*; his Mexican diary forms the basis of *The Lawless Roads*. On the first page of his November 1957 Havana Journal he said he was “running from myself, and my chaos and my loss.” If Batista’s Havana offered louche charms it also gave him the backdrop for *Our Man In Havana*. His travel reports paid his way for the research that informed many of his novels. From his Vietnam trips came *The Quiet American*. A journey on the Orient Express in 1968 served him well in *Travels With My Aunt*. Visits to Argentina and Paraguay provided background detail for *The Honorary Consul*. Two Panama diaries (Greene took six trips to Panama) include notes for a novel he never completed, for *Getting to Know The General*, and his story “On The Way Back.”

Then there are the letters. Perhaps most interesting among them are those to Catherine Walston (over 1200 at Georgetown University), to Yvonne Cloetta (these chronicle Greene’s travels as well as his love for her), to Leopold Duran (which include discussion about *Monsignor Quixote*), to Gloria Emerson (journalist and author of the novel *Loving Graham Greene*), to John and Gillian Sutro (close friends for 40 years), and to Vivienne Dayrell-Browning before she and Greene were married. Wise and Hill say that with her, Greene “adopted the conventional gender role of that time, that of the strong male caring for the delicate and emotionally fragile female who needed protecting” and that they cannot tell from these letters “if this romantic yet chaste relationship was what the deeply sexually charged Greene really wanted or if he was adopting a role simply designed to please a person he genuinely loved.” Here Wise and Hill’s sensitive editing begins to explain that doomed marriage.

Given the mass of information they have condensed, it is not surprising that their comments sometimes mislead. Greene was on the Board of The Bodley Head from June 1957 until 1968 when he stepped down to establish beyond question that he was domiciled in France, and his brother, Hugh, soon replaced him. He, nonetheless, remained active in the firm's affairs and his suggestions were almost always taken up. However, in September 1962 Reinhardt did not publish Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn* when Greene thought he should. Wise and Hill say the reasons are "unfortunately . . . not known." But they are.

Reinhardt and Greene had to intervene many times between September 1957 when they first contacted Charlie Chaplin about his autobiography and 1964 when it was finally published. Getting Chaplin to finish his manuscript was a very delicate task. Early on Greene proposed shortening it by about 15,000 words, cuts Chaplin agreed to, and Greene and Reinhardt made many other suggestions as time passed. Part way through these often difficult Chaplin years, Reinhardt urgently needed a new editorial director; Greene suggested he steal James

Michie from Heinemann. Among Michie's desires was the freedom to take on whatever books he liked. When he asked if The Bodley Head would publish *The Tropic of Cancer*, Greene advised Reinhardt not "to discourage [him] at this point and I personally would be all for publishing Henry Miller . . . . The courageous thing for us to do would be to publish in one volume both 'Tropics'." If you add this publishing information to what Wise and Hill quote of Greene's 12 May 1960 letter to Reinhardt, it becomes clear that while Greene was in favor of publishing Miller's books, the possibility was raised, or temporarily not denied, only to encourage Michie to come to The Bodley Head, which he did and where for years he was a highly valued member of staff.

However, Wise and Hill's editing is almost invariably thorough and helpful. Their book is an invaluable guide to the various Greene archives and it often provides startling insights. It should be used in conjunction with its companion volume *The Works of Graham Greene: A Reader's Bibliography And Guide* (Bloomsbury, 2012), which was so recently published that one is in awe of Wise and Hill's energy.