Part II
Chapter 4

Women in Greene’s Life

Greene in his autobiographical writings is extremely reticent about his private life, and in the preface to *Ways of Escape*, he categorically states that, that part of his life which is the favourite of columnists is deliberately excluded from the purview of the book. We should not read too much into one experience, but it is noteworthy that the leading women of his fiction are almost “ghosts”. Though they apparently seem to be “wheeled on and off only to perform the office of flashing back the image of the protagonist” (Spurling, 1983, pp.21-22), they do much more than that. To the question, as to why Greene presents the *women in his fiction* in such an *unfavourable light*, one has to have at least a glimpse of the important women in his life for an answer.
As a young boy Greene did not have any admiration for women. By the time of puberty he however shed much of the contempt he had, and began to like the attention given him by women. During this time, he suffered from flat feet like Jones in The Comedians, and his gym mistress gave him regular massages. Greene recalls about it in his autobiography: “The massage tickled a little and my soles sometimes ached, but on the whole I found the treatment agreeable, perhaps because it was given by a woman” (Greene, 1971, p.48). At about this time, the Greenes' had a young woman called Olive Dodge as nurse. Her fiancé was reported to be missing during the war, and was believed to have been killed. Still, she did not despair, but found him a little later in a London hospital with shell shock. Greene candidly remembers the incident:

He didn’t recognise her, he was plunged in deep melancholia, but she never despaired, and one day she was able proudly to introduce him to the denizens of the nursery, . . . They married and lived happily ever after, or so I hope, in Acton (Greene, 1971, p.49).

This woman seems to have made a strong impression on Greene, when we consider his hopes and expectations about his own wife.

Something of his attitude to women during the time is reflected in a piece he wrote at his psychoanalyst Richmond's. It
was called, **The Creation of Beauty** which appeared in the *Saturday Westminster*. It is a story in which the chief architect of the universe comes to God after the seventh day unhappy because, God has given man no happiness other than a woman to love. There was darkness to haunt him, birds to ravage his fields and beasts to wage perpetual war. But God answers him:

> Can you not see, that because you have given him the beauty of woman, you have given him the beauty of the universe? He will worship the moon, because it is as pure as his love. He will worship the sun because it is aflame with the glory of her spirit. He will love the cold, because it is like his wayward mistress; he will love the heat, because it is as warm as her breast (cited in Sherry, 1989, p.101).

Though reluctant to speak about intimate people, Greene speaks in the first volume of his autobiography about his "**numerous aunts**, most of them officially maiden" (Greene, 1971, p.25), in whose company he was brought up. Among them **Helen**, "who ran a school of gymnastics" with a strong will under her breast felt the need to banish his photograph from the sitting room to a bedroom only because he dealt with too much sex in his popular entertainment, **Stamboul Train** (Sherry, 1989, p.442). We also get to know about his "**dear muddle headed Polly**" who wrote ambitious plays, "the beautiful mysteriously gay **Nora**" who gave his wife a gift of 12 shillings and himself a small
gift to buy a book, Alice “the progressive who was a friend of General Smuts”, Madge “who sang songs in pre-Raphaelite gowns from Liberty’s”, Florance, the only aunt to marry whose “loss of virginity kept her apart from all other Greene aunts”, and Maud, his mother’s sister, “a walking news letter” who kept her ears “close to the ground”, in whose company he very much liked to have tea because he could hear from her the latest gossip of Berkhamsted (Greene, 1971, pp.26-27). All these women exerted a pressure on Greene, and a synthesised expression of the attributes and eccentricities of these women appear under various permutations and combinations in many of his writings.

None can, and will deny the role mothers play in moulding the character and outlook of their offsprings. Who first takes our hands away from undesirable things, who implants pleasure or inhibitions about our bodies, who lays down the rules for us to follow with her own life, and gives us an indelible model? Certainly, our mothers. For many young children, the mother is the source of warmth and comfort. But for Greene it was slightly different. Marion Greene was exactly six feet tall and thin, and had a mild and extremely refined look. She was physically flat chested and was a meek woman. Although called Ma Greene by
the boys of the school of which her husband was the headmaster, she was, as her family, friends and school boys recalled, astonishingly remote. Though Greene states that her remoteness did not trouble him, there is an element of *sorrow, regret, and resentment* when he speaks of her: “She paid occasional state visits to the nursery in the School House. . . .” In fact he associates her with the “smell of eau-de-cologne”, and taste of “wheaten biscuits” (Greene, 1971, p.15).

She had great confidence in her children, exercised a tight hold over her emotions, and was least demonstrative in her behaviour. She was a good protestant who allowed people to be individuals. Greene’s sister, *Elisabeth*, who was the favourite of her mother, in a telephone conversation with Norman Sherry, disclosed that though her mother was a remarkable mother, she would never throw her arms around and kiss her.\(^1\) This incapacity of Marion for demonstrativeness was stressed by Vivien too:

The Greenes were a very cool family. I never noticed any great affection between them. I can never imagine any child sitting on his mother's knee, being told a story or anything like that . . . As a family they were awfully locked up and I think it was because they did

not have petting as children. (cited in Sherry, 1989, pp.401-02)

This detachment in Marion’s temperament, prompted Greene to set out hunting for women who would not only love him, but would demonstrate their love to him.

Marion’s central passion was for her husband even at the risk of her affection for her children, and this too created problems for Greene. The adult Greene met women with all the force of his unrequitted longing for his remote and idealized mother, as well as with his suppressed rage against her. About his parents marriage Greene himself states, “I think that my parents’ was a very loving marriage; how far any marriage is happy is another matter and beyond an outsider’s knowledge . . . but I think their love withstood the pressure of six children and great anxieties” (Greene, 1971, p.20).

What Greene probably most appreciated in his mother was her “wonderful lack of the possessive instinct” (Greene, 1971, p.22). This appreciation might have been the result of the great torment, worry, and suffering he had during his life because of an overplus of the possessive instinct of somebody who was very dear and near to him. In spite of his mother’s remoteness and incapacity to demonstrate her love towards him, Greene had great
regard and affection for his mother, as his letters to her on even the most trivial matters reveal. Describing his mother as she was dying on 23 September 1954, at the age of eighty-seven, Greene wrote, “When she was in an untroubled coma before death and I was watching by her bed, her long white plantagenet face reminded me of a crusader on a tomb” (Greene, 1971, p.15).

The next woman to play a significant role in his life was Zoe Richmond, the wife of his psychoanalyst. As stated earlier, Greene's mother's primary loyalty was for her husband, and not for her children. Greene being very sensitive craved for a mother's love prior to, and while undergoing psychoanalytic treatment at Richmond's. Luckily for him he found a mother substitute in Zoe Richmond, the thirty-one year old wife of Kenneth Richmond – Greene was only sixteen at that time. In a psychoanalytic session he narrated one of his dreams to Kenneth Richmond with a little embarrassment: “There was a knock on the door and Zoe came in. She was naked. She leant over me. One of her breasts nearly touched my mouth. I woke up” (Greene, 1971, p.76).

Explaining this dream Norman Sherry refers to an interview he had with Zoe, and writes in Greene's biography:
. . . here we have a clear example of the great mother dream . . . To Graham love, expressed through touch or kiss, did not come from her [his mother] but from his Nanny.

Then, in Kenneth Richmond’s home he had this dream of a relatively older woman . . . coming to his bedside to give him the supreme evidence of motherly love by offering her breast, unlike his mother, who came to the nursery to supervise while retaining immense reserve. Surely the dream’s message was his need for love, a mother’s love which was never sufficiently expressed (Sherry, 1989, p.102).

Zoe herself told Norman Sherry later, that she was a mother substitute for the young Greene. She also explained what was wrong with Greene and why he was in need of treatment:

People are often suicidal and unbalanced if they have impossible parents. People must be loved and the awful thing is when a son is not loved then trouble begins. . . . Graham was very intellectual and very sensitive. . . . To be sensitive is feminine and the unsensitive and warlike is extremely male . . . Lack of love creates the kind of disability Graham had. . . . He had an obsession. (cited in Sherry, 1989, p.103).

What Zoe said about Greene, being sensitive and feminine is significant. Probably the anima in Greene was more pronounced than his masculinity during his adolescent years and his adulthood. Greene’s short period of six months with his psychoanalyst had a remarkable influence in his life. Sixty-three years later he wrote to Zoe Richmond, soon after his eightieth
birthday: “Please believe that you represented one of the happiest periods of my life with your kindness – your beauty”\textsuperscript{2} (Greene, 1984). Zoe Richmond died on 26 November 1986, at the age of ninety-eight.

The woman who came next into Greene’s life with full force, is not mentioned by name in Greene’s autobiography, \textit{A Sort of Life}. But her name was \textit{Gwen Howell}, the ten year or more older woman, who worked as governess at Berkhamsted for a short period of eight months. According to Greene’s sister Elisabeth, Gwen Howell was not actually a governess: “Up till the time she came there had been nannies . . . and she was pure heaven. I adored her and life became much less boring.”\textsuperscript{3} Greene first met her on a visit to his family, holidaying at Sheringham. He recalls their first meeting in \textit{A Sort of Life}: “She was lying on the beach and her skirt had worked up high and showed a long length of naked thigh. Suddenly at that moment I fell in love, body and mind” (Greene, 1971, p.90). Thereafter she became an \textit{obsessive}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{2} Greene, letter to Zoe Richmond. This letter was shown to Sherry in 1986 by Zoe, cited in Sherry, 1989, p.101.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Elisabeth Greene, letter to Norman Sherry 24 April 1982, cited in Sherry, 1989, p.150.
\end{itemize}
passion for him. Greene himself graphically describes the intensity of his passion for her:

. . . the reality of a passion should not be questioned because of its brevity. A storm in the shallow Mediterranean may be over in a few hours, but while it lasts it is savage enough to drown men, and this storm was savage (Greene, 1971, p.92).

After his brief holiday with his family, Greene returned to Oxford, but his love for Gwen Howell continued unabated, and they wrote to each other every week. Away at Oxford, over the newly established British Broadcasting Corporation he even read out a poem addressed to her after warning her beforehand about it. The poor woman sat listening to the radio much embarrassed with Greene’s parents. Her handwriting was so fixed in his memory that even after thirty years, Greene recognised her hand on an envelope sent him by her, and his heart beat the faster.

Though engaged to be married to a man even before she had come to Berkhamsted, Miss Howell’s fidelity towards her fiancé was not strong as that of Olive Dodge, an earlier nurse. She reciprocated Greene’s immature advances towards her. Greene recalls:

Once when she talked to me of her marriage, she wept a little. I was too inexperienced to press her for more
than kisses; marriage for me seemed then to be years out of reach. . . All I could do was to urge her to break her promise and I had nothing to offer in exchange (Greene, 1971, p.91).

Being more practical, she married the man to whom she was engaged, Conway Spencer, on 25 February 1925. Greene's mother attended the marriage and Greene's bitterness was expressed in one of his early poems. *Greene thus lost his first battle in love*. Gwen Howell's contribution in prompting Greene to take an anti-feminine stance in his fiction, cannot be ruled out. She died in 1974 at the age of eighty.

Greene however recovered from the shock of his first failure in love, but was to fall more deeply in love again. This time it was his wife-to-be, **Vivien Dayrell-Browning**. Their first meeting was on 17 March 1925, and Greene was carried away by the magic in her eyes, her voice, her long dark hair, and her whiteness (Sherry, 1989, p.183). The ardent nature of his love for her, and the elation and despair which alternated in him “with the regularity of a tropical rain” (Greene, 1980, p.89), as a result of her warm and frozen responses, were a great deal responsible for shaping his attitude and outlook towards women in general.
Nineteen years of age at that time, Vivien was a precocious girl. At thirteen, she had published her verse in the Poetry Review and at sixteen, a volume of verse entitled, The Little Wings. She was working with a publisher, Sir Basil Blackwell, from her fifteenth year. She became a convert to Catholicism when she was seventeen, and remained a devout Catholic since then. Vivien and Greene had certainly interest in common, but she had an independent mind in all matters, although not an obvious rebel.

It did not take a long time for Vivien to change the young atheist Greene who had expressed his atheistic contempt for belief in God in The Improbable Tale of the Archbishop of Canterbridge⁴ a few months before he met her. She made him a “coward without armour”⁵ and he returned to her whining. He wrote to her “I am going to get instruction & become a Catholic, if they'll have me”.⁶ Vivien haunted him as a passion, and he wrote, “I want to live with you as long as you live and die with you

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⁵ Greene, letter to Vivien Dayrell, cited in Sherry, 1989, p.201.
when you die, . . . I’ve pursued you into the Church and I want to pursue you into eternity.”

Many of the letters Greene wrote to Vivien during the time show him striving to come to terms with a reluctant sweetheart and most of them are painful reading. Here are a few samples:

The strange thing is that I can’t be very depressed, when I’m with you even though you insist on not marrying me. It’s strange that just seeing you is satisfactory.

I feel like a character in a Hans Andersen story. For in a way I have been made out of your breath, this me . . . if you didn’t exist, I don’t feel as if I could exist either.

My miracle worker . . . You’ve given trees shade, and the flowers scent, and the sun a gold it’s never had before.

Apart from you, I have no ambition, and there’s nothing but you in life which is worth anything at all.

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I should love you now, if you develop a squint and a hunchback and red hair or anything.\(^{12}\)

It will be such fun doing odd jobs for you, turning on your bath-water, cutting your bread, helping you tidy up, ringing up the butcher and greengrocer, tucking you up in bed!\(^{13}\)

I have nothing to say but I love you & no ambition but to win you, & little idea of Paradise but to have you with me.\(^{14}\)

The declaration by which he pledged himself entire to Vivien on his twenty-first birthday resembles the one in which Marlowe’s Dr. Faustus bartered away his soul to the devil:

This is to certify that whereas the aforesaid Graham Greene has on this day, October 2\(^{nd}\), attained his legal majority & has thus become legal master of himself & his own actions, the aforesaid Graham Greene herewith states & declares that he surrenders himself entire with no reservation, to be the property sole and free-hold, of Miss Vivienne Dayrell, to do with as she may at anytime think fit (cited in Sherry, 1989, p.230).

Christ said, “to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.”\(^{15}\) The converse of this must also be true: who loves much hopes much of his transgression to be forgiven. Greene did


\(^{13}\) Greene, letter to Vivien Dayrell, 22 April 1927 cited in Sherry, 1989, p.353.


\(^{15}\) Luke 7:47, Holy Bible, New King James version.
exactly that. He hoped that Vivien would forgive his sins, because he loved her much, and carried her “like a passport everywhere.”16

Vivien had come to Greene’s life at a crucial time. He had a history of attempted suicides, a devastating experience at school, and had undergone psychoanalysis. He had periods of excessive excitability which in a manic phase made him do impulsive acts. Apart from his ambition to become a writer, he had no anchor until he met Vivien. Greene earnestly hoped that Vivien with her sanity, serenity and purity, would give him stability, channel his energies and would satisfy his sexual urges.

Their prolonged courtship ended, and the date was set for their marriage, thirteen days after Greene’s twenty-third birthday, on 15 October 1927. Though Greene in an unemotional style stated, “I married, and I was happy” (Greene, 1971, p.138), their married life was not smooth. Close contact with Vivien reduced his reverence for her.

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Initially it was no doubt an intense relationship, and Greene’s love for Vivien in its devotion and worship is well reflected in Greene’s first published novel, The Man Within, in Andrew’s love of Elizabeth. The drive for it came from the various traumatic experiences Greene had before he reached the age of twenty-three. Those experiences are gathered in the novel in a fictional form. Greene’s obsession with Vivien at the time is suggested by a relative of Greene: “So far as Graham was concerned while she was it, she was it, and black could be white.”\footnote{Sherry, personal interview with Helga Guinness, (Greene’s brother’s first wife) 19 January, 1977, cited in Sherry, 1989, p.360.}

Looking back at the life together of Greene and Vivien one cannot fail to notice that it was a relationship between two very different personalities. Greene’s cousin Ben and his wife, turning back fifty years to Greene’s and Vivien’s courtship remembered in an interview with Norman Sherry, that the young couple had been too involved with each other, and “those sort of relationships do burn out.”\footnote{Sherry, personal interview January, 1977, cited in Sherry, 1989, p.359.} It did burn out, and the burnt out character, Querry in Greene’s A Burnt-Out Case, very much reflects Greene’s own perplexities and problems a great deal. Norman Sherry in
Greene’s biography speaks of No.14, Northside, Clapham Common, London, as the last house in which Greene and Vivien lived together. The house was totally destroyed in the blitz during the Second World War, and its destruction symbolically manifested the impossibility of yoking together these different personages once again under the same roof.

The dissimilarity in the upbringing of Greene and Vivien was evident at the outset of their married life. Whereas Greene came from a family where the bonds between parents were very strong, Vivien was the product of a runaway marriage. Her mother, Marion Dayrell, had deserted her husband when Vivien was only ten, on account of “the narrow views plus narrow pocket of a narrow little man.”19 She was a domineering personality and mother and daughter were not really good friends. Vivien did not even disclose her pregnancy to her mother because she was afraid of her. When Vivien was only fifteen, her mother compelled her to break off completely with her father. He had written to Vivien from Rhodesia where he was working at the time, and Vivien’s mother forced her to write a letter rejecting him. As Vivien herself

recalled about it, “It was a dreadful thing to have done, dreadful, dreadful, dreadful.” Vivien never forgave her mother for that.

Vivien's attitude towards sex was curious. She held the strange view that the world soils what it touches, and her early reluctance in marrying Greene sprang from her distaste to embark upon the sexual side of marriage. Opposed to his ardent desire, Vivien was afraid of sex. She preferred a celibate marriage which Greene rightly dismissed as impractical and impossible, though he himself had suggested it earlier. Greene was probably right in believing that Vivien's mother had poisoned her mind about sex with misrepresentations and exaggerations so that she might never marry. Her mother even went to the extent of giving Vivien a sealed letter on sex instruction, which she was to hand over to Greene. Greene read it promptly and tore it up not letting Vivien know what her mother had written. The frozen and frigid responses Greene received from Vivien, might have been responsible for the whetting of his sexual appetite and craving for sex outside marriage. In It's a Battlefield, sexual relationships fail when they are based on love; but lust makes everything

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simple. Love only complicated the act. The reason for such a portrayal might have sprung from Greene’s own experience.

Material wealth exercised a great charm over Vivien. This too created problems for Greene. Here too, he found her mother’s influence. Though the year “when formal education ends and the moment arrives to find employment and bear personal responsibility for the whole future” (Greene, 1971, p.106), is an ominous one for many, Greene was never crazy about money before his courtship with Vivien. But by the time he was twenty-one, one of his determinations in life was to make a lot of money. This obsessive concern for earning money was mainly because of his ardent desire to marry Vivien.

Greene however did not allow his longing for money overtake his love for her – his abandoning of his lucrative employment at the British American Tobacco Company (BAT) proves it. After giving up the job at the BAT, there were disappointments in his search to find money on which to marry. His anxiety about Vivien’s concern about his impecuniosity is evident in one of his letters to Vivien: “. . . if you ever feel the weeniest bit inclined to marry someone else, who’s got the ready
money – do it. Darling, money’s a hateful thing . . . ”21 The letter he sent nearly four months later shows his irritation at Vivien’s attitude towards money, and possibly the influence of her mother: “I could marry a waitress on £ 400 R[aymond, his brother] can marry C[harlotte] on £ 500 . . . I can’t marry you under £ 600 !”22

Having set his mind on marrying Vivien, Greene wanted to save money wherever he could. On securing an employment with The Times, he sent the following telegram to Vivien:

GOOD NEWS BE PUNCTUAL DARLING 14367.23

The purpose behind the code 14367 was not simply a matter of secrecy. On 10 January 1926 he wrote to Vivein, ‘How wonderful our code is. I was able to send you, “I love you always darling” for 1d. That’s the heart not getting in the way of the head.’24

Greene “left The Times the author of a first successful novel” (Greene, 1971, p.142). The decision to quit The Times was however, taken in search of more money whereby he would be

21 Greene, letter to Vivien, 9 March 1926, cited in Sherry, 1989, p.284


23 The numerals 14367 were part of a love-code. Each number indicated the number of letters in a word, thus 143 stood for ‘I love you’ and 14367 for ‘I love you always darling’, Sherry, p.284.

able to please Vivien. His stay in the affluent London flat, the love basket, could not be continued beyond fourteen months for want of money consequent to the failure of his next novels. The move to Chipping Campden where they were “terribly poor, certainly much poorer than any of their social equality”,25 was one of the causes which broke up their marriage, testifies Norman Sherry in Greene’s official biography.

Greene’s need for Vivien compelled him to turn his attention to earning money for them, and providing a home for them. In fact he followed Vivien into the Roman Catholic Church for the love of her, and accepted its denunciation of suicide as mortal sin in his popular novel, *The Heart of the Matter*. Though widely acclaimed, the novel was not well liked by Greene because it carried with it an element of “personal anguish” (Greene, 1980, p.119). But it would help us a great deal in understanding the change in Greene’s *attitude towards material wealth*. Vivien’s efforts at persuading Greene for earning more money backfired, and like Greene, Scobie, the protagonist of the novel, was bent upon building a home by a process of reduction rather than by accumulation. By that time Greene lost his charm

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for physical comforts which came with money, and longed for an austere life and peace, in search of which he went to the perilous edge of far off forlorn lands.

Greene’s attitude towards physical comforts however changed like that of Scobie, later. Martin Shuttleworth and Simon Raven while interviewing Greene for the Paris Review in 1953, suggestively asked him whether his absorption with poverty, pursuit and failure was not simply a false show on his part. They had noted that Greene lived in a very comfortable London flat with more things than needed, for the very limited optimum of happiness. Greene’s response was revealing: “I think you have misjudged me and my consistency. This flat, my way of life – these are simply my hole in the ground . . . shall we leave it at that?” (Hynes, 1973, pp.161-62).

If the lack of possessive instinct of his mother appealed to him, the devouring kind of possessiveness of his wife repelled him. Despite the hardships of the down and out days at Chipping Campden, it was a good period according to Vivien. Her reason – “It was before we had children, and we were very wrapped up in each other, and struggled together. . . . It was very idyllic in a
way”\textsuperscript{26} discloses her state of mind. Being “an oddity in a way”,\textsuperscript{27} Vivien was fond of Victorian dolls, and probably she regarded Greene to be one such doll worthy of safe keeping. As a result, Greene found it necessary to escape from her physically and spiritually. By the time he came to write \textit{Stamboul Train} Greene had turned from romanticism to cynical realism. Nothing was now sacred to him, all could be used because all was in life. A decision of this kind took him to many directions away from Vivien's conventional world. His trip to Mexico thus in a way, was a way of escape from being tied up in London, leading the life of a gentleman author in a gentleman's apartment. Arthur Calder-Marshall described those days in a letter to Norman Sherry:

\begin{quote}
I was particularly impressed by Vivien’s behaviour as the Protective Wife. One couldn’t telephone Graham in the morning, because he was writing. Messages would be taken and passed on at more convenient times. . . . at the same time, when we met (preferably in pubs) I was conscious that there was another part of Graham which felt imprisoned by the comfort of the house in Clapham and his protective wife, which yearned for the seedy, the dangerous, the uncomfortable.\textsuperscript{28}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{26} Vivien Greene, personal interview by Norman Sherry, 10 August 1983, cited in Sherry, 399.

\textsuperscript{27} Helga Guinness, personal interview by Norman Sherry, January 1977, cited in Sherry, 359.

Maclaren-Ross also had a similar impression when he visited No.14 Northside. An elderly housekeeper treated him on the doorstep as if he were a salesman. When he told the housekeeper that Greene had invited him for lunch, Ross was allowed into the drawing room with instructions to wait as Greene was out. Suddenly Greene who was in the house appeared from nowhere, and with a spontaneous pleasant smile greeted him with the words, “Nobody told me you were here. . .” (Ross, 1989, p.15).

If one has to sum up in one sentence what was wrong in the relation between Graham Greene and Vivien, it could be this: *Greene looked for in Vivien what was not in her.*

The next woman who came into Greene's life was partly responsible for the breaking up of his marriage. War clouds were gathering all around him and the thought of leaving his wife and children without enough financial support worried Greene. He felt that the proceeds of the “unsaleable book” (Greene, 1980, p.88), he was writing, would not be enough to sustain them.

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29 *The Power and the Glory.*
Circumstances at home were not congenial. "I found it impossible to work at home because of the children",30 Greene remembered to Sherry in 1981. It was at this time that he found an advertisement in a newspaper for a studio to be rented out. He went there where Dorothy Glover was living with her mother. That is how Dorothy entered Greene's life. Reminiscing about it Greene records in Ways of Escape, "The anxiety that had driven me to write so fast had an ironic end" (Greene, 1980, p.89).

Not much is known about Dorothy's background except that she was part Irish, and part Scottish. Greene thought that she was slightly younger than Vivien, but her birth certificate showed that she was born on 17th May 1901, thus older than Greene by three years, and Vivien by four. Small, less than five foot, square and stoutish, Dorothy was not smart but was very friendly. Many people were mystified by Greene's interest in Dorothy, especially Malcolm Muggeridge who stressed Greene's enigmatic nature.

Although Greene had in the past, lingering romantic interests in his cousins and a constant fascination with

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prostitutes – “a list has survived of forty-seven women Greene slept with, mostly prostitutes” (Sherry, 1994, p.224) – he had managed to avoid any deep affair with women except his wife, until Dorothy came along. But the unglamorous Dorothy infatuated him and they were closely involved with each other until the late 1940s and remained friends until her death in 1971.

When Greene met Dorothy, she was working as a theatre costume designer who had ambition to write and illustrate children's books. Greene and Dorothy in association, produced a few small books – Greene wrote the text, and Dorothy created the illustrations. After the war the books were published, and the books proved to be a great success. Among them, The Little Horse Bus secured for Greene, The Boy's Club of America Junior Book Award, 1995. They also shared a common passion for Victorian detective fiction. But their love of popular and junior literature was not the primary bond between them. The key attraction seems to have been “a sexual relationship of a stormy nature” (Shelden, 1995, p.275).

The most intense period of Greene’s relationship with Dorothy began in late 1939, after the outbreak of the War forced
Vivien and children to be evacuated to his parents house in Croborough. Greene moved into Dorothy's flat in Gower Mews, and lived with her until he was called away to Sierra Leone on wartime service in 1941. Greene's tenure at the Ministry of Information as a front line officer in the propaganda war during April to 14 October 1940, helped in securing for Dorothy a position as the Head of a section. Her job there was to get people to do cartoons, caricatures and so on, and she worked there till end of the war.

Greene's attachment to Dorothy deepened when he began working as an Air Raid Warden. Greene found life enjoyable in a city under siege, and he liked to inspect bomb damage after each raid. Dorothy was also assigned duty as a Shelter Warden during the blitz. Together they enjoyed the dreary hours of the black out in the dark shelters, and there were constant complaints about the goings in the shelters. Greene was really happy with Dorothy at that time as a comrade in arms, able to stand up to the worst raids, and never panicking under the conditions of the war. Greene loved her for it, and recalled her companionship in an
interview with Norman Sherry in 1983: "From the first raid she was courageous, oh yes and showed no fear of any kind."31

Greene referred to Dorothy as 'My Girl' or simply m.g. in his correspondence, and she was the closest he ever came to having a lover, a drinking partner, and a friend in one person. Sometimes writing about Dorothy, Greene called her 'Doll', after Doll Tearsheet in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* and like Doll, Dorothy was fond of her ale, a passion Greene also shared. Even though Greene was deeply in love with Dorothy, Greene was unwilling to give up his attachment to Vivien. His love for Vivien still thrived. On his twelfth wedding anniversary he asserted, "as I have always said and shall say - how dearly I love you and how glad I am we got married."32

On 4 March 1940, *The Power and the Glory* was published. Eight days later he sent a copy to Vivien. Instead of autographing it in the usual way Greene wrote to her:

"My darling heart, just a line in pencil to say it's good to see you even for a few minutes. In a confused and confusing world I am certain of one thing; I can't live...

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32 Greene, letter to Vivien Greene, 15 October 1939, cited in Sherry, 1994, p.27.
without you & I can't be happy for very long without seeing you. Whatever happens that's true. I shall like being old with you!

God bless you my darling one
Your Tyg

In spite of such declarations, Greene visited Vivien and children rarely. Apart from the blitz there was another reason for Greene's irregular visits - Dorothy didn't like him to go often to meet Vivien and the children. During his occasional visits Greene talked to Vivien about Dorothy. Vivien remembered in an interview how possessive her rival Dorothy was to Greene's affection: “She was very jealous. He told me - he laughed but I think he was rather flattered – that if I put on a button, she would find it. She would cut it out. If I mended his socks . . . she would cut it all out.”

Vivien practised reticence on such occasions and thought that after the war things would settle down, and it would all be part of the past. But things got much worse. Greene's involvement with Dorothy progressively deepened, and a hint of its influence became explicit soon. At the height of the blitz in October 1940, “the most beautifully decorated house” Greene had

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even been in (Sherry, 1994, p.62), - No. 14, North Side, Clapham Common - was totally destroyed. While Vivien was in tears when she knew about it from Greene, Greene experienced a sense of relief at its destruction, according to Malcolm Muggeridge. Malcolm’s shrewd analysis of the event is enlightening: “Vivien felt that the destruction of their house was an outward and visible manifestation of the destruction of their marriage . . .” Greene on the other hand had a grim satisfaction, because he saw in it, “the promise of being relieved from a moral one” (i.e. living with Vivien and children) (Holmes, 1981, p.317).

Greene's sister Elisabeth helped to talk Greene into becoming a regular officer in the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), and in July 1941 Greene was given approval to join the SIS. His destination was to be the colonial capital of Freetown, Sierra Leone. To prepare him for his mission, a few weeks training was given him at Oriel College, Oxford. He went down to the country to be with his family, although he intended to spend the final few days before his departure to West Africa with Dorothy. Before leaving, Greene decided to make a will. Since Greene was living with Dorothy in the midst of danger one would expect that he would be concerned about her future; but actually it was not so.
He left everything to Vivien. Anxiety about her and his children were paramount in his mind at that time even though he had done various favours to Dorothy throughout their relationship.

Greene set sail to West Africa in early December 1941 and "the blank unexplored continent the shape of the human heart" (Greene, 1961, p.106), influenced him a great deal. More than his wife and children, leaving Dorothy Glover alone, was troublesome to him. He landed at Freetown on 3 January 1942, and continued there a little more than a year. Though no letters to or from Dorothy while Greene was in Sierra Leone have survived, Dorothy wrote to Greene often. "We can be certain that her passion for Greene moved her to write", records Norman Sherry in Greene's biography (Sherry, 1994, p.144 - 45).

At first Greene carried on as if no problem existed. The idea of giving up either wife or mistress was unthinkable. But some idea of his marital problem can be obtained from a private letter he wrote to his sister Elisabeth in Cairo, who also was in a difficult predicament:

Things can be hell I know. The peculiar form it's taken with me for the last four years has been in loving two people as equally as makes no difference, the awful struggle to have your cake and eat it, the
inability to throw over one for the sake of the other...\textsuperscript{35}

Greene's relations with his boss at Sierra Leone were not smooth. They soon developed an intense dislike for each other, and in September 1942 Greene asked H.Q. to bring him back home. His request was granted after six months, and Greene arrived back in England in March 1943. A position was waiting for him in Section V where his job was to counter enemy intelligence operations. His new boss, Kim Philby was a man whom Greene loved and revered in his own way.

Back in London Greene was so busy that he neglected friends and associates. He lived with Dorothy in 19 Gower Mews, but still maintained a good relationship with Vivien. She was still the best and most dear person Greene had ever known. In a letter to her written under the influence of wine, Greene after confessing that he had told a lot of lies in the past declared, "...but this is true. I hate life and I hate myself and I love you."

\textsuperscript{35} Greene, letter to Elisabeth Greene, 15 October 1942, cited in Sherry, 1994, p.145.
Never forget . . . if I ever make you unhappy really badly and hopelessly or saw life make you that, I'd want to die quickly.”\textsuperscript{36}

But Greene's stay with Dorothy worried Vivien. If in the past she nursed the hope that she could remain the loved one in spite of his mistresses in London, she now knew that the affair had not died or even subsided. She knew that she had miserably failed. While working in Section V Greene suffered an internal haemorrhage, and was in great pain. Philby accompanied him home, but it was to Dorothy that he went to, and not Vivien. Philby wrote about the incident to Sherry: “When I rang his doorbell, a lady came out, scooped him up and took him inside.”\textsuperscript{37}

The lady was none other than Dorothy Glover.

Just prior to the Allied invasion of Europe on 6 June 1944, Greene resigned his position in Section V without any apparent important reason and joined the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign office. The London of June, July 1944 was a London of heavy clouds, driving rain, and pilotless bombs. He

\textsuperscript{36} Greene, letter to Vivien Greene, 9 April 1943, cited in Sherry, 1994, p.278.

still lived with Dorothy, but moved to an area regularly and heavily bombed. Surprisingly they rented the flat most vulnerable to attack: "A bomb hits more easily if you’re on the top floor and you are more likely to be killed than if you’re on the ground floor",\textsuperscript{38} Greene explained to Sherry. The wonder is, even under such a stressful situation Greene enjoyed making love with Dorothy. The passionate love making in \textit{The End of the Affair} between Bendrix and Sarah is based on Greene’s experiences with Dorothy under threat of death from German pilotless planes.

By the middle of July 1944, he got a half time discharge from Government service and joined the Board of Directors of Eyre and Spottiswoode, a publishing firm. During this time he started writing \textit{The Heart of the Matter}, a novel which mixes Greene’s personal terrain more than any other work he had written. The marital conditions described in the novel developed after he returned to England from Sierra Leone.

Significantly, the novel has three parts. The first part bears witness to his marital troubles, and the second deals with his disturbed relationship with his mistress, Dorothy. By the mid

1940s Greene's passion for Dorothy had died down, but a woman of thirty and mother of five children now made an entry into his life. This woman proved to be Greene's "greatest love and greatest torment" (Sherry, 1994, p.215). The third part was written after his encounter with her.

Described 'a Marie – Antoinette in elegant jeans', by one of her own friends (cited in Shelden, 1995, p.35), Catherine Walston was the next woman to haunt Greene's life and faculties. In September 1946, she wrote to Greene to say that his books had influenced her so much that she was going to become a Catholic. To recognise and acknowledge her gratitude, she wanted to make Greene her godfather.

She hadn't met Greene before, and so she rang up Vivein to get his consent. Her husband being busy, Vivien represented Greene on the great day of Catherine's reception into the church. In later years, however, it was a matter of regret for Vivien that she was instrumental in bringing Greene and Catherine together (Sherry 1994, p.226).

Catherine had been married to Harry Walston, one of the richest men in England, for twelve years when she met Greene.
Greene felt that they were safely divided; she had a husband and five children, and he, a wife and two children. Besides, he was her godfather and she, his god-daughter. But Catherine caught him as a fever and invaded his thoughts. Their association refused to remain a modest adventure and it entirely changed his life. In her company he would know his greatest love and greatest torment.

Greene's official biographer, Norman Sherry, had rightly labelled the most productive and the most emotionally wrenching period of Greene's life, 'Time of Catherine' (Sherry, 1994, p.219). During this period, Catherine was the source of his creativity. Had it not been for her, the most successful of Greene's novels, The Heart of the Matter would not have been completed, and The End of the Affair started.

'Determined not to be chaste' yet deeply religious,39 Catherine during the early days of their friendship arranged Greene to return home after a visit to her country home in an aeroplane. It was on the plane, that they knew that they would become close friends. In a letter to Catherine one year after that

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plane ride, Greene recalled how love came to him: “A lock of hair touches one's eyes in a plane with East Anglia under snow and one is in love.” Greene was impressed by her beauty, ease and freedom, wealth gave her. One look at her was sufficient to inspire a passion in him that would not die for years to come.

The affair took a serious turn when Greene and Catherine went to Achill together in April 1947. She owned a cottage there, and it belonged to her entirely. This cottage was to be their escape from the world, and their own particular paradise. Love happened at Achill and the intense love Greene felt for her was described in a poem, *I Do Not Believe*, which was written for Catherine. The poem was published only in 1983, five years after Catherine's death:

I can believe only in love that strikes suddenly out of a clear sky;  
I do not believe in the slow germination of friendship or one that asks 'why ?'

Because our love came savagely, suddenly,  
like an act of war,  
I cannot conceive a love that rises gently  
and subsides without a scar (Sherry, 1994, p.231).

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After having slept with Catherine, Greene continued to desire her *obsessively*. After their first magical visit to Achill, Greene decided to drop in with Catherine at his Beaumont street residence. When they arrived, Vivien and children were not at home. When Vivien returned, Greene explained to her that Catherine had a bad back, and wanted to rest before proceeding on to London. This incident early in Greene's affair with Catherine forewarned Vivien of the altered nature of her relationship with Greene. The humiliating part of this episode for Vivien was that she had to serve them dinner and make the beds: "How could I say anything with two children there. It was impossible – it was a dreadful situation", Vivien told Sherry years later the event.\(^{41}\) The memory of Greene's performance at the time brought tears of pain to Vivien's eyes, even in 1990s (Shelden, 1995, p.367).

Later when Vivien complained to Greene that he and Catherine were leagued against her in her own home, Greene wrote to her that they had definitely given up the affair. But it was not true. Though some trouble brewed up between Greene

and Catherine, and Greene returned all her letters to Catherine, the atmosphere soon cleared. Greene pursued her reminding her of three things: “that he was terribly in love with her, that he missed her voice, and that he wanted her” (Sherry, 1994, p.262).

During their relationship, Catherine joined Greene in a unique endeavour of ‘committing adultery behind every high altar in Italy.”42 Always prepared for love, Catherine kept a drawer full of condoms of various sizes, and in the exciting path of their sexual odyssey they made love on floors, in fields or in forbidden places. “Staggeringly beautiful”43 as she was, Catherine with her unconventional devotion to Catholicism had every reason to believe that the Catholic creator of Pinkie and the Whiskey Priest,44 would make a great godfather.

Even while enjoying his time with Catherine, Greene continued his relationship with Dorothy and Vivien. This complicated his love for Catherine. He was living with Dorothy at the time, and paid short visits to Vivien at Beaumont street

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44 The central figure, the never named priest of The Power and Glory.
during week ends. Even such a stay with Vivien sometimes irritated him. "O God, What a house. This is Sunday with both dullness and Vivien around . . . How it makes me hate the smell of other people”, he wrote in a letter to Catherine. As for Dorothy, Greene did not know how to give her up. Unable to break free from her, Greene placed her in the way of an affair – he arranged for her a two month trip to West Africa – and had high hopes that she would fall out of love with him. “The girlfriend is really ripe for a love affair and I wish she'd take the plunge”, he informed Catherine.

His object in sending Dorothy away was to ensure a peaceful period with Catherine. But he was not successful, and his jealousies often strained his relationship with Catherine. What maddened him most was his fear that he was merely a favourite while she was having other simultaneous affairs. Greene wrote to Catherine, “All the same you mustn’t walk out on


me before she returns or I shall be left high & dry & desperately having to look for a love affair."\(^{47}\)

In August 1947, Greene spent some time with Vivien and children in Switzerland. While at Switzerland, Greene felt cut off from Catherine as he failed to receive letters from her. But while waking up with Vivien at his side he kept on having the curious notion that it was Catherine. When Greene returned from Switzerland, Catherine met him at the air-port but left for America for three months. Catherine's absence troubled him deeply and Greene tried another affair. It did not provide an answer as he was worried about Catherine only. Greene wrote to Catherine, "Substitutes don't work . . . I'm whistling hard. Won't you answer my whistle? . . . What a bloody, not to say fucking fool I am, Cafryn. I can't stay out of love with you for more than 36 hours."\(^{48}\)

While Catherine was in America, Greene was getting ready to take Vivien also to America. But he was highly *dejected* because there was little possibility for him to meet Catherine.


\(^{48}\) Greene, letter to Catherine Walston September 1947, quoted in Sherry, 1994, p.269.
Four days prior to his twentieth wedding anniversary (i.e. on 11 October 1947), Greene hoped to meet Catherine in New York. But that became impossible and he was highly irritable. Vivien's memory about her twentieth wedding anniversary was green even in July 1997: "We were at Mary's and it was awful. I was snubbed and he was in a bad temper... He was aloof and irritable..."49

It did not take much time after that, for the death of their marriage. On 20 November 1947 Greene came home to Vivien to say good-bye to her for the last time. What brought things to a crisis was a passionate love letter Greene had written to Catherine. The letter was addressed to her in New York. By the time it arrived, Catherine had left and it was returned to the sender. Vivien opened it and wanted to talk it up with Greene. She rang up Greene and Greene came down. Vivien recounted their last meeting, and parting:

We went upstairs into the drawing room and then he left. And I thought, well, I'll probably never see him again and looked out of the window that was facing

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the street, and he looked back for a minute, didn't wave, but looked back.\textsuperscript{50}

The dramatic moment appeared eight years later in Greene's novel, \textit{The Quiet American}. Thus the potency of a twenty year long affair proved powerless before a \textit{sexual association} which was less than a year old.

After Greene left, Vivien was stunned. She wrote to Greene's mother upset by her husband's departure. Marion Greene was distressed and she wrote:

I am ashamed of my son. It absolutely makes my heart bleed. I could never have believed it of Graham ... Like you, I am appalled at K. [Catherine] – too terrible. I could kill her, nasty minx. With everything in the world & 5 children ... I hope he will keep away from K now. I think you are a saint. I feel like a murderer.\textsuperscript{51}

In another letter, Marion stressed the parallels between Greene and his hero Scobie, and wrote:

I think the only way he can save himself is to cut clear of D[orothy] & the other woman & return to you & the children ... let that woman commit suicide. I don't expect she would ... I don't know how that


\textsuperscript{51} Marion Greene, letter to Vivien Greene, 7 January 1948, cited in Sherry, 1994, p.276.
woman can - what does her husband know - all those little children too. It is just beastly.\textsuperscript{52}

Remembering about Greene's \textit{sexual congress} with Catherine, Vivien recalled in two separate interviews with Sherry:

Until he met Mrs. Walston he was always very sweet, but I consider that was a turning point. He turned into a different person . . . he became indifferent to children and had furious and terrible tempers . . .

I think the change was entirely and purely Mrs. Walston. A very powerful woman, with very strong sexual drive, and I'm not deficient myself, but she had a great number of men and as I say with her money. . . .\textsuperscript{53}

Greene's brother Hugh also agreed with Vivien. "Graham became harder then, and less friendly. It was all Catherine Walston's fault."\textsuperscript{54} Vivien was very blunt about what Catherine was up to:

I think she was out to get him and got him. I think it was a straight forward grab, . . . it was just as if you got into a railway carriage with somebody you know very well and they got the tickets and sat down to read and presently they got up and simply opened

\textsuperscript{52} Marion Greene, letter to Vivien Greene, 29 June 1948, cited in Sherry, 1994, p.277.

\textsuperscript{53} Vivien Greene, personal interviews by Sherry, cited in Sherry, 1994, p.225.

the door of the carriage and heaved you out. It was as sudden as that in a way.\textsuperscript{55}

After leaving Vivien, Greene, however, did not remain unaffected. Early in the new year of 1948, Greene's friend Evelyn Waugh encountered Greene and recorded in his diary:

I met the shambling, unshaven, and as it happened quite penniless figure of Graham Greene. Took him to the Ritz for a cocktail and gave him 6 d . . . He had suddenly been moved by love of Africa and emptied his pockets into the box for African missions (Davie, 1979, p.694).

The woman whom he loved 'wildly, crazily, hopelessly',\textsuperscript{56} drew him further and further into the quagmire of despondency. It was his private hell, and he shared his \textit{anguish} with no one. He had now left Vivien and was in the process of leaving Dorothy but they were hardly out of his mind. He could see with terrible clarity the conflict and suffering he had caused to those he once loved. He felt that he had poisoned the lives of his wife and mistress and could never quite bring himself to depart altogether. The knowledge that once love was over, he would replace it with a terrible engrossing pity made his life extremely painful. He knew


\textsuperscript{56} Greene, letter to Catherine Waslton, 5 August 1948, quoted at Sherry, 1994, p.316.
from his own experience that 'one has to be the servant of the one who suffers most or one injures' (Sherry, 1994, p.281).

Under the influence of Catherine, Greene began writing The End of the Affair in late 1948, and continued working on it for the next two years. Throughout this period, he was expecting the end of his affair to come. Catherine’s familial and social responsibilities forced her to ration her time with Greene, and he felt an angry longing for her. He was further troubled by his sense that Catherine’s feeling did not match his own. Again and again his obsessive possessiveness and jealousy ruined his love. Catherine’s difficulty in dealing with this nervous, depressive genius is well reflected in the novel. The entry in Sarah’s posthumous journal, “He is jealous of the past and the present and the future. His love is like a medieval chastity belt: Only when he is there with me, in me, does he feel safe” (Greene, 1951, p.107), well reflects Greene’s state of mind. The two most popular of Greene’s novels, The Heart of the Matter, and The End of the Affair were completed in Catherine’s company, and they expose the depths of his depressive character, and the conflicts he secretly engineered, better than in any other of his works.
Vivien was fighting hard for Greene's return, and profuse proof is available of the enigmatic nature of Greene in the protracted correspondence between Greene and Vivien:

... mainly through my fault, we have lived for years too far from reality, & the fact that has to be faced dear is that by my nature, my selfishness, even in some degree by my profession, I shall always, & with anyone, have been a bad husband. I think, you see, my restlessness, moods, melancholia, even my outside relationships, are symptoms of a disease ... which had been going on ever since my childhood & was only temporarily alleviated by psychoanalysis, lies in a character profoundly antagonistic to ordinary domestic life. Unfortunately the disease is also one's material. Cure the disease & I doubt whether a writer would remain.\(^57\)

On 12 August 1948, he replied to Vivien:

I'm very unhappy too & have been except for brief intervals for nine years. I don't believe this is the end of us ... When I got your letter all my inclination was to throw everybody & everything up & return. Your pull was far greater than any other pull. But then I told myself hopelessly ... what's the use? As soon as I give up C[atherine] I shall feel the pull back & within a few weeks I should begin to cheat.\(^58\)

The emotion embodied in the above letters testify that Greene suffered very deeply like St. Paul who wrote. "I don't do


the good I want to do; instead, I do the evil that I do not want to do."\textsuperscript{59}

Having separated from Vivien and Dorothy, Greene intermittently but with real \textit{determination} attempted to persuade Catherine to leave her husband and marry him; but it was of no avail. By 1949, Greene could see Catherine only if her husband was engaged, and that too in crumbs and pieces. There was also a rumour during the time that Catherine had an illegitimate child by Greene. Lady Melchett in an interview she had with Norman Sherry disclosed in 1991, "I think Catherine was very much in love with Graham. I was always led to believe that one of Walston children was theirs."\textsuperscript{60} Catherine's husband Harry now imposed some restriction on Greene's visits and Catherine's letters were Greene's life-line: "You don't know what letters do to me, . . . I was suddenly ready to kiss any beggar's sores from sheer happiness when your letter arrived."\textsuperscript{61} In Catherine's company Greene's moods could swing swiftly. He was desperate one

\textsuperscript{59} Romans 7:19, Good News Bible, Today's English Version, Bangalore.


\textsuperscript{61} Greene, letter to Catherine Walston, 5 August 1948, cited in Sherry, 1994, p.316.
minute and happy the next. These *mood shifts* were difficult for Catherine and she knew that they were painful for him. She pressed him to see his *psychiatrist*, Dr. Eric Strauss, and tried hard to be gentle with him. Greene acknowledged the greatness of Catherine when he wrote to her:

> ... you are so sweet & patient & good to me. You never say the nasty things I say to you. That is not the difference between a man & a woman; it is the difference between you & me. You give me back all the peace that other people take away.\(^62\)

Catherine on her part felt that she was the cause of those near breakdowns of Greene. “Were I really nice and good and brave, I would walk out, as I am convinced for HIM that’s the best thing. But then, how seldom do I ever behave in the way that I know is the best?”, Catherine once wrote to her sister.\(^63\)

Harry Walston, though capable of profound forgiveness was seriously considering separation from Catherine by the end of 1950, because she was totally consumed by Greene. The difficulties between them were taken advantage of by Greene, and he offered marriage to Catherine. But her letters suggested that

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she was not going to leave her husband, as there was no one as patient, loving, and generous as Harry. Greene was very much disappointed, and he turned to his older brother Raymond for help.

Raymond reported to Greene that Catherine probably was unconsciously putting on an act and had realised that if she washed Greene out, she would have a much more peaceful and happy life. In order to substantiate the findings of Raymond, Greene requested facts from Catherine and he wrote to her, “Now my dear, for goodness sake tell me the truth . . . Anybody can stand & face facts, but what wears the nerves is half truths, half lies, deceptions of any kind or another.”64 Catherine’s reply might have clearly raised a point that held some irony for the man who had left both wife and mistress for her. Greene felt very much depressed and had to seek help from Dr. Eric Strauss, his psychiatrist, and wanted to have electric shock treatment. Several of Greene’s letters during the time reveal his state of mind:

I wish you were my wife, so that when one went away, one came home – to the place you shared and

the bed you shared . . . I kiss your mouth, your eyes, your "secret hair." 65

I'm sorry that I've failed you again . . . You are all I have in the world, & I make such a mess of things. Pray for me. 66

Catherine was often upset at the seemingly endless battles. Yet the end of the affair did not come swiftly. The periods of separation imposed by her brought need for distraction to Greene - his work, his travels, his death wish, opium dens and brothels, and his substitutes for her. His greatest desire still was to make her his wife, but it seemed only a dream, a dream she did not share. If Greene were denied her, he wanted to create some temporary happiness with others. But that too didn't work: "I don't even want a substitute for you - anyone would be such a dreary second best," 67 he wrote to her in 1953. Even after eight years Catherine was his first love.

Although Greene's love for Catherine was undiminished during 1954-56, she was making it increasingly difficult to flourish, because she suffered from a deep religious guilt. By that


time Greene's love for Vivien had turned "very tiny and far distant, more distant than childhood".\textsuperscript{68}

In 1956 Greene was very ill; the strain of the previous few years began to tell on his health. His doctors were seeking to find out if he had cancer of the colon. In March in bed sick, he wrote to Catherine:

\begin{quote}
The trouble seems to me is that we both want to simplify our lives . . . & yet if you simplify you can do it by excluding me (after all I'm a kind of barnacle on your boat) . . . Call it a neurosis if you like, but I have the desire to be of use to someone, & in the last nine months particularly I have felt of little use & possibly of real harm to you . . . I've fought too hard to make you stay . . .\textsuperscript{69}
\end{quote}

It took him all these years to understand that an affair can't be important on one side only.

Greene and Catherine had their last holiday in December 1956 at Rome, and Catherine insisted on twin beds for them. Catherine had been central to his existence since their first days in Achill in 1947. Now she was detaching herself from him and he felt that Catherine was slipping away. In his novel, \textit{The}


\textsuperscript{69} Greene, letter to Catherine Walston, 7 March 1956, cited in Sherry, 1994, p.504.
Comedians, Greene had his revenge. The woman whose very name had once seemed so magical to him is brought down to earth. Whereas he had once repeated it as an incantation, now her name was only another joke in the long comedy of life. The madam of the best brothel in Haiti is called Mère Catherine. Catherine became Lady Walston in 1961. There was no longer any reason for Greene to expect something more than friendship from the woman who was everything to him.

But the real end of the affair came only in 1978 as Greene stood watching through a window in the Ritz. Catherine Walston's health was not as resilient as Greene's. Hard drinking had robbed her of her health and she developed pancreatic cancer. When Greene came to know that Catherine was dying, he asked to visit her. But she did not want him to see her looking so ill. While Greene was staying at the Ritz, Mabel Dawes, one of the Walston family's longtime employees took Catherine to her last trip to the London clinic, and paid Greene a visit. Greene ordered some flowers for Mabel to take back to Catherine. Mabel took the flowers in a car and Greene stood watching. Not long afterwards news came that Catherine was dead. She was sixty-two.
A painter, twenty years his junior, Jocelyn Rickards, was the next woman with whom Greene carried on an affair for some time. It was early in 1951 when he was putting the finishing touches on The End of the Affair, that Greene met her. Catherine was still his first love and the centre of his universe. But the affair with Jocelyn was inevitable because sex was the top of all his past-times, and he could see Catherine only rarely.

Jocelyn Rickards was extremely attractive, and she was “obviously very much launched with Greene.” Remembering about their first meeting Greene in an interview recalled:

I did meet her at a cocktail party, and I’d got to give dinner to a man, a German, a Catholic who wanted to write a novel, a Prince or a Count . . . and I felt I did need somebody else and this girl had been very sweet at the cocktail party and had fought her way to the bar and got me a dry martini, and I said will you have dinner with me at a little party . . . So that was the beginning at a cocktail party. And we had an affair which lasted over a few weeks, you know. And we remained friends ever after.

Jocelyn at that time was living in London with A. J. Ayer, the English philosopher whose twin constants in life were women

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and philosophy. According to Ayer, there was no source of truth but experience, and in his attempt to find the truth about the opposite sex, girls came and went, or came and stayed in his home. As Jocelyn recalled, she was progressively part of a trio, a quartet, a quintet and sextet at Ayer home. It was while Ayer was away on a long trip to Mexico that Jocelyn met Greene, and she instantly fell in love with him. In a private memoir she wrote:

> We felt no guilt as we climbed into his bed together—his skin was always faintly sunburned and the texture of fine dry silk. Graham said he felt as though he was holding a boy and a girl in his arms.\(^72\)

Jocelyn was willing to join Greene in some interesting experiments and they shared, according to her, ‘a dazzling sexual recklessness’. In their most remarkable romantic moments they “ran like hares” and “sat giggling like naughty school girls” (Shelden, 1995, p.409).

Friendly and bright, Jocelyn did not complicate Greene’s life. He regarded her as an antidote to the emotional storms that featured in his relationship with Dorothy and Catherine, and he was always anxious to keep things uncomplicated. As for

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\(^{72}\) The memoir referred to was not published, but was loaned to Shelden when he was writing, ‘Graham Greene: The Man Within’. Shelden, 1995, p.409.
Jocelyn, she always felt that Greene enjoyed thinking of her ‘as one of Australia’s ignoble but engaging savages’, and he never wanted to share the darker romantic life of a Catholic with her. He once even said to her, “promise me you’ll never become a Catholic” (Shelden, 1995, p.411). Jocelyn also did not have any interest in becoming a second Catherine. She had only contempt for Catherine. About her, Jocelyn once remarked:

She [Catherine] was the only one of the women he loved who was cunning. I don’t know what Graham really saw in her . . . I still feel very strongly about her, even forty years after we once met at a dinner party at Freddie Ayers’ home. I didn’t like her. She didn’t like me (Shelden, 1995, p.411).

As far as Jocelyn was concerned, Greene was ‘a man of irony, wit and gaiety’. Rarely did she see him in a depressed state. Greene on his part was always kind to Jocelyn and was careful not to create any difficulties for her even though he talked of marriage to her for a time. Jocelyn felt no desire to pressurise him into marrying her, and she felt that Greene was not completely in earnest when he talked of marriage. It was easy for Greene to maintain a place for Jocelyn in his life because she made very few demands on him.
The only time when Greene's behaviour really frightened her was when he announced his desire to receive *electric shock treatments* from his psychiatrist, Eric Strauss. It was a matter of concern for Jocelyn why Greene wanted such drastic treatment. In fact it was a sign of the desperation which lurked under his relationship with Catherine. It took some time for Strauss to talk him out of the idea, and Jocelyn *anxiously* asked him “not to think of it again” (Shelden, 1995, p.411). Excessively dependent on Strauss, Greene had realised the *dangers of psychiatric treatment* and advised Jocelyn to stay away from all psychiatrists: “Promise me faithfully that you’ll never go near an analyst – You're all right now, but it might change you, and you'll never be all right again!”, he warned Jocelyn (Shelden, 1995, p.412).

Greene, as was his practice, kept their affair alive for a few years, even though he saw less and less of her as time went on. Even during the last months of his life Greene kept up correspondence with her.

Though much confusion and dissatisfaction in Greene’s life stemmed from his unnatural *propensity* for sex, he never got tired of it. With Catherine, Jocelyn, and his famous brothel – Rue de Douai in Paris to occupy his thoughts in the 1950s, one is likely
to think that Greene no longer needed any more romantic involvement in his life. But the Swedish classical actress whom Greene met in 1955 proved just the opposite. Greene’s dinner with *Anita Bjork* at Stockholm on a cold November night, and their subsequent meeting at Christmas in London, fanned the flames of his passion. Soon after the second meeting at London, the affair took off and for the next three years, Greene tried to spend as much time as possible with Anita in Sweden.

Irresistibly attracted towards this young, exceptionally talented and petty Swede, Greene bought for her a house near Stockholm, and took her on various trips. They also shared some long holidays at his villa in Anacapri. Just as in Jocelyn’s case, Anita was younger than Greene by twenty years and she like Jocelyn provided a pleasant *fantasy* for Greene, another escape into a different world.

Greene was on a visit to his Swedish publisher, Ragnar Svanstrom, when he first met Anita. Anita who had a promising theatrical career in Stockholm was at that time trying to overcome the *trauma* that she suffered consequent to the suicide of her husband, Stig Dagerman. Dagerman was a *manic depressive*, and had a history of several *attempted suicides* behind him. An year
ago, he had however succeeded in succumbing to carbon monoxide poisoning, leaving Anita to care for their two young children on her own.

Greene impressed Anita because he was complicated in a way she was familiar with, and liked. But she had a feeling that Greene did not like Sweden or Swedes very much. He often complained to her about the wrong dark winters there, and the difficulties of learning to speak Swedish. However Anita held a special appeal for Greene that it became a chore for him to fly back and forth to Stockholm to be with Anita. At one point in their relationship Greene suggested to Anita that they would establish a home elsewhere. But it is doubtful whether he had intended to make the relationship last anywhere.

Greene tried to hide the relationship from Catherine for a while, but he was not successful. Catherine soon found about it, and Greene quickly tried to explain it away by saying that Anita was only a pale substitute for Catherine. For him, he told Catherine, she was special and all others paled into insignificance before her. But whatever he said or wrote, it appears however that Greene was never prepared to make a complete commitment to any single woman in his life. Each could absorb his attention
for a while, and during such a period he would make many extravagant plans with them. As for Anita he suggested that she move to France, and live there. Anita wrote, “I couldn’t leave my children and the theatre”\textsuperscript{73} and the difficulties were impossible to resolve. By the end, of the 1950s, the affair was over. When the affair came to an end, Michael Meyer a staunch allay of Greene for many years, helped Greene to discover a new escape in far away Tahiti. In Meyer’s company in the next few months, Greene found the strength to behave in a chaste manner.

Greene’s affair with Anita though brief, is significant as it had something to do with the denial of the Nobel Prize for Greene. Greene in one of his plays, \textbf{The Complaisant Lover}, offended the close knit literary community of Stockholm. Although the play in a large part is a satire on Greene’s relationship with Catherine and her complaisant husband, it incorporated an important detail from Anita’s life. Towards the end of the play, the complaisant husband of the story is tempted to commit suicide on account of the \textit{infidelity} of his wife. His attempted \textit{suicide} closely resembles Dagerman’s successful suicide. Several Swedish writers

complained that Greene had “drawn the parallel deliberately to wound either Anita or Stig’s memory, or both.”

According to Shelden, “the whole episode is typical of the way that Greene liked to use literature to strike back at real or imagined enemies, and he may have believed – for a time – that Anita and Stig’s ghost were among his enemies” (Shelden, 1995, p.421). Anita however refused to criticise the play. “It was his work”, she said and suggested that she was willing to accept a separation between Greene’s life and his art.

Others in Sweden were not inclined to forgive and forget as Anita did. Artur Lundkvist, the Chairman of the committee which decided future Nobel Prizes for a long time was one among them. He strongly disapproved Greene as a novelist and dramatist. Having seen the cruel touch in The Complaisant Lover in an incident connected with Anita whom he knew, Lundkvist could have found other examples of it in Greene’s work. Lundkvist is on record as saying, “Graham Greene will receive the Nobel Prize over my dead body” (Shelden, 1995, p. 421). His hatred for Greene carried on for most of his life, and his death in the same year as Greene’s, barred the possibility of a Nobel Prize for Greene forever.
The 'blank unexplored continent shaped after the human heart' (Greene, 1961, p.106) was a very important piece in the jigsaw puzzle of Greene's life. It was there that he stumbled on the next principal woman of his life – **Yvonne Cloetta**. Yvonne remained his constant companion for the next thirty years of his life. In a letter written forty years after his first trip to Africa, Greene remarked to his cousin, Barbara, in whose company he had gone there:

To me that trip has been very important – it started a love of Africa which has never left me & that led to . . . the Congo & the Cameroons when I stumbled on Yvonne. Altogether a trip which altered life.74

It was 1959, and Greene's affair with Anita Bjork was coming to an end. After a trip to Congo where he had visited Dr. Lechat's leper colony, Greene was returning home. On his way back, he paid a brief visit to the Cameroons. Yvonne who was then approaching her thirties, and her husband, Jacques, first met Greene at a party given in his honour by some of their friends. Although it was not love at first sight for Yvonne, she was intrigued by the great man's reserve, and was flattered by his interest in her. After asking her out for a drink, Greene confided

to her that he would like to see her when she was next in France. As it happened, she was returning there soon, and she agreed to his proposal. Trevor Wilson, a long time friend of Greene recounted about Greene's interest in women once, in the following manner:

He likes women. They have to be attractive to him and he would immediately go after the lady . . . But with men it's quite different. He only met people that I knew for certain reasons. There are two things that he'd go to the ends of the earth for: to get information: to know, and to contact a beautiful woman.75

It was the start of an affair, which withstood the onslaught of many years. Greene was not to restrict his interest to only one person, though.

By the beginning of 1960 Greene and Yvonne were seeing each other frequently. From the Cameroons where her husband worked for Unilever, Yvonne had come to France, and had settled near Antibes with her two young children – Brigitte and Martine. She went back to Africa only during school holidays. Greene would stay at a hotel in Antibes for weeks at a time, exchanging visits with Yvonne. Occasionally he would take her to Capri

where some of the local people were under the impression that she was his secretary. Greene on his part found it convenient to sustain this impression.

Greene called Yvonne his ‘happy, healthy, kitten’, or simply HHK. One of his books - *Travels with My Aunt* - is even dedicated to HHK. It is worth noting in this context that Greene enjoyed and endeared himself to Vivien in the early years of his marriage with her, using such kittenish expressions. He later, however, began to view the use of *feline* terminology in his private life with distaste. His own re-employment of these expressions in his relation to Yvonne may possibly be an indication of Greene’s desire to *substitute* Yvonne in the niche vacated by Vivien.

Unlike Vivien, Yvonne was content to let Greene come and go as he pleased. She showed little sign of *jealousy* and her *feline* charm was not spoiled by any *possessive instinct*. Initially any conversation between them was difficult because Yvonne knew very little English, and Greene’s French was poor. Both of them however improved over time especially Yvonne, who became quite fluent in English.
By late 1965, Greene took a difficult decision and “burnt a number of boats” in his “private life”. (Greene, 1980, p.287). He disposed of his chambers at Albany and moved to Antibes on 1 January 1966 to settle there permanently. To the enquiry as to why he was leaving England, his answer was: “My doctor . . . says that I should avoid London smog” (Shelden, 1995, p.446). But there was another important reason: Yvonne Cloetta.

Now that Greene was at Antibes, Yvonne used to come to his apartment nearly everyday. He would spend his mornings, as was his custom, alone, immersing himself in his work. At noon Yvonne would arrive and by that time Greene would be free to enjoy the company of his ‘kitten’. They would then lunch at a nearby restaurant and would most often go for a drive in Yvonne’s car. In the evening she would return home, leaving behind some simple food for Greene’s dinner. It was a simple and agreeable routine for both. Yvonne’s husband, Jacques, also appeared to be content with the arrangement. Divorce seemed to be out of question. Greene never lived with Yvonne except during the last year of his life, and never did he indicate any desire to do so. To a writer from England, an acquaintance, Piers Paul Read, Greene disclosed a certain amount of pride in the “convenient way he had
arranged his life” (Shelden, 1995, p.449). He was comfortable in his sparsely furnished apartment, without a wife to live with, without the need to drive a car, and having none to stay.

Initially the relationship between Greene and Yvonne was based on physical attraction. But gradually it grew to a much nobler plane. Age and experience had mellowed Greene. He loved and needed solitude and Yvonne appreciated Greene’s need for privacy. She was not the retiring type, but she never craved for a life with more excitement. “Before I met him I had been living in Africa for seventeen years and there, my goodness, with all those cocktail parties at the embassies and what not, my goodness, we had so much social life I think I was fed up with it”, Yvonne told Michael Shelden in an interview in August 1991 (Shelden, 1994, p.449).

Almost from the beginning of the affair, Greene was on very close terms with Yvonne’s daughters – especially Martine, who was a young teenager in the 1960s. Given the fact that Greene was never close to any of his real nieces and nephews, even to his own children, it may appear odd that Greene was something like an uncle to Martine. He might have found something appealing
about Martine so as to be so much protective of her. A very close friend of Greene recalls:

Graham carried a letter from Martine, the daughter of his good friend Yvonne Cloetta, in his wallet. It had been written when she was nineteen when he was experiencing a variety of personal problems, some of which were very serious. Martine told him that he would never be alone; that she would always be with him; that she prayed for him . . . (Duran, 1995, p.86).

His attachment to Yvonne and Martine was such that Greene himself reported to Duran that a local police chief believed that the girl-child born to Martine was Graham's natural daughter (Duran, 1995, p.265). It was even rumoured that Greene was intimately involved with both Yvonne and Martine.

Martine, when she was in her early twenties married Daniel Guy for love, with all the blind romanticism of idealism. After a few years, however, the relationship began to turn sour and a divorce was granted her. She was also given the custody of her child - Alexandra. But Daniel Guy managed to persuade the courts to revoke the judgement and to give him the custody of Alexandra. As Martine's warm and loving protector Greene now entered the fray and he turned this private divorce and custody question, into a major international feud. Yvonne in an interview in August 1991 disclosed:
He was very fond of my daughter, as she was fond of him, right to the end. He used to accompany her [to the court], where she used to come out crying like anything, saying that she hadn't been allowed to open her mouth, either herself or her lawyer, in front of a judge. There, Graham himself would go with her to the [court], not inside, because he was not allowed, but he would wait outside, and he saw with his own eyes what was happening. It was not through me or anyone else. He wanted to be a witness of what was going on (Shelden, 1995, p.452).

Martine and Yvonne valued such care of Greene “as a kind of ‘fortress’ and they felt that “inside these big walls” they were safe (Shelden, 1995, p.450).

Realising that a merely personal problem would not attract substantial attention, Greene widened the dispute by alleging that corrupt officials were protecting Guy. He wrote a letter to The Times of London and it had an enormous impact. It ensured that all the authorities were aware of the case of Martine and Daniel Guy. In the meanwhile Guy assaulted Martine’s father, and the young Martine defended her father with a tear-gas bomb. Greene was very much worried over the issue and he returned his Order of the Légion d’Honneur which had been awarded him by the President of France. (The government refused to accept it). In his statement he gave the reason for his decision as “the corruption of justice on the Côte d’Azur” (Duran, 1995, p.250). Enquiries
revealed that the Mafia was involved, and the problem seemed endless.

Having failed to get the justice he wanted, Greene now turned to use his most powerful weapon – his pen. He published a short pamphlet *J’ Accuse: The Dark Side of Nice*, running to sixty-nine pages in a bilingual edition in English and French, in 1982. The Mafia sprang into action and did everything possible to defame Greene and the Cloetta family. They caused the publication of an article in which the photograph of the cuckolded, complacent husband, smiling at the author of *J’ Accuse* was also furnished. The husband of Yvonne and the father of Martine according to that photograph was Fr. Leopoldo Duran, a Spanish priest and a close friend of Greene! A spate of cases followed.

After a long and eventful legal battle, Guy won a decision to ban the book in France, and from a Paris court he won libel damages from Greene and his publishers to the tune of 52,000 francs. Faced with a libel action by Rev. Duran, the publishers of the article attacking Greene relented, and tended an apology dictated to them by the priest and his friend.
Legal defeat did not prevent Greene from fantasising that Guy was Pinkie *reincarnated*. When an interviewer asked whether Greene would write a novel about Guy, he said that he had already told the story in *Brighton Rock*. But Greene who had often led readers to *sympathise* with many ruthless villains and extreme cases of disloyalties failed to find any virtue in Daniel Guy's alleged *disloyalty*. Of this aspect of *J' Accuse*, Jonathan Raban noted in a review of the pamphlet:

> Greene was able to anatomise Pinkie with studied calm in a book . . . when he meets his counterpart in real domestic life he responds with a degree of moral bluster that would do credit to a maiden aunt.76

The dispute, though it made Martine and her two children secure, showed a chief aspect of Greene: his battles were always vindictive, defensive and personal. According to Shelden, “the defensive, nasty tone of the pamphlet suggests the portrait of the artist as a vindictive Pinkie defending Kite’s memory against the onslaughts of a rival gang” (Shelden, 1995, p.454).

Before Greene issued the *J’Accuse* pamphlet, he never had publicly mentioned his relationship with Yvonne, except to dedicate *Travels with My Aunt* to HHK. But after the legal

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battles for Martine, he helped Martine to move to the same place where his daughter had settled - in a village near Vevey, Switzerland. This warm relationship between ‘niece’ and ‘uncle’ did not however please Vivien:

I was upset that Graham came and bought a house for Martine in the same road that my daughter lives in. And brought her along to my daughter – . . . he used to come for two or three days at Christmas - he would bring her and Yvonne. He got a job for the daughter at his lawyer’s . . . in Lausanne. I thought it was not good taste to get his mistress and daughter involved with the family (Shelden, 1995, p.450).

Yvonne continued to help to protect Greene, providing him with steady loyal support in a town where he had no other close friends - at Antibes.

In 1989 Yvonne accompanied Greene to Ireland for the newly instituted GPA Book Award in a special plane sent by the sponsors to fetch him – he had been appointed as the supreme judge of the award. The trip and the fuss that Greene himself generated for awarding a special prize to Vincent McDonnel who had authored a novel which had some similarities with Greene’s The End of the Affair, The Broken Commandment, left him exhausted. He was never the same again.
Sensing that his end was near, Greene in 1990 decided to leave Antibes and moved to an apartment in Corseaux, a small village near Vevey, Switzerland. Yvonne went with him to render full-time support. There Greene could have the assistance of his own daughter, Lucy, and Martine – both lived only minutes away. The apartment that Greene occupied was not a large one, but it exuded a sense of peace because of its scenic beauty. Greene loved the place because it was a favourite spot of Henry James whom he admired.

Greene’s health deteriorated fast. A test of his blood showed low R.B.C. count, and bi-weekly blood transfusion was prescribed for him at Hôpital de la Providence: Yvonne drove him to the hospital in the mornings and took him back home in the afternoons. By March 1991 the transfusions were losing their effectiveness and he grew lethargic and pale. By the end of the month he was not able to move beyond the confines of his apartment. Yvonne spent three sleepless nights by his side watching him. While Greene’s daughter stayed with him one night, Yvonne tried to get some rest. But 5 o’ clock in the morning on Easter Sunday, she was woken by Lucy, for Greene had taken a turn for the worse. An ambulance was sent for and
they rushed him to the hospital. Yvonne contacted Rev. Leopoldo Duran the same night in accordance with the wishes of Greene. Greene knew that he was dying and he told Yvonne, “Don’t stop me. I want to go. Let me go”. Martine told Greene, “You will be immortal. Your body will die, but your works will live on” (Shelden, 1995, p.486).

Rev. Duran flew to Greene’s side on 2 April. Vivien also wanted to see her husband one more time. Through Lucy she asked to be allowed to come to Vevey. But Greene refused to give his consent. He was also reluctant to see his son, but eventually Greene was persuaded to do so. He soon lapsed into a coma and did not awaken from it. It was Yvonne who heard and remembered Greene’s last words: “Why must it take so long to come?” (Shelden, 1995, p.487). Just before noon on Wednesday, 3 April 1991, Greene died.

Greene’s companion for his last thirty years, Yvonne Cloetta, and the one and only Mrs. Graham Greene met for the first time at the official funeral ceremony the following Monday on 8 April 1991 at the Corseaux’s little cemetery. It was also attended by the British Ambassador. The service was conducted by Greene’s close friend and admirer, Father Duran who laid
Greene to rest with the words from Greene’s favourite Shakespearean play, Hamlet:

*goodnight, sweet prince;*
*And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!*

(Verity A.W., 1989).
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