

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Though Greene is a serious writer, he does not underline the moral implications of his stories. He offers us not cases to solve and classify but the mystery of people like Pinkie or Scobie or the nameless whiskey-priest. Greene never judges. He looks beyond ethics and beyond the Law, intent only on Love and the sin against Love. "These characters," he says, "are not my creation but God's. They have an eternal destiny. They are not merely playing a part for the reader's amusement. They are souls whom Christ died to save."¹

Though Catholicism is the most outstanding element in his novels, Greene finds the Theological harangues over his works difficult to understand.

I wrote a novel about a man who goes to hell - Brighton Rock - another about a man who goes to heaven - The Power and the Glory. Now I've simply written one about a man who goes to purgatory (The Heart of the Matter). I don't know what all the fuss is about.²

Greene is a remarkably readable writer, and yet a writer from whom it is very difficult to remember sentences and paragraphs. One remembers scenes. Greene is present in his novels as a producer is present in a film, rather than as a poet in a poem. He works in a series of sharply visualized episodes, and the frequent use of metaphor and simile to heighten description, or intensify atmosphere, is one of the few obviously personal characteristics of his style. He cuts, like a film director, from episode to

¹Marie Béatrice Mesnet, Graham Greene and the Heart of the Matter, p. 114.

²Ibid., p. 111.

episode ; there are no long, dull, ruminative or padded passages. The episodes he chooses to present are each, in themselves, a minor climax of some part of the story ; something has always come to a head, life is never just jogging along. So Greene's stories translate admirably into cinema, and one may find it hard to remember whether one has read the book or seen the film. He is cinematic also in his sense of atmosphere, heat, monotony, or seediness, atmosphere always used to heighten expectation and never for its own sake. We have probably no modern novelist so efficient and skilful as Graham Greene.

" Patronizingly in the end he would place me probably a little above Maugham, " Bendrix the novelist sourly predicts of his critic, Waterbury, thus cautioning critics intent on "placing" Greene himself. Let it merely be suggested that among his own generation of British novelists it is difficult to find his equal ; and that he has produced a number of novels that seem certain to live, by the force with which they embody a highly individual and genuinely challenging view of life.