CONCLUSION

A close, analytical study of the themes and motifs of his novels reveals a highly repetitive pattern. This is apt to create an impression, at least on those who are not well-acquainted with his work, that Graham Greene's novels must make dull reading. Nothing can be farther from the truth. Greene was a sworn enemy of dullness. The recurrent elements, along with fresh facts, background and characters, are so skilfully and artistically blended that each novel has an identity and a personality of its own.

Looking back on the considerable output of this prolific writer — about twenty novels, apart from short stories, essays, travelogues and plays — one can see why he has attracted so much attention. There can be no doubt that he has great skill in the
art of characterization, that he can devise an exciting or intriguing situation, and tell a story; and that he has an enviable felicity in the handling of language which can create and preserve the right atmosphere. There is no doubt at all that not only in the so-called 'Catholic' novels but in the others too we see a sensitive mind at work on the problems that confront modern man.

It is undeniable, perhaps, that a good deal of the experience so ably presented through one character or the other, is really his own, that the debates on religion and God —— provided with contexts from which they spring with such unforced naturalness and ease —— are the heart-searchings of a modern, rational man who needs to justify to himself the faith that he so desperately needs to support and sustain him. This effort, set in a variety of

* O'Neill in an interview with George Jean Nathan:

"The playwright of today must dig at the roots of the sickness of today as he feels it —— the death of the old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfactory new one for the surviving primitive religious instinct to find a meaning for life in, and comfort its fears of death with. It seems to me that anyone trying to do big work nowadays must have this big subject behind all the little subjects of his plays and novels, or he is scribbling round the surface of things".
imaginatively conceived situations — some of them rather unexpected and even bizarre — gives to his work something more than mere readability that comes from a skilful manoeuvring of plot. In his case the structuring of the plot is part of an art-form which assimilates into itself portrayal of character and technique of narration, giving thereby a certain depth of meaning to the novel itself. Greene's novels have a moral fibre about them. They have, indeed, that quality of "high seriousness" which Arnold looked for in a classic. They are a "criticism of life", presented under the "conditions of art". His triumph lies in his being able to reconcile the often contradictory demands of a surface narrative and an underlying deeper philosophical import. We have here eminently readable stories — accounts of persons in whom our interest is aroused, doing and experiencing things which are interesting — which, nevertheless, achieve a certain austere dignity because of their profound implications. Neither the "message" nor the
"medium" suffers in this partnership. As the author of such novels as *The Heart of the Matter* or *The Power and the Glory* or *A Burnt-Out Case*, Graham Greene can look back with some pride in his achievement; and though, as Sir Thomas Browne would say, there is nothing truly immortal but immortality, he could look forward with some measure of confidence to the kind of immortality that a writer of great work achieves.