

# Life A Paradox

"The terrible paradox is the awareness of an absolute. Life and the absolute are a paradox." So quoth Dr. Eli Mandel in a recent SCM prof. talk.

Dr. Mandel of the English Department discussed the works of Graham Greene in the SCM's continuing discussion of the Vision of Man.

The British novelist's work can be divided into two categories — the

thriller, exemplified by *The Third Man*, and the theological thriller such as *The Power and the Glory*. The latter was cited by Dr. Mandel as probably Greene's best novel.

Greene first started writing thrillers. These were novels not of a phony world, but "a genuine reflec-

tion of a particular kind of world," according to Dr. Mandel.

The interbellum period of this century gave birth to many reflections of this "world." "The familiar phantom of our age" (the zeitgeist?) is one reason for the popularity of Mickey Spillane AND Greene.

The paradoxes of Greene's work are many. The thriller both reflects and contrasts the reality of the age. It provides an opportunity for very sharp ironies. Good is Bad. The vicious murderer becomes sympathetic. But the bad is still bad, good still good.

### NO ORDER

"Man is a paradoxical thing in a world of paradoxes into which the intellect cannot bring order," he stated.

One of the visions which haunts Greene is that of the "lost childhood." Childhood or the "Childhood vision" is very sharply defined. The worlds of Greene's thrillers are childlike.

The "theological thrillers" are concerned with the mystery of God's grace. Greene defines difference between man and God in both naturalistic and spiritual terms. He delineates "the awful demands of divine love."

Greene's view of Man and Life Dr. Mandel broke down into two

characteristics:

- the kind of commitment a man makes. Greene's great characters are possessed, "God haunted." They want an absolute. They won't leave God alone.
- man is absolutely incompatible with the realities of life.

### MORE VITALITY

Dr. Mandel concluded his talk by saying, "Greene's great damned characters have far more vitality than the decent people who have no contact with God whatsoever."

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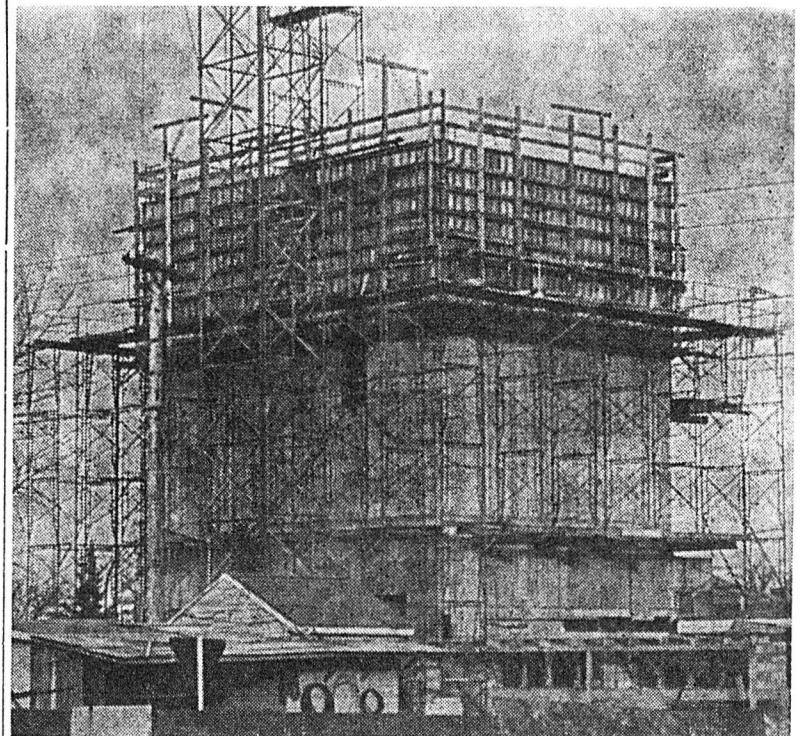
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