PSYCHOLOGY has been a favourite topic of writers for several centuries, and writers and personae suffering from one or another kind of psychological abnormality are many. The contribution of these men of letters in changing the concept of the public regarding these abnormalities, and in modifying the mode of approach to be adopted in such cases, is commendable. The most notable contribution in this area is that of William Shakespeare, and the explorations he made therein conclusively prove that a talented person can by observation and insight, identify and depict psychological aberrations with great accuracy and clarity. His Lady Macbeth (obsessive compulsive behaviour), King Lear (paranoia), Iago (antisocial personality), Othello (obsessive paranoid jealousy) and Ophelia (depression/melancholia), all reveal certain behaviour
characteristics associated "with officially recognised clinical patterns" of mental disorders (Carson, 1988, p.6).

Since the thrust of this study is on Graham Greene and his world, exclusive consideration of Greene and 'Greeneland' is essential. So far as this inquirer is concerned, the best approach to a writer is still a blend of biography and a close reading of his works. No writer seems to live in a vacuum divorced from his surroundings, and it is a basic premise of psychology that a person is what he is, according to his own perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and responses to his immediate environment. Greene is more so, because he carried the 'rage of his personality' in his lungs, wherever he went. According to him, books inevitably are formed out of bits and pieces of one's own experience:

The main characters in a novel must necessarily have some kinship to the author, they come out of his body as a child comes from the womb, then the umbilical cord is cut, and they grow into independence (Greene, 1980, preface).

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1 The term was coined by A. C. Marshall, in Horizon (May 1940). According to him Greeneland was characterised by seediness. Eventually, A supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary I (1972) included the word, defining it thus: 'A term used to describe the world of depressed seediness reputedly typical of the setting and characters of the novels of Graham Greene.'

2 Greene used the expression, "a rage of personality", with reference to Henry James, in his essay, "Henry James: The Religious Aspect."
On re-reading of his own books, he recounts:

... as I read on I encounter more and more characters whom I have forgotten, who beckon to me from the pages and say ironically "And did you really believe you had invented me?" (Greene 1980, p.84).

Writing about Henry James, Greene observes in his essay, *Henry James: The Private Universe*:

It was just because the visible universe which he was so careful to treat with the highest kind of justice was determined for him at an early age that his family background is of such interest (Greene, 1962, p.26).

Greene's own family background is of interest for the same reason. In English Literature there are very few writers who were so very obsessed with their childhood as Graham Greene was. He firmly believed that the child is “father of the Man.”

His justly famous essay which forms the personal prologue to his oeuvre, *The Lost Childhood*, concludes with George Russel's poem, *Germinal*:

In ancient shadows and twilights  
Where childhood had strayed,  
The world’s great sorrows were born  
And its heroes were made.

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3 William Wordsworth (1770 –1850) in his short poem ‘The Rainbow’ calls child “father of the Man” by which he means that all that will come out in the character of the grown man is already present, but not yet developed, in the child.
In the lost boyhood of Judas,
Christ was betrayed.

Reiteration of this idea appears in almost all his works:

For writers it is always said that the first twenty years of life contain the whole experience - the rest is observation, but I think it is equally true of us all (Greene, 1966, p.61).

... the creative writer perceives his world once and for all in his childhood and adolescence, and his whole career is an effort to illustrate his private world in terms of the great public world we all share... (Greene, 1962, p.59).

If I had known it, the whole future must have lain all the time along those Berkhamsted streets (Greene, 1971, p.11).

Despite Greene's solemn declaration that he is keen to protect the copyright of others over their lives, he was a "grit in the... machinery"\(^4\) (Greene, 1969) who had great faith in subversiveness. Almost all his works glorifies subversiveness as a virtue, and he carried out deception, disloyalty, and betrayal in his professional and private affairs. His capacity for cleverness and wisdom, mischief and malice, frivolity and vengeance, are writ all over his works. And, the most significant fact is that he found a reservoir of these in his own life. W. B. Yeats, with his vision of:

\(^4\) Greene in his speech, "The Virtue of Disloyalty", on the award of Shakespeare Prize to him by the University of Hamburg, cited in Shelden, 1995, p.5.
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed and everywhere,  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned; (Yeats, 1920)

is perhaps the only poet who comes close to capture the confusion and terror of living in this world.

Reason for Greene’s portrayal of this ‘Greeneland’ of his mindscape can be studied only with reference to his life. Thus the first tool of psychology to fathom the domain of his conscious as well as unconscious mind for the understanding of his creativity is Greene’s own commitment.
References


