Aftermath: Foreign Relations and the Postwar British Novel

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Abstract

In the aftermath of the Second World War, British writers engaged with the reconfiguration of national identity that resulted from the dissolution of the empire. In many regards, the postwar British novel performs the work of diplomacy. While colonial power held together global networks before the war, an emerging discourse of internationalism urged cooperation after the war. Rebecca West's travelogue about Yugoslavia, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, as well as her reportage on the Nuremberg Trials, laid the groundwork for her incomplete tetralogy, *Cousin Rosamund*: *A Saga of the Century*. In both her fiction and non-fiction, West considers questions of British responsibility on the international stage. Similarly, Lawrence Durrell writes about the aftermath of the Second World War by reflecting on the motives and effects of British foreign policy in the Mediterranean. Durrell's travelogue, *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus*, influenced the narrative structure of the *Alexandria Quartet*. By focalizing *Mountolive*, the third volume of the *Quartet*, through the character of a diplomat, the narrative reflects on questions of the private and public responsibilities of ambassadors. Olivia Manning's *Balkan Trilogy*, which concerns British nationals in Romania before and during the war, is concerned with global events that provoke mass displacements. Even the British become refugees because of aggressive warfare. While journalists craft their reputations through authorship in the public sphere and diplomats inscribe their perspective into the reports they send to embassies, the spy's works remain hidden from the public gaze. Nonetheless, it fulfills a diplomatic function. In *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* and *The Looking Glass War*, John Le Carré shifts novelistic attention to the ways in which spies skirt democratic processes and opt for creating international relationships through

secret means. This thesis relies on archival documents and theories of narrative in order to demonstrate how a concern with international cooperation influences postwar preoccupations and narrative structure. Although literary critics often characterize the postwar British novel as being in decline, mid-century novelists, in fact, adapt the genre to changes in the global balance of power.

Résumé

Les écrivains britanniques d'après-guerre révisent l'identité nationale suite à la dissolution de l'empire. Un discours de coopération internationale remplace les liens globaux maintenus par le colonialisme. Pendant cette période, le roman britannique sert à une fonction diplomatique de plusieurs façons. Le récit de voyage de Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* et ses articles sur les procès de Nuremberg ont influencé sa tétralogie inachevée, *Cousin Rosamund: A Saga of the Century*. Dans ses romans ainsi que dans ses reportages, West se penche sur la question de responsabilité de la Grande Bretagne dans un climat de diplomatie internationale. De la même manière, Lawrence Durrell écrit à propos des motivations et des effets de la politique étrangère britannique dans la region méditerranéenne. Son récit de voyage, *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus*, a influencé la structure narrative de la série *Alexandria Quartet*. Le troisième roman dans la série, *Mountolive*, focalise sur la question des responsabilités privées et publiques à travers la figure du diplomate. La trilogie d'Olivia Manning, *Balkan Trilogy*, qui raconte l'histoire de personnages britanniques habitant la Roumanie avant et après la guerre, se préoccupe des effets que les catastrophes globales ont sur les réfugiés de guerre. Dans ce roman, même les personnages britanniques deviennent des réfugiés. Pendant que les journalistes forment leur reputation dans la sphère publique et que les diplomates incluent leur opinion des faits implicitement dans les rapports qu'ils envoient à leur ambassades, le travail de l'espion demeure caché du regard public. L'espion contribue cependant au travail diplomatique. Dans ses romans, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* et *The Looking Glass War*, John Le Carré ré-oriente l'attention sur les moyens par lesquels les espions contournent les procédés démocratiques et choisissent de créer des liens

internationaux par des voies secrètes. Cette thèse met en valeur les sources archivales d'auteurs et de départments gouvernementaux, dont elle a recours. En général les critiques littéraires considèrent que le roman britannique d'après-guerre représente un déclin. Toutefois, cette étude démontre que les romanciers de cette époque adaptent leurs romans aux changements du pouvoir politique international.

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Aftermath: Diplomacy and the Postwar British Novel

Aftermath

Diplomats circulate through modern fiction. This dissertation looks at diplomats and international relations in fiction and non-fiction written between 1935 and 1965 by Rebecca West, Lawrence Durrell, Olivia Manning, and John Le Carré. Writing fiction in the 1950s and 1960s that deals with an earlier time period, these writers are frequently concerned with the effects of British involvement in the Second World War. Their positions as outsiders shape their attitudes toward foreign relations. Sent out as envoys for the British Foreign Office, the British Council, or the Intelligence Services, they manifest their sense of the diminishing importance of Britain on the international stage in their fiction. Especially after the Second World War, ambassadors and messengers, while living abroad, are tasked with maintaining security and stability at home. As a corollary, postwar writers chronicle the end of the British Empire from perspectives outside Britain. Whereas Rebecca West reported on the Nuremberg Trials and postwar treason trials and continued to write about questions of evil and international responsibility in her multi-volume novel, *Cousin Rosamund: A Saga of the Century*, Lawrence Durrell worked as a minor official in Egypt and Cyprus. In the *Alexandria Quartet*, Durrell questions the influence of ambassadors on international affairs. Olivia Manning's *Balkan Trilogy* reflects on British national identity in relation to the postwar refugee crisis from the perspective of a group of British Council workers abroad, while John Le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* and *The Looking Glass War* examine the role of spies and the redefinition of enemies in postwar espionage networks that operate away from public scrutiny.

I focus on the echoes between diplomacy and literary representation because both involve the signification and the interpretation of information. It is no accident that writers use the techniques of diplomacy in their fiction and thematize its practices because "diplomacy is a political practice that is also a writing practice. It is deeply invested in the dynamics of writing, in the structuring of narrative, and in the development of scriptural authority" (Hampton 7). Centering on the circulation of information and on the messenger's eloquence, diplomacy offers a model for fiction that amasses details about foreign cultures, then orders them into what will become future foreign policy. These narratives also show a concern with the state of British culture as it is perceived globally, and with the deployment of culture to stave off fascism. In many cases, British enclaves emerge in foreign locations. For example, in Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*, British subjects mingle with international diplomats and spies. In Olivia Manning's *Balkan Trilogy*, British expatriates stage a production of *Troilus and Cressida* in Romania. By representing British characters abroad, postwar novels interrogate questions of community and responsibility in the aftermath of war.

This study looks at the period between 1935 and 1965 as a time that deals with the aftermath of empire in Britain and around the world. The choice of the term "aftermath" rather than "postwar" to refer to the period emphasizes the continuities with earlier periods and forms. An aftermath is a time of reckoning with what came before. It is characterized by a sense of belatedness in cultural forms and literary genres. "Aftermath" also designates continuing reverberations. The events of empire and war have repercussions through time; in this case, the rise of international organizations such as the United Nations establish new mechanisms for diplomatic relations between countries. Whereas some critics have characterized the cultural production of this period as a decline

in relation to those of their modernist predecessors, I suggest instead that the mid-century develops out of nineteenth-century and modernist aesthetics while using the means of both to represent political and individual responsibility. Postwar fiction is not an extension of modernism, late modernism and intermodernism—although it shares features with these movements and periodizations—but stands alone as a period of literary and cultural significance unto itself.

While this project is rooted in a period, time also structures the modes of representation chosen by the four writers featured in this dissertation. In a 1953 article entitled "English Fiction at Mid-Century," Elizabeth Bowen recognizes that violent events such as war can accelerate daily life:

> a century halfway along its course may be considered due to declare maturity, to have reached culmination-point, to make seen the fruition of its inherent ideas. The twentieth century's development, however, has been in some directions so violently forced, in others so notably arrested as to seem hardly a development at all. (321)

Bowen's essay registers a sense that the postwar period reckons with past events, some of them so violent as to defy summing up. A halt in development is needed for reckoning to take place. More recently, Paul Virilio has argued that speed is a characteristic of war and that art forms enable us to re-examine, and look back, in order to understand the significance of those events. Even Virilio, however, has moved from an account of speed to a detailed study of ruined Second World War bunkers along the Atlantic Coast in Europe. In *Bunker Archeology* he recalls that, in 1958, at the beach near Saint Guénolé, leaning against a bunker, "this solid inclined mass of concrete, this worthless object...up to then had managed to martial my interest only as a vestige of the Second World War,

only as an illustration for a story, the story of total war" (*Bunker* 11). *Bunker Archeology* represents his thinking about aftermath as a necessary phase that follows total war.

This project looks at multi-volume novels that re-examine the 1930s and the period leading up to the Second World War, as well as novels that trace continuities between the Great War, the Second World War, and the Cold War. I call this period the "aftermath," even though the project begins in 1935, because some works published by Rebecca West in the 1940s were begun in the mid-1930s. In the aftermath, fear of the future was also the fear of another war. After the Second World War, British writers re-examine national identity in light of a retrospective view of events. Writing about the past after the fact, these novelists layer a later understanding of a period into its representation. They write retrospectively in order to look more closely at the origins of the war, as does Rebecca West in her travelogue about Yugoslavia. West, Manning, and Durrell look to history, modern as well as ancient, to explain the catastrophe of the Second World War. They draw parallels and analogues between the past and present. The rise and fall of other empires in earlier times sheds light on the monumental changes to which they are witnesses. Writing fifteen or twenty years after the end of the war, these novelists also trace the effects that the war had on the international balance of power.

While this dissertation situates postwar narratives in relation to time and retrospection, space and geography are equally crucial to the re-configuration of politics and culture after the war. The postwar period and the aftermath are characterized by decolonization; the texts that I examine offer alternatives to the geographical division of regions into centers and peripheries. Timothy Brennan traces the connections between travel and colonialism in the imperial era: "in the four decades between 1876 and 1915, a quarter of the world's land mass was acquired as additional colonies by the main imperial

powers, Britain itself adding about four million square miles to its territory" (71). Whereas in the latter half of the nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth, Britain, especially London, was a center from which culture and modernity radiated outward to the colonies, the novels that I study shift the emphasis to other centers where Britain has lost its influence. In *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* Rebecca West's descriptions of Yugoslavia reject comparisons to British culture, as the different regions of Yugoslavia are culturally significant in themselves. Lawrence Durrell represents Alexandria as a center of culture and draws on its past as a place of learning. In *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus*, he finds that events in Nicosia affect London and diplomatic relations. Olivia Manning traces the early rumblings of the Second World War from Bucharest and shows that Romanians look to Paris rather than to London for cultural influence; just as often, they look north to Soviet Russia out of fear of further political encroachments. One character warns that "only Allied influences had prevented Russia from devouring the Balkans long ago. Rumania, he said, had been invaded by Russia on eight separate occasions and had suffered a number of 'friendly occupations,' none of which had ever been forgiven or forgotten" (298). British citizens in Romania enjoy privileges only as long as military alliances are preserved. In John Le Carré's novels, Berlin displaces London as a center of global politics. Germany becomes the newly contested geographical location that influences international relations. The British in Berlin are players in a larger coalition. Alexandria, Bucharest, Berlin—these cities are locations to which envoys are sent. They shift the balance from a colonial concept of space as a wheel extending outward from a hub, to one where the envoys recognize the reduced importance of London. As spokes in a network animated by cooperation, diplomats and novelists realize that multiple forces run the whole operation of international relations. As West, Durrell,

Manning and Le Carré prove, Britishness does not guarantee privilege or safety in the new postwar geopolitical configuration. These four novelists trace the ways in which envoys navigate postwar space as journalists, diplomats, spies, and refugees.

Although space has been theorized as a colonial category, this project looks at the way in which writers who work for cultural organizations such as the British Council participated in a shift from a colonial to a postwar organization of geography and space. Timothy Hampton argues that diplomacy,

> involves what Michel de Certeau has called 'spatial practices,' the specific strategies, both official and unofficial, through which subjects use movement to mark out or configure space. Such strategies principally (though not exclusively) involve the construction of narratives…Diplomatic movement bears a particularly complicated relationship to the official processes through which space is marked out by political institutions (76).

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the global movements of journalists, including Rebecca West, are sanctioned by the need to disseminate information for a reading public and to report from the centers of activity. For Olivia Manning's characters and war refugees in the *Balkan Trilogy*, space is determined by the hope of escape. Whereas knowledge of Egypt in Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* is overseen by the Foreign Office, secrecy animates spies' movements and their trade in information in John Le Carré's espionage fiction. Temporally and spatially, postwar novels re-imagine communities in terms of international belonging.

British National Identity and International Cooperation

Many politicians and writers in the 1930s and 1940s regarded the Second World

War and its aftermath as the result of unsatisfactory diplomatic efforts to achieve a lasting peace in those years. As historians have remarked, total war was a new experience: "Local, regional, or global, the wars of the twentieth century were to be on an altogether vaster scale than anything previously experienced" (Hobsbawm 24). In Britain, the realization of the unprecedented power of the German war machine caused the country to launch an effort to win the war; this effort eventually exhausted British resources and weakened its economic power. As Phyllis Lassner points out, the question of British involvement in the Second World War polarized women writers like Naomi Mitchison and Storm Jameson. Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* weighs in on this debate in terms of the ramifications of aggressive takeovers that occurred in Yugoslavia. In the *Alexandria Quartet*, Lawrence Durrell also looks back to this period to think about the limitations of local diplomacy. Britain entered into the war as a result of its earlier agreement to defend Poland in the event of a German attack on that country. When pre-war alliances and Neville Chamberlain's attempts at striking a deal with Hitler failed to stop the war, there was a growing suspicion and skepticism about the efficacy of diplomacy to maintain peace.

A difficult economic recovery after the war forced Britain to abandon its colonies, and the implementation of the Welfare State in Britain increased government costs. Not only could Britain not afford to engage in colonial administration, it had to borrow to cover domestic expenditure. "Britain was still heavily indebted to the US, paying interest on outstanding loans; pressure on sterling in 1955 had even led London to consider seeking a temporary waiver of these payments" (Judt 295). Although Egypt had been independent since 1922, the Suez Canal was administered by a French company. Britain, which depended on the Canal for oil shipments, wanted to maintain some measure of

influence in the region. After the Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser decided to nationalize the Suez Canal, Britain, France, and Israel secretly launched an attack on Egypt. The attack was a failure and the US refused to support British colonialist aims in Egypt. Tony Judt interprets the British response to the crisis as a rejection of international cooperation: "Whatever their public posture, the British and French were impatient with the UN and its cumbersome procedures. They didn't *want* a diplomatic solution" (295). The attempt to place the strategic interests of Britain ahead of its requirement to cooperate with the US and the international community proved that the nation could no longer act alone in international matters. The Suez Crisis had a marked impact on British national consciousness. Historians such as Tony Judt find that the early 1950s, up to and including the coronation of Elizabeth II, were characterized by optimism. "From 1956, the tone began to darken discernibly," as illustrated by John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* (1956), and the film *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), which refuses to portray British wartime heroism (Judt 299-300).

In the same period, instability threatened Cyprus. As Lawrence Durrell recounts in *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus*, the British were forced first to respond and later to withdraw from the island. EOKA, the *Ethniki Orgánosis Kipriakoú Agónos*, or National Organization of Cypriot Struggle, a militant independent organization, protested against British control over Cyprus and fought for *Enosis*, or reunification with Greece. Violent demonstrations instigated a state of Emergency in 1955, but Cyprus became an independent state in 1960. In 1963 a UN Peacekeeping Force was brought in to arbitrate an agreement with the Turkish inhabitants of the Island. Both the Suez Crisis and the EOKA rebellion in Cyprus showed the British the importance of cooperating with the US and with the UN.

Shifting notions of the enemy characterize the changing alliances in the aftermath of the Second World War. This period saw the proliferation of supra-national organizations such as NATO, the UN, and UNESCO. The War did not conclude with a peace treaty; tensions with Russia only escalated into the Cold War. As John Le Carré's novels show, the clear sense of an evil enemy during the Second World War became more muddied in the postwar years as the British and the Germans collaborated to stem the Soviet presence in Europe for fear of a Communist takeover. As Mark Rawlinson notes, "in the postwar era, the enemy [was] redefined in numerous contexts, from the trials of major war criminals…to the rehabilitation and rearmament of Bundesrepublik within NATO" (205). The necessity of re-arming Germany to guard against Soviet threat also meant that German guilt needed to be re-configured in the public imagination. After the end of the war, a number of trials took place that tried to punish wrongdoers and re-establish a sense of order:

> As the Nuremberg trial and the Paris Peace Conference in 1946, the drafting of the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and, thirteen years later, the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem all demonstrated, the law was at its most audacious and creative in the immediate postwar period. (Stonebridge 2)

Although the trials were a necessary process in the recovery from war, Rebecca West and other reporters were uneasy at the insistence of the Russians to appear in military uniform. Writers and politicians also questioned the long-held British position that it had been ignorant about the atrocities committed by the Nazis during the war.

Despite this unease, Western Europe developed new alliances and strategies in this period, including re-arming Germany, in order to defend itself against a possible threat

from the Soviet Union. As Tony Judt explains, NATO decided that the safest way to subdue the Soviet Union and to ensure stability was to create alliances among the Western European countries:

> In July 1951 the Western Allies had declared their 'state of war' with Germany to be over, but in the circumstances of a rapidly intensifying Cold War there was still no Peace Treaty, and little prospect of one to come…the expanding web of international alliances, agencies and accords offered little guarantee of international harmony…Western Europeans owed their newfound well-being to the uncertainties of the Cold War. (Judt 242)

Established in 1949, NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, brought together the United States, Canada, and fourteen European countries in a defence alliance. NATO ensured that security and stability would be maintained and "illustrated the most significant change that had come over Europe (and the US) as a result of the war—a willingness to share information and to cooperate in defense, security, trade, currency regulations and much else" (Judt 151). During the Cold War, Berlin became the focus of international attention. Much like its representation in John Le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, the city served as a border between a geographical and an ideological East and West and became a hub of espionage activity. The division of the city into an American, a British, a French, and a Russian sector became symbolic of the uncomfortable alignments characteristic of the postwar period. The building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 physically cut off Eastern from Western Europe, stopped the flow of information, and challenged stability.

Enduring postwar tensions were addressed through several political and cultural networks designed to ensure security and stability, such as the United Nations and the

British Council. The United Nations Charter was ratified on October 24, 1945, and replaced the League of Nations as an international body that would prevent violence. The League of Nations, founded by Woodrow Wilson and others in 1919, aimed to act as an international arbiter but ultimately failed to prevent the invasion of Manchuria by Japan in 1931 and the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 (Black 202). It was also felt that in the Great War, diplomacy had "served the ends of geopolitical goals" (187). In the period after the Second World War, international organizations once again aimed to curb the territorial ambitions of some countries. The rise of these organizations reinforced a global view of political responsibility. With decidedly idealist and humanist aims underpinning its Charter, the UN placed human rights at the center of global foreign relations.

One of the first tasks that the UN undertook in this period was to advocate on behalf of refugees. If the Second World War victimized non-combatants and civilian populations, the years immediately following the war saw an unprecedented rise in displaced persons and refugees: "All wars dislocate the lives of non-combatants…But in World War Two it was state policies rather than armed conflict that did the worst damage…Between them Stalin and Hitler uprooted, transplanted, expelled, deported, and dispersed some 30 million people in the years 1939-1943" (Judt 22-23). According to the OED, the term refugee was "originally applied to the French Huguenots who came to England after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685." In 1951, a UN Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees revised earlier legislation and re-defined the term "refugees" as persons who:

> As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside

> the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (16).

A further distinction was also made between refugees and displaced persons: the former were considered homeless, while the latter referred to those who still had an existing home (Judt 29).

The 1951 UN Convention and Protocol also provided guidelines for the obligations due to refugees from their country of residence relative to their education, ownership of property, and rights of movement:

> The Convention consolidates previous international instruments relating to refugees and provides the most comprehensive codification of the rights of refugees yet attempted on the international level. It lays down basic minimum standards for the treatment of refugees, without prejudice to the granting by States of more favorable treatment. The Convention is to be applied without discrimination as to race, religion or country of origin, and contains various safeguards against the expulsion of refugees. It also makes provision for their documentation, including a refugee travel document in passport form (5).

Most importantly for this project, the Convention insisted that refugees be provided a travel document that allows them movement from their country of residence. As the 1951 Convention makes clear, the postwar refugee crisis "was something new in the European experience" (Judt 22). UNRRA, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation

Administration, responsible for coordinating efforts at repatriating refugees and displaced persons, was another example of the role that intergovernmental organization came to occupy in the postwar period. Refugees and displaced persons, dislocated by the aggressive warfare of nations, became the responsibility of so-called neutral organizations whose legislation transcends the boundaries of nations and states.

Whereas the UN governed political matters, a number of cultural organizations that aimed to promote peace through cultural exchange also emerged in this period. UNESCO, founded in 1944 in the context of postwar idealisms, had an educational mission. UNESCO "represented the great liberal ideals of the Enlightenment, encompassing western values of freedom, democracy and human rights, and positing a faith in reason and science as the motors of progress" (Pearson xii). Its Paris headquarters, built between 1954 and 1958 and modeled on the UN buildings in New York, used modernist architecture as "a universal language in a unified world" (xiv). The way forward, politically as well as diplomatically, was thought to lie in the common good of all countries around the globe.

While UNESCO championed a global exchange of learning in all disciplines, the British Council was established to facilitate the global dissemination of the English language and of British culture. The British Council was created jointly by the Ministry of Information and the Foreign Office in 1934. Although precursors had existed from the turn of the century in the form of British Institutes for the promotion of the English language and had been well established throughout Europe and South America, the Council coordinated the activities of such Institutes through centralized planning committees. According to its charter, the British Council was charged with the "promotion of a wider knowledge of this country and of the English language abroad…

[as well as] with the development of closer cultural relations between this and other countries" (NA BW 1/43). The creation of the Council coincided with a new spirit of cooperation in British foreign policy that encouraged the participation of cultural ambassadors in diplomatic missions concerned with building political and economic ties with Continental Europe.

Early on the Foreign Office and the British Council disagreed about the focus of Council activities. While the Foreign Office hoped to deepen cultural relations with countries of economic and commercial significance, the British Council sought to increase British influence in countries that they believed to be of political importance. As Frances Donaldson points out, Germany and France had recognized the benefits of cultural propaganda abroad and had been sending cultural attachés abroad with diplomatic missions since the eighteenth century. During the 1920s, evidence grew of the damage done to British interests by the increasingly hostile propaganda of other countries as well as of the size of the budget devoted to cultural propaganda. Harold Nicolson attributes the British reluctance to set up cultural-diplomatic missions to an aversion to all types of self-display: "If foreigners failed to appreciate, or even to notice, our gifts of invention or our splendid adaptability, then there was nothing that we could do to mitigate their obtuseness. The genius of England, unlike that of lesser countries, spoke for itself" (Donaldson 2). Rex Leeper, the chairman of the British Council during the Second World War, explained that "The British would not…embark on any programme of this sort until they were convinced that it was materially damaging to their interests not to do so" (Donaldson 12). Thus the creation of the British Council, with its mission to expand British cultural influence around the globe, coincides with the beginning of a decline in British political influence on world affairs.

Archival sources suggest that one of the key debates to surface in the first meetings of the Planning Committee for Foreign Lectures was the question of reciprocity; the committee discussed whether or not the British Council should engage in "facilitating the making known of other cultures in the UK" (BW 1/43). Lord Tyrell, the first chairman of the Council, wrote to his committee that "Neither objective (cultural propaganda and political influence) can be properly attained, the Council feels, unless we show real interest, both here and abroad, in the culture, history and ways of life of the other peoples" (BW, Correspondence). In response to its declining cultural influence, Britain looked to collaboration and exchange with other countries and cultures. As Janet Minihan has noted, the British government began to sponsor the arts to a greater extent during the interwar years: "In a single decade, during and after the Second World War, the British Government did more to commit itself to supporting the arts than it had in the previous century and a half" (Minihan 215). The initial aim of the Council was to avoid war, and in this goal it conceived of culture as an extension of diplomacy.

Diplomacy: A Short History

Diplomacy refers to the meetings between government representatives who negotiate on behalf of their countries, but who do not themselves set the course of policies that they follow. Diplomacy has been defined as "the process and machinery by which…negotiation is carried out" (Johnson 1). It is the implementation of a more general direction set by national foreign policy, and it changes according to context and circumstances. Diplomacy does not function independently of the other activities of a country; it assumes national, ideological positions. Legitimized by the state to carry messages to other countries, diplomats can influence the course of events through the

information they report, but they cannot deviate from the policies that have been set for them by their home government.

In the twentieth century, the failures of diplomacy to prevent global warfare led to the creation of intergovernmental and supra-national organizations in the wake of the First World War. Historians of diplomacy note that this period also prompted changes in diplomatic practice. The failures of the First War were attributed to aristocratic diplomats who had been removed from the horrors of the war and therefore untouched by them. T.G. Otte explains the reasons why aristocratic envoys were distrusted:

> the revulsion at the carnage of the First World War, the first general war in Europe for almost a century, led to a search for its origins in which diplomatists were the readily identifiable main culprits. The strong reaction against the pre-war aristocratic *internationale* of diplomatists, and particularly against what was called the 'old' or 'secret diplomacy'. (qtd. in Johnson 1)

The interwar period was characterized by a shift from what Harold Nicolson and other historians have called the "old" to the "new diplomacy." This change prompted greater transparency in diplomatic negotiation and greater effort at international cooperation: "diplomacy was to serve a global order dedicated to the enforcement of systemic rules; the world could not afford the use of diplomacy to forward disparate national interests opposed to these rules" (Nicolson 204). Countries had to re-direct their policies to benefit the international order rather than their own interests.

The rise of "summit diplomacy" (Black 15), or diplomacy conducted by conferences, characterizes interwar and post-Second World War international relations. During the war and immediately after, the US, the Soviet Union, and Britain met in

"Allied conferences at Casablanca (1943), Cairo (1943), Tehran (1943) and Potsdam (1945) reflected the importance of intermediary locations" (Black 209). While summits represented a new method for conducting international relations, as Jeremy Black has noted, these meetings were not always successful at establishing dialogue between ideologically opposed states. Individual countries still thought in terms of self-interest and alliances:

> Summit diplomacy represented the continuation of pre-war practices including of special diplomatic missions, as well as an attempt to maintain alliances and provide forums for negotiation to cope with the failure or deficiencies of international agencies such as the League of Nations and, later, the United Nations. (209)

Black notes that as leaders took center-stage in summits, diplomats advised but did not directly participate in negotiations: "Thus summit diplomacy in part represented an attempt to advance the domestic perspective more directly, if not forcefully, and was a rejection of the idea of diplomacy as a means of compromise grounded in a professional understanding of (and often sympathy for) other points of view" (210).

In the interwar period, diplomats became increasingly public figures. Thus the old secret diplomacy was transformed to include greater consultation with the ordinary citizen and was conducted through means that could be verified, rather than in secret meetings. In the twentieth century, diplomacy was carried out in the public eye, and envoys were chosen from among meritorious public figures. In the later twentieth century, diplomats faced the cameras and the press. The twentieth century also saw changes in the openness of the diplomatic service to women and to people of different classes. Jeremy Black argues that "the social attitudes seen in the diplomatic service were scarcely those of an

advanced society, although they were certainly typical of the age. Even in 1918, the Diplomatic Secretary worried that men who had not been to public school would enter the diplomatic service" (Black 184). After the war, women and envoys from all classes began to work in the Foreign Service and created an atmosphere of greater equity.

Changing communications brought about by new technologies also meant that decisions were made more quickly: diplomats could no longer ponder a document for as long as they felt necessary. But these new technologies also showed that diplomacy is more than just what one diplomat says to another. Diplomacy relies on time and builds over time. Negotiation, one of the chief tasks of the ambassador, is a gradual process. Words, communications, and encounters accumulate over a period of time to constitute a relationship between two states.

Despite technological changes, diplomatic work remains grounded in writing. The textuality of the diplomat's work is embedded in the etymology of the word "diplomacy" itself. In his study *Diplomacy,* Harold Nicolson explains that the term

> is derived from the Greek verb "diploun" meaning "to fold." In the days of the Roman Empire, all passports, passes along imperial roads and way-bills were stamped on double metal plates and folded and sewn together in a particular manner. These metal passes were called "diplomas." At a later date this word "diploma" was extended to cover other and less metallic official documents conferring privileges or embodying arrangements with foreign communities and tribes. (Nicolson 11)

The diplomat's movement from one country or state to another is sanctioned by a document that not only allows for passage, but also confers immunity. Unlike the warrior, the diplomat travels to promote peace and stability between nations. The "diploun"

constitutes the record of the diplomat's movements between states, as well as the event of this passage.

A concern with archiving and with the preservation of documents is also conveyed in the etymology of the word, as even the earliest practice of diplomacy shows:

> As these treaties accumulated, the imperial archives became encumbered with innumerable little documents folded and endorsed in a particular manner. It was found necessary to employ trained clerks to index, decipher, and preserve these documents. Hence the profession of archivist arose, and with it the science of palaeography—the science, that is, of deciphering and verifying ancient documents. The occupations were, until late in the seventeenth century, called '*res diplomatica*' or 'diplomatic business', namely the business of dealing with archives and diplomas. (*Diplomacy* 11)

Nicolson's observation about the centrality of archives and paperwork to statecraft demonstrates that the state *is* its papers. Matters of state are planned, negotiated, and carried out on paper. State papers are both powerful and insubstantial: they determine the course of future events but can be easily destroyed. Diplomatic correspondence is carefully preserved since continuity is central to diplomacy. Past agreements and documents serve as living memory: they establish precedents for future relations among states.

By recording observations and recommending courses of action, the diplomat functions as a node between past and future relations between countries. Records of the diplomat's personal observations were archived as the written word replaced the spoken word in negotiations. The diplomat thus became a producer of texts that were

meticulously kept on file, and the written document became central to the practice of diplomacy:

> diplomacy, as its name implies, is a written rather than a verbal art…An ambassador almost invariably receives his instructions in writing; the representations which he thereafter makes to the foreign government are either embodied in a carefully drafted Note or conveyed in a personal interview; in the latter event he is careful, immediately on his return, to record the course of that interview in a despatch to his own government. (Nicolson, *Diplomacy* 113)

From the very beginnings of diplomacy in the Byzantine period, the diplomat was principally an informant charged with bringing news from far corners of an empire or lands with whom a state maintained a commercial relationship. Garrett Mattingly notes that "one of the chief functions of the resident ambassador came to be to keep a continuous stream of foreign political news flowing to his home government" (58). But gauging how much detail was enough proved difficult.

In Renaissance despatches from Italian ambassadors, many seemingly useless details and reports of idle gossip were included, but there was good reason for this overabundance of information. "By making the mesh fine," Mattingly explains, "fewer items were likely to escape because the man on the spot missed a significance clear enough to a minister who had the run of dispatches from all over Italy" (Mattingly 97). Such reports assumed a passive role for the ambassador: although he reported information, he offered neither commentary nor opinion on the subjects related. As diplomacy became increasingly based on the diplomat's written observations in the eighteenth century, the written report became more than a utilitarian object: the style of a

written report also assumed importance. An eighteenth-century French minister, writing to one of his diplomats, "would devote hours of blissful energy to the composition of…'Instructions' which…developed into literary exercises of the utmost elegance" (Nicolson, *Diplomacy* 56-7). The document, whether the "diploun" or the communiqués of news and information collected by the diplomat, is key in the practice of diplomacy.

As observers and recorders, ambassadors occupy a liminal subject-position *vis-à-vis* political events. In *The Evolution of Diplomatic Method*, Nicolson claims that, in the sixteenth century, "theorists saw diplomats as angels who traveled the space between heaven and earth" (27). Mobility, rather than political agency, confers power upon diplomats. Derived from a Celtic word for "servant," an ambassador takes instructions from a home government and is a minor character in the great chain of decision-making (Nicolson 33). In their liminality, ambassadors and diplomats exercise a number of different functions: they act as emissaries and informants, but they are also negotiators and interpreters. Diplomats observe and record events as they happen; they execute but do not write policy. In their roles, ambassadors use language for peacemaking rather than for warfare; their work promotes continuity rather than catastrophe. They advocate for the continuation of discussion and negotiations. Nicolson cites Demosthenes, who argues that "'ambassadors…have no battleships at their disposal, or heavy infantry, or fortresses; their weapons are words and opportunities'" (13).

Key to the ambassador's power to arbitrate for maintaining peaceful relations between states is his neutrality and his objectivity, specifically in exercising his powers of observation. In his essay, "A Trait of Certain Ambassadors," Michel de Montaigne remarks that the ambassador should deliver a faithful account of events while retaining as much neutrality as possible: "It seems to me that the function of the servant is to represent

things faithfully in their entirety just as they happened, leaving to his master the liberty to arrange, judge, and choose" (Montaigne 51). According to Montaigne, the ambassador has the right neither to omit nor to embellish, for to do so would constitute an abuse of power. If the diplomat is the vehicle for the information that he transmits, then the living envoy is also a sensory apparatus for the powerful body he represents. Part of the ambassador's role rests in his ability to decide what is important and what his master should heed. But the ambassador, through his opinion, can nevertheless influence policy. Montaigne points out that though they must be neutral and honest: "ambassadors have freer commission, which in many areas depends in the last resort on their judgment; they do not simply carry out, but also by their counsel form and direct their master's will" (51). He cites several examples of ambassadors whose effectiveness was even compromised by a too close adherence to orders. The diplomat is more than a negotiator and an interpreter. As "the chief channel of communication between his own government and that to which he is accredited…he remains the intermediary who alone can explain the purposes and motives of one government to another. The ambassador's opinion, judgment and authority to suggest a course of action are central to his work" (Nicolson, *Evolution of Diplomatic Method* 82). The diplomat's power, therefore, rests in his ability to influence a situation. His authority lies in his first-hand experience of the country in which he is resident.

The envoy's understanding of the circumstances and context surrounding the information that he has heard is indissociable from the information itself. That the diplomat's status confers neutrality does not mean that he is to be devoid of opinion. Harold Nicolson echoes Montaigne in his insistence that "an ambassador in a foreign capital must always be the main source of information, above all the interpreter, regarding political conditions, trends and opinions in the country in which he resides" (*Evolution of*

Diplomatic Method 82).

Hermes, the ruling deity of diplomats, governs commercial transactions, which entail the circulation of money and information. Hermes is also the patron of diplomats and of writers. The word "hermeneutics," which derives from "Hermes," connects, etymologically, the faculty of interpretation and the circulation of information. Thus, the diplomat is a traveler who is engaged in a hermeneutic enterprise of decoding and interpreting his surroundings. In his discussion of Ezra Pound in *The Gift*, Lewis Hyde offers a description of the attributes of the god Hermes which is useful for thinking about diplomacy. As the ruling deity of messengers and travelers, Hermes belongs to no specific location:

> If we imagine an ancient road at dusk, a road passing through no-man's-land and connecting two towns but itself neither here nor there, we will begin to imagine the ancient Hermes, for he is the God of the Roads, identified not with any home or hearth or mountain but with the traveler on the highway…He wants everything to be on the road: travelers, money, and merchandise. (Hyde 323-324)

The diplomat has a duty to convey the message he is tasked with by his government. Detachment affords him the luxury of communicating different kinds of message, and being removed from their content. As Lewis Hyde states, "Hermes is an amoral connecting deity…the moral tone of an exchange does not concern him…When he's the messenger of the gods he's like the post office: he'll carry love letters, hate letters, stupid letters, or smart letters" (Hyde 324).

Unlike Hermes, however, the diplomat must remain loyal to the state for which he speaks. He may be an outsider or a traveler, but he is nonetheless the representative of a

nation state abroad. The danger is that a diplomat may forget his loyalties. Harold Nicolson, like Montaigne before him, warns against the diplomat being too close to the country in which he serves:

> If a man spends his whole life in any given community he is bound to develop affections and prejudices which distort his evidence. So strongly is the danger anticipated by the British foreign office that it is their habit, when a man has been too long in the Far East, to appoint him somewhere in Latin America…The business of the diplomat is to represent his own government in a foreign country; if he lives too long in a foreign country, he may lose touch with his own home opinion and his representative value will be diminished. (250-1)

The longer an ambassador works away from his home state, the more he is likely to become detached from the country that he represents. The ambassador should understand the cultural referents of the country in which he is resident, but nonetheless remain loyal to the interests of his home country.

Postwar British Novel

Walter Benjamin asked, in the aftermath of World War I, "Was it not noticeable at the end of the war that men returned from the battlefield grown silent—not richer, but poorer in communicable experience?" (84). War does not produce words; instead, the shock of violence and destruction leads to silence. Several years must pass before the full extent of the consequences of catastrophe, including warfare, can be measured and understood. The postwar novels of Rebecca West, Lawrence Durrell, Olivia Manning and John Le Carré break the silence left by aggressive warfare. Their narratives trace the

international causes and effects of war without necessarily representing it directly. The discourses of diplomacy, negotiation, and revision have a stylistic influence on postwar novels, which thematize the practice of foreign relations by raising questions about the neutrality and detachment of narrators. Diplomacy and literary representation both focus on signification and the interpretation of information. The diplomat and the novelist structure information into a meaningful narrative and edit out whatever does not signify. While journalists like Rebecca West make information available for the good of the reading public, minor foreign officials like Lawrence Durrell gather information for the use of the state. Olivia Manning's refugees look for information about the upcoming war, whereas John Le Carré's spies are victimized by the intelligence services for which they work.

This project builds on and extends several existing studies of the postwar period. While many critics have examined the period 1935-1965 under various guises, no study has reflected on the novelists' engagement with foreign relations in this turbulent period. Tony Judt's historical study, *Postwar* (2007) focuses on European political and social history from 1945 to 1989. Judt studies the details of the political intricacies of the rebuilding of Europe and of the Cold War. His determination to call the postwar the *History of Europe from 1945* suggests that the postwar period is still ongoing and that its effects are felt into the twenty-first century. Alan Sinfield's *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (1997) looks at the repercussions of the Second World War in the 1950s, and the development of an increasingly multi-cultural Britain. Sinfield's study marks the period 1945-1989 as bearing out the effects of the war. He traces the hopes of social and political change that prompted popular support for the war and charts the ways in which the postwar years failed to bring some of the changes that were promised.

Mid-century fiction, which has suffered from critical neglect, is enjoying increasing attention. Michael Gorra's *The English Novel at Mid-Century: From the Leaning Tower* (1990) considers that Henry Green, Anthony Powell, Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh "gave the novel a way to go on by creating an idiom…that simultaneously attempted to restore, and yet acknowledged the difficulties of maintaining, the novel's traditional function as mediator between subjective experience and objective world" (xvi). Marina MacKay's and Lyndsey Stonebridge's more recent study *British Fiction After Modernism: The Novel at Mid-Century* (2007), brings together essays on Rebecca West, Muriel Spark, Olivia Manning, Henry Green, Ivy Compton-Burnett and others in order to "get beyond the formalist distinction between experimental and realist fiction that has dominated accounts of this period" (3). This dissertation extends the effort of MacKay and Stonebridge to position mid-century fiction and non-fiction in relation to its own time and in response to modernism. Their collection posits several responses to "how the English literary 'centre' ceased to understand itself as central" (10). MacKay and Stonebridge's study looks at novels of a period that some critics thought to have produced only negligible fiction, and contributes to re-considering the ways in which fiction from this period works in relation to modernism.

The re-formulation of British national identity in response to the end of empire has been the subject of recent studies as well. Jed Esty's *A Shrinking Island* (2004), which looks at the relationship between modernism and the end of empire, focuses on later works by high modernists such as E.M.Forster, Virginia Woolf and T.S. Eliot. Esty argues that late modernist literature responded to the decline of empire through what he calls an "anthropological turn…the discursive process by which English intellectuals translated the end of empire into a resurgent concept of national culture…" (2). Late

modernist British writers, Esty finds, insisted on English cultural particularity in response to the recognition of their relativity: "The attempt on the part of English writers to reinscribe universal status into the particularist language of home anthropology defines the transition from imperial to postimperial Englishness" (15). While his insight that English and British culture became objects of study for late modernists is the foundation of my project, the writers on which I have focused suggest that British culture continued to promote itself globally through institutions such as the British Council well into the 1960s. My project also builds on Simon Gikandi's *Maps of Englishness* (1996) which redefines Englishness in relation to the colonies and looks at how imperialism shaped notions of Englishness in British national culture at home. Gikandi's point about the relationality between colonies and notions of Britishness offers a model for thinking about British national culture.

Nick Bentley's *Radical Fictions: The English Novel in the 1950s* (2007), considers the way in which Englishness is reconfigured in novels by Sam Selvon, John Wain, Kingsley Amis, among others. Focusing on anxieties in England, Bentley argues that these novelists are in fact experimental and respond to new political movements, such as the emerging New Left. Peter Kalliney's *Cities of Affluence and Anger: A Literary Geography of Modern Englishness* (2006) also looks at class and metropolitan literature of the 1950s, and how British writers responded to the postwar climate of economic contraction. Kalliney finds that "the reality of imperial decline forced the English to turn inward, to perform a thorough inventory of Englishness in the absence of an expansive imperial imaginary…it was the domestic class system…that allowed the English to reframe the discourse of national identity through a social system that was intrinsically and mysteriously unique to England" (6).

This study also engages with reformulations of modernism such as Tyrus Miller's *Late Modernism* (1999). Miller's study focuses on "modernism from the perspective of its end" (5) and situates the beginning of late modernism in the late 1920s. He considers that American and British writers such as Djuna Barnes, Wyndham Lewis, and Samuel Beckett marked the transition between modernism and postmodernism. The current project also builds on Kristin Bluemel's *Intermodernism* (2009), which examines literature produced in the 1930s and 1940s by writers who "saw their responsibilities, as writers, primarily to 'the people'" (1). Defined in relation to modernism, intermodernism is "a cultural and critical bridge or borderland whose inhabitants are always looking two ways" (2). Intermodernism refers to both a period and a style, but is not necessarily stylistically unified (5).

Postwar novels examine points of contact between fiction and the changing landscape of international relations, diplomacy, and international law. In the postwar period, Britain was increasingly committed to global cooperation rather than to colonial domination. By focusing on diplomacy, the postwar novel "shifts the terms of investigation to a median space…that is neither the space of monarchial domination nor the space of imperial conquest through violence" (Hampton 4). Diplomacy gathers information about foreign countries to promote cooperation. While these activities bear the traces of the colonial administration of power, in the *longue durée* of decolonization, British diplomats and envoys work toward finding peaceful solutions. In *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, for example, West gathers information about Yugoslavia for the British Council in order to encourage British participation in the war effort against Nazi power. Similarly, Lawrence Durrell uses his fame as a poet and novelist to bridge British and Cypriot interests.

As Edward Said has shown, historically, Britons' knowledge about foreign countries and locations served the ends of colonial domination. In *Orientalism*, he describes the colonialist relationship between knowledge and power. Referring to James Balfour and to the colonizing of Egypt, Said explains how knowledge masquerades as a "civilizing" force:

> As Balfour justifies the necessity for British occupation of Egypt, supremacy in his mind is associated with 'our' knowledge of Egypt and not principally with military and economic power. Knowledge to Balfour means surveying a civilization from its origins to its prime to its decline—and of course, it means being able to do that. Knowledge means rising above immediacy, beyond self, into the foreign and distant…To have such knowledge of a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. (32)

In postwar novels concerned with foreign relations, knowledge is not a colonial category. Diplomatic encounters constitute moments of cultural exchange. In the novel, cultural and linguistic negotiations are manifested in questions of representation, genre, and rhetoric. In fiction and non-fiction by Manning, Durrell, and West, knowledge of foreign locations does not strengthen British national identity; rather, knowledge relativizes national identity.

Representatives of a political community, like West, Durrell, Le Carré, and Manning's protagonist Harriet Pringle, are envoys of their country and ethnographers of another culture. They derive their authority to report on Nuremberg, Cyprus, or Romania from their first-hand witnessing of these locations rather than from military prowess or political influence. As Timothy Hampton notes, diplomacy is "the space where the influential Foucaultian notion of 'power' takes the plural form of shifting diplomatic

'powers,' where authority is mere representation, and where representation must claim whatever authority it can garner through negotiation instead of violence" (4). As British representatives, these writers work with cultural organizations that aim to establish peaceful relations with foreign countries. Cultural and political agencies in the years immediately preceding the war and in the postwar period sought to create alliances between countries rather than between heads of state.

In keeping with the historical shift in diplomacy, in postwar novels, envoys who create peaceful alliances are drawn from the middle classes rather than from aristocratic circles. Jeremy Black points out that the period after the First World War saw a growing mistrust of diplomats, who were considered aloof from the concerns of ordinary people: "Diplomacy suffered from a number of critiques…notably widespread populist/nativist hostility to professional diplomats as suspiciously cosmopolitan, too sympathetic to foreigners, smooth-talking, and sly" (Black 188). In *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, Rebecca West refers to herself as an ordinary woman whose point of view on Yugoslavia is made more reliable by her sympathy for ordinary people. In *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus* Durrell mixes with locals at the *taverna*. Guy Pringle in the *Balkan Trilogy* has Socialist sympathies and comes from a lower-class family. While nineteenth-century diplomats negotiated through the elegance of their language, postwar envoys create consensus by engaging in dialogue with a variety of people.

That postwar novels engage with the representation of information and with issues of interpretation is also due to these novelists' careers as journalists. They focus on re-creating events in their daily details. As Iris Murdoch notes in a 1961 essay "Against Dryness," the mid-century novel "tended toward one of two extremes. It could be 'journalistic…a large shapeless quasi-documentary object, the degenerate descendant of

the 19th Century novel, telling, with pale conventional characters, some straightforward story enlivened with empirical facts" (Gorra xv). West's and Manning's postwar novels, for example, focus on the ordinary experience of witnesses. Much of West's postwar journalism addresses jurisprudence, especially trials, and the boredom that arises from interminable legal processes.

Although they draw on the discourses of journalism and emphasize daily life, postwar serial novels also seek to understand the effects of events. As a result, novelists write the Second World War retrospectively. These novels re-create the details of events that happened too quickly to be grasped; they document change, not permanence. The narration of the aftermath requires seriality because the consequences of the war are only understood through time. Multi-volume novels are also interested in the past; their task of remembering becomes a political act. The novel of foreign relations privileges the present, although it may look back on past events. As Harold Nicolson points out, diplomacy values history as the key to the conduct of relations between states. By looking back on incomprehensible and catastrophic events, these novels reject the inevitability of wars and insist on the possibility of influencing future events.

Postwar multi-volume novels have important antecedents in Anthony Trollope's *Barchester* series, John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*, and Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage.* The postwar period saw a resurgence of lengthy multi-volume novels, not all of which were set abroad. Evelyn Waugh's *Men at Arms* series and Anthony Powell's *Dance to the Music of Time* are both principally concerned with postwar life in England. The novels considered in this project, however, contextualize Britain on the international stage. The postwar serial novels of West, Manning, Durrell, and Le Carré document social change from a panoramic perspective. As they register the aftermath of violence,

these novels expand to encyclopedic, multi-volume proportions. Looked at from one angle, the effort to account for nebulous events and to order ambiguous material defers closure.

To make the argument that the public discourse of diplomacy and foreign relations influenced the thematic concerns and structures of the postwar novel, this dissertation has relied on archival research. Consulting the archives of Rebecca West, Lawrence Durrell, and Olivia Manning demonstrated the extent to which their fiction was influenced by the public discourses of journalism and diplomacy. As Lawrence Rainey points out, the multiplicity of documents that emerge from writers' archives "testifies to the radical interpenetration of the authorial and social worlds, and to the impossibility of distinguishing rigorously between literary and historical documents" (8).

The Foreign Office papers at the National Archives at Kew verify the extent to which foreign relations are conducted through documents and the circulation of information. In 1905, the Crowe-Hardinge reforms created a new way of classifying Foreign Office documents. Correspondence and memos sent by envoys to the London offices of the Foreign Office were all preserved in order to show the evolution of policy-making. The reform also created the minuted sheet, which historians consider to be a landmark in Foreign Office history. The minuted sheet results in a meticulous documentation of policies. Drafts are circulated through rigorous protocols for information sharing, and evolve as a result of the emendations of individuals. As Zara Steiner notes, "the practice of minuted dispatches moving up the departmental hierarchy" gives historians a unique opportunity to trace the decision-making process within the office (14). Foreign Office historian T.G. Otte argues that "in modern sociological parlance, the Foreign Office was a knowledge-based organization" (36). That foreign

relations is still today dependent upon the cataloguing and circulation of documents supports the idea that the modern state is housed in the *archon*, the house of the archives.

The public access of British Council and Foreign Office documents attests to the openness to public scrutiny of those organizations. By contrast, the availability of documents about the British secret service has made it difficult to trace its history. At the Public Records Office the secret service documents were not available to the general public: "Prior to 1981, British departments of state were warned that secret intelligence materials were 'never released' to the Public Records Office" (Aldrich 7).

Because modern foreign relations are dependent on paper, they are also fragile. "In the past, British historians have been fortunate in being able to trace the decision-making process…Efficient information management procedures, guaranteeing a controlled information flow, had to be devised, properly maintained, and constantly revised, geared towards the needs of informed policy-making and decisive action" (Otte 36). As the novels that I focus on in this study show, the documents that are available to write history shape the story that results. In other words, history is mediated through documents. Postwar novels cast a retrospective glance on the period immediately before and after the Second World War while remaining attuned to the power relations at work in any act of ordering and remembering. The British Council and the Foreign Office have had a policy of discarding documents that are no longer felt to be useful, partly because of a lack of storage space. In a recent issue of the *Times Literary Supplement*, T.G. Otte has called attention to the new policy at the National Archives to store "low-usage" documents in a salt mine in Cheshire. "There is no end of stories that might be told about the past. Making a priori digital selections from the surviving material, based on subjective views of the world, will diminish what future historians can achieve" (17). He

argues that the resulting histories that will be written from the documents will have already been shaped by the availability of materials. Postwar novels that represent documents and information call attention to the ways in which the accounts they produce are dependent on having access to information.

Arbitrating the Aftermath: Rebecca West's Journalism and *The Saga of the Century*

In the aftermath of the Second World War, as British influence on international affairs diminished, Rebecca West articulated an emerging postwar Britishness through her journalism. From the 1930s to the 1960s, West's reports—on the Balkans, the Nuremberg trials, the postwar treason trials, and apartheid in South Africa—charted the reconfiguration of a global balance of power. As British foreign policy moved away from imperialist aims, an emerging discourse of internationalism emphasized cooperation over domination. Throughout the postwar period, West interpreted international events in the British press. She used her authority and acclaim to explore the ends to which journalism can bridge cultures. By engaging the public in the task of understanding global affairs, West's journalism performs a certain kind of diplomatic work. Reporting on foreign affairs, she creates a new sense of Britishness in print.

West's postwar fiction engages with the consequences for Britain of the loss of global power and imperial pursuits. Her incomplete tetralogy, *Cousin Rosamund*: *A Saga of the Century*, defamiliarizes the Edwardian past while refusing to sentimentalize its loss by representing a community vulnerable to both domestic and political pressures. I take as a starting point Jed Esty's claim that, "if we think in terms of generational exhaustion, we presume late modernism to be an aftereffect rather than a new historical phase requiring its own formal innovations" (4). *Cousin Rosamund* responds novelistically to an emerging historical phase by employing a realist mode complicated by gothic elements. Although written in the aftermath of the Second World War, West's novel provides an inventory and archive of pre-war England. In its ethnographic analysis of the Aubrey

family's daily life, the novel continues what West began twenty years earlier in her travelogue, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon.*

Cultural Authority in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*

Journalists, like diplomats, interpret information. Both act as messengers. While the diplomat gathers information and orders it for his government to create future foreign policy, the journalist mediates between events and the public sphere to ensure public consultation on major decisions. West uses journalism to weigh the impact of international affairs on Britain, and to build a dialogue between political events and the public mind. As Patrick Collier notes, West worked from an "'educational model' of the press, in the belief that the press could and should educate the masses to prepare them for full participation in political life" (177). Although her political views may have altered in the course of her career, her commitment to journalism did not, and she continued to view "journalism as a force for social advancement and reform" (Collier 172).

In her articles for *The Freewoman*, *The New Freewoman*, *The Clarion*, and *The Egoist* in the 1910s, she both defended and critiqued the suffragette movements. Later, she determined her stance by writing for a wide range of newspapers and magazines, including *Time and Tide*, *The Evening Standard*, *The Daily Mail*, and *The New Yorker*. After the Second World War, her politics shifted to the right, but her method remained processive and her political positions provisional. As Marina MacKay notes, West did not abandon feminist philosophy: "Identity politics always provided her model for reading international politics…her feminist radicalism was a protest against a whole set of enshrined political inequities of which she saw anti-feminism as emblematic" ("Lunacy" 3). In a 1981 interview, West explained, "I really write to

find out what I know about something and what is to be known about something. And I'm more or less experimental" (Warner 248). For this reason, no definitive statement of West's politics exists in any one text; rather, she developed ideas and responses to events as they unfolded.

West had already gained authority as a journalist when she was selected as a lecturer by the British Council in the late 1930s. She was thought a good spokesperson for the ends of cultural diplomacy. West's is a decidedly British point of view, one that she brings to bear on the transition in the latter half of the century from British imperial power to a cooperative partner in global negotiation. In 1936, after a successful lecture tour of Scandinavia and the Baltic Countries under the auspices of the newly created British Council, she undertook a second lecture tour, this time in Austria, Yugoslavia, and Greece. As one of the first official cultural ambassadors for the British Council, she lectured on subjects such as "Personalities in the English Literary World," "Contemporary English Literature," and "Anglo-Yugoslav relations" all during a four-week tour to Prague, Bratislava, Vienna, Lubljiana, Zagreb, Belgrade, Dubrovnik, Sarajevo, and Athens (West Papers, McFarlin, I. 8:3). West's reports to the Council on her travels in Yugoslavia aided the Foreign Office in determining where to send future lecturers in order to maintain cultural influence in the region.

West's experience of cultural exchange in the Balkans became the subject of her thousand-page multi-generic account of her travels, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon,* published in 1941. Although her book—the result of three trips that she made to the region in 1936, 1937 and 1938—is an attempt at creating a conversation between England and Yugoslavia, her study provides instead a detailed account of Yugoslav history and culture for a British audience. As Douglas Mao argues, West consistently

associated sensitivity to beauty with inherent goodness both in her fiction and in her aesthetic theory (191). In the politically charged climate of the 1930s, she took this theory a step further and supported the mission of the British Council, namely to spread British liberal values through culture. In a 1936 report about her travels for the Council written to the chairman of the Lectures Committee, Colonel Bridges, West warns that Britain should step up its cultural propaganda in Yugoslavia. She acknowledges the importance of British influence in the Balkans and advises the Lectures Committee to continue sending cultural envoys to the region. She explains that such missions would be built upon existing sympathies with Britain: "I found everywhere that there was a substantial residue left of the pro-English feeling that began in the war; and since the French influence is so rapidly fading there is an appetite for culture and liberalism which will be unsatisfied unless we take steps to fill it. It is a field worth cultivating" (qtd. in Donaldson 40). West assumes that British liberalism is an inherent part of its culture, and that liberal values can be spread through the teaching of Shakespeare. Despite her agreement with the aims of the Council, however, West's experiences in Yugoslavia convince her that English culture is exceptional only insofar as all cultures are. Visiting a region that was conquered by the Ottoman Empire in the fourteenth century, the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the eighteenth-century, and in 1941 by the Nazis, West recognizes, belatedly, that the British Empire is nearing its end.

West may have initially traveled to the Balkans as a cultural ambassador for Britain, but her book creates a rapprochement between the various foreign occupations of Yugoslavia and the situation in Britain in 1941. She was critical of the insularity of British foreign policy and of what she perceived as a lack of acknowledgement of the role

of so-called "minor nations" in global politics. She took issue with this turn in foreign policy in part because her experience of the Great War confirmed her belief—one which she shared with other writers of her generation—that the effects of events in Sarajevo could be felt in London.

West feared the rise of nationalism in the early part of the century. Consequently, she argued instead for international collaboration. In "The Necessity and Grandeur of the International Ideal," an essay she contributed to Storm Jameson's 1934 volume, *Challenge to Death*, West argues that nationalism "has already produced an unprecedented crop of horrors" (249). In order to avert future disaster, she advocates a return to internationalism. But global partnership, she points out, need not mean that nations will cease to exist, since "nationalism and internationalism are not irreconcilable opposites but counterbalances which can keep the nations in equilibrium" (243). Internationalism is not new, but inscribed in the political traditions of Britain and Europe: "The test of real and valuable nationalism is to avail oneself of the tradition of one's country; and it happens that internationalism is one of the most ancient and firmly established elements in our tradition" (242). In the wake of the First World War, Britain considered it the role of the League of Nations to arbitrate of conflicts in other countries, but its failure to stop either Hitler's invasion of the Rhineland or Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia led to skepticism about its ability to prevent sovereign nations from waging aggressive warfare. In the mid-1930s, West argued against the Conservative policy of appeasement in her articles for *Time and Tide.* She understood but disagreed with the pacifist position, which maintained that because Britain had lost so many lives in the Great War, it should avoid another such conflict. The use of diplomatic means for dealing

with the territorial demands of political leaders like Mussolini and Hitler, she felt, was misguided because the fascist leaders did not negotiate in good faith. Like Storm Jameson and Naomi Mitchison, West maintained that Hitler's extremism had to be dealt with through any means necessary. As Phyllis Lassner notes, "many women writers resisted policies of making peace with Hitler by insisting that this war, unlike others, was the only way to save the Führer's victims" (*Battlegrounds* 3).

The British lack of preparation for the war was partly the result of Neville Chamberlain's political priorities and of his unwillingness to re-arm Britain in the 1930s. In West's analysis, Chamberlain approached foreign policy with the attitudes of a nineteenth-century English gentleman rather than with those of a twentieth-century political leader:

> The Chamberlains were typical of the industrial bourgeoisie that had risen to political power during the nineteenth century, and he had brought to the office of Prime Minister the outlook of a respectable businessman accustomed to deal with businessmen of the same order…The rape of Czechoslovakia horrified Neville Chamberlain, not because he felt any tenderness towards the Czechs, whose representatives he continued to treat with the same coldness and discourtesy he had always shown them, but because he found that the world had changed around him. (*A Train of Powder* 148)

In *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, West associates the political sleepiness of Britain with appeasement. "In England there was such a stillness, such a white winter of the spirit, and such a prolongation of it that death was threatened" (1115). She fears that reliance on

diplomacy to secure peace will, in the case of this conflict, keep Britain sequestered in the nineteenth century. The entrance of Britain into the war represents, to West, an acceptance of the new threats posed by Nazi weaponry.

Although *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* is about Yugoslavia, she connects its political dilemma to the problems confronting Britain. In the Prologue she likens war to surgery and the aftermath of war to convalescence: the book begins with West lying in her hospital bed, recovering from surgery and becoming aware of bodily pain. In the Epilogue to *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon,* West re-contextualizes her account of Yugoslavia: she draws connections between Yugoslavia in 1389 and England in 1939 and points to the catastrophic effects of cultural annihilation that await Britain if it continues to appease Hitler instead of preparing for what she considered a necessary war. Fearing that Europe has the same longing to sacrifice itself to the Nazis as the Serbs did to the Turks in Kosovo six hundred years earlier, she warns:

> The difference between Kossovo [sic] in 1389 and England in 1939 lay in time and place and not in the events experienced, which resembled each other even in the details of which we of the later catastrophe think as peculiar to our nightmare…even as the English, though they made good guns and planes…built up no defences against attack from the air, so the Balkan peoples…gathered together no appropriate counter-forces…Defeat, moreover, must mean to England the same squalor that it had meant to Serbia. (515)

The ultimate defeat of the Serbs in 1389 and the consolidation of Ottoman power that followed predict the ultimate defeat of a common Europe and the vanity of all imperial

ambitions. West mocks the abdication of political responsibility. Tsar Lazar, in choosing a heavenly kingdom in the afterlife over the successful defense of his country resembles, as Bernard Schweizer points out, "'a member of the Peace Pledge Union'" (*Radicals* 97). She connects the possible destruction of British culture by the Nazis to that of Yugoslavia by the Ottoman and Hapsburg Empires and compares the imperial ambitions of the Nazis to those of earlier aggressors. In her history of the Balkans, she traces the genealogy of the Hapsburg family from 1273 to 1918, drawing a clear line of causality between their oppression of the Serbs in the sixteenth century and the First World War. In *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon,* West uses history to predict the future.

West documents the similarities between Yugoslavia and London as a witness who has experienced the region first hand. She finds that Yugoslavia has been misunderstood in Western Europe and represents the country not as remote and unimportant but rather as central to European history and politics. Although she had employed a first-person witnessing voice in her first novel, *The Return of the Soldier,* in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, West approaches narrative witnessing differently. She insists upon her first-hand experience of the region to report on and document what she sees as a witness; but in writing her account as a history of Yugoslavia, she employs a traditionally male genre. In fact, she was reading Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* while on her travels. West's narrative knowledge of Yugoslavia is associated with travelogues usually written by men. As Bernard Schweizer notes, "West's discourse displays a number of 'male' traits, specifically in the 'mastery' of foreign societies by appeal to the discourses of history, politics, and anthropology, as well as an orientalist bias" (81).

Nonetheless, she undercuts these imperialist aims by using generic hybridity. *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* fuses travelogue, personal anecdote, historiography, and ethnographic chronicle. Referring to *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* and to West's reports on the Nuremberg Trials, Debra Rae Cohen finds that West's "palimpsestic use of genre…enables her to construct a multiple witnessing persona, both historian and historical subject, Cassandra and collaborator, within texts deliberately open-ended and interventionist" (151). In *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, West's use of generic hybridity allows her to represent a foreign region while simultaneously foregrounding her own status as an observer. Even though her desire to know about Yugoslavia is orientalist, she insists on the contingency of her knowledge. She gives a portrait both of a country and of herself observing it. There are tensions among the various "Wests" that she performs: the writer whose fame gives her access to locations and information competes on the page with the traveler who apprehends a new culture. The text is a *métissage* of the words and observations of her traveling companions. In attributing opinions to others, she acknowledges that the book is not solely the result of her experiences. West reports the information given to her by her guide, Stanislas Vinaver, or "Constantine" as she calls him. Vinaver's interpretations of history differ from those of his interlocutors, whom West also cites. Her quotation of these points of view reveals that the history of the region is subject to various nationalist interpretations. However, by reporting the words of a Serb who has, in her travelogue, become a fictional character, West dominates and controls the representation of the region. If Vinaver's and others' words stood alone, they would not appear integrated with West's vision of Yugoslavia. By creating a uniform

surface where she reports the words of others, West becomes the sole interpreter of those other observations.

The hybrid form of West's narrative can be explained by her choice to write both as a public envoy to Yugoslavia and also as a private traveler with a personal interest in the region. As she explains, "To know nothing about the Balkans is to 'know nothing about my own destiny'" (xv). The writing of *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* is prompted both by her personal ignorance of the region and by her fear of the upcoming conflict:

> If a Roman woman had, some years before the sack of Rome, realized why it was going to be sacked and what motives inspired the barbarians and what the Romans, and wrote down everything she knew and felt about it, the record would have been of value to historians…So I resolved to put on paper what a typical Englishwoman felt and thought in the late 1930s when, already convinced of the inevitability of the second Anglo-German war, she had been able to follow the dark waters of that event back to its source. (1089)

Black Lamb and Grey Falcon documents what will be lost if Yugoslavia is annexed by the Nazis and creates an inventory to preserve what might be destroyed. The book offers a history of Yugoslavia written from the perspective of the late 1930s and early 1940s but is expressly intended for readers in the future, presumably after war has ended. Even as a history, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* has contemporary implications. West represents herself as simultaneously the subject of history, an historian, and a historiographer. This historiographical method foregrounds histories that are lost. West not only writes a history of Yugoslavia, she also takes history as a subject matter. That West is aware of

the production of history through available information, and of the instability of this information, accounts for much of her interrogation of the process of writing history.

Like the *Alexandria Quartet, Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* cites many other books. Just how many other studies of the region and of empires helped West to craft her own study is indicated by her lengthy bibliography. The fact that West also wanted to draw attention to her sources in a preface indicates that she was anxious about receiving criticism of her perspective, but it also shows her desire to separate her own book from former studies that have taken what she deems to be unjust or non-factual positions on Yugoslavia. Anxious to present herself as a more neutral scholar than the writers of the books she consults, West explains in her "Bibliographical Note" to *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* that "a large proportion of it [the literature dealing with Yugoslavia] is propaganda bought and paid for by the Great Powers…[and] represents a sour controversy between birds of two different feathers" (1153). As a critic of empire and empathetic outsider, West provides a corrective to those flawed studies. Contrary to other histories of the region, she claims to give her readers "a picture of the reality of South Slav life" (1153).

The writer furnishes the missing link between the past and the present that is crucial to understanding international situations. As Susan Sontag points out,

> What is called in news parlance, 'the world'—"You give us twenty-two minutes, we'll give you the world," one radio network intones several times an hour—is (unlike the world) a very small place, both geographically and thematically, and what is thought worth knowing about it is expected to be transmitted tersely and emphatically. (Sontag 20)

West's account of Yugoslavia, like her report on the Nuremberg trials, is far from being terse. The book and the reports meander; they provide information that is not always immediately useful in forming an opinion. As a result, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* immerses the reader through sheer length; there is no claim that national difference is easy to access. The reader, too, must interpret and sort through the varied material. Paradoxically, a book that was initially written to function as a cultural bridge does so by insisting on the "unbridgability" of the differences between Britain and Yugoslavia.

In *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* West uses both an historical and an ethnographic method. Hers is not a purely anthropological study, but the discourse of ethnography influences her observations about culture. Rather than simply write a history of the region, she visits it in person. Based on personal experience, she describes the habits, customs, language, and religious rites of the inhabitants of different regions in Yugoslavia. She relates their daily life, customs, and dispositions in the 1930s to their history. She also compares features of Yugoslav culture and British culture. West's choice of an ethnographic method highlights her belief in the 1930s that British culture is not exceptional but that it can itself be subject to ethnographic description. While British culture is not exceptional; it is nonetheless, like Yugoslav culture, particular. In the wake of the increasingly modest goals of British foreign policy, West creates an argument for the relative value of all cultures.

The success of *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* led to West's being invited by the BBC to broadcast both to Yugoslavia about Britain and to speak to a British audience about her eyewitness experience of Yugoslavia. In 1936 she convinced the BBC to broadcast a series on Yugoslavia for the Home Service. In her correspondence with the

BBC, she stressed the importance of filling the cultural gap that France left in the region. Heard over the airwaves, West's ambassadorial voice reached a broader audience and continued to address international questions, especially having to do with women. In 1943, for example, West was asked to give a talk on "German women after ten years of Nazi rule," to be broadcast in the BBC's foreign languages programme. While she recognizes the usefulness of radio in reaching a wide audience, West favours a flow of information that is not unilateral, but conversational. She prefers to travel in person to a given location. In this sense, she is a self-conscious, or critical ethnographer. In fact, much of the most useful information that she was to relay to the British Council and the Foreign Office was gleaned from her knowledge of areas which she visited and knew from experience.

Trials and Reportage

After the Second World War, West's politics shifted considerably. In particular, she privileges legal arbitration of mass violence instead of advocating socialism and its meliorative solutions. Trials became the focus of much of her postwar journalism. Indeed, postwar international trials established a new basis for global solidarity: "The carnage of war, measured by millions of dead, produced the symbolic, if not the cathartic, postwar execution of military and political figures deemed responsible for destruction and bloodshed" (Hepburn, "Trials and Errors" 142-3). Foreign relations in the postwar period were influenced by tribunals which required international cooperation in order to come to terms with Nazi atrocities and, later, with treason. Reporting on the Nuremberg Trials for the *New Yorker* in 1945, West became convinced that individual countries

cannot, alone, arbitrate in cases of mass murder: only tribunals that call on international cooperation can begin to cope with the effects mass violence.

In her coverage of the treason trials of Lord Haw-Haw and John Amery, and subsequently of Cold War traitors such as Alan Nun May, Klaus Emil Fuchs, the Rosenbergs, Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, and William Vassal, she draws more explicit connections between treachery and nationalism. The articles on treason were collected in *The Meaning of Treason*, which was revised as *The New Meaning of Treason* in 1964. In this book, and in *A Train of Powder*, West works out a new sense of Britishness. Cold War Britain, preoccupied with keeping order and ensuring support from America, shows its willingness to prosecute traitors while not executing them. As postwar allegiances were re-shaped and fear of war grew again, West emphasized the importance of individuals' loyalty to nations.

Like many of her contemporaries, West felt the impact of the Second World War once the fighting had ceased. Only in the aftermath of the war, with the trials of war criminals and the discovery of atrocities, did the facts of the war agglomerate into a single event. While facts produce feelings, the transformation of facts into events leads to judgment and appraisal. Like her contemporaries Martha Gellhorn and Hannah Arendt, West witnessed and wrote about the unprecedented juridical effort undertaken by postwar international courts to come to terms with aggressive warfare by assigning guilt to individual perpetrators of war crimes. West shares with Gellhorn the sense of the journalist's responsibility to report to the world news of unprecedented events. Gellhorn registers the hopefulness that the trials bring by assigning guilt to the perpetrators of the war: "Aggressive war is a crime; the state is not some vague abstraction...Now there is a

law against murder, for nations as for men. There is crime and punishment. The organizers of war will no longer live in comfortable exile when the war is over" (197-198). Similarly, as West writes in her last essay on the Nuremberg Trials, "brave [were] the men who, in making the Nuremberg trial, tried to force a huge and sprawling historical event to become comprehensible" (*A Train of Powder* 250). The Nuremberg Trials brought some measure of closure to victims of the war by reassuring people that war was not the result of evil; it was a choice made and carried out by human beings. The trials figured catastrophe as a product of the human will.

West produced three articles about the Nuremberg Trials. "Greenhouse with Cyclamens," part I, was published in the *New Yorker* in 1945; that article reports on the last few months of the first Nuremberg Trial. "Greenhouse with Cyclamens," parts II and III, written after subsequent trips to Nuremberg, examine economic recovery in Germany after the war. That West continued to travel to Nuremberg after her first visit bespeaks her continued attention to the ramifications of the trials and the aftermath of the war. Together with West's report on a lynching trial in South Carolina, "Opera in Greenville," and her account of a murder in "Mr. Setty and Mr. Hume," these articles were collected in her 1949 book, *A Train of Powder*, which is largely concerned with the question of judgment.

As an observer at the Nuremberg trials, West gives a picture of postwar Europe. She is careful not to criticize the bombing of Nuremberg because, without American help, the war would have been lost. In her first instalment of "Greenhouse with Cyclamens," West begins with a physical description of the men in the dock. She looks for a key to their motivations in their physical appearance, but she finds that the trial is

occupied with judgment more than with the aetiology of criminal behaviour. Although the Nuremberg Trials exposed the details of war crimes committed by the Nazis, they did not provide an understanding of the criminals' motivations. Clearly frustrated by the limits of the trial, West writes: "that was what all in the court required: an explanation. We had learned what they did, beyond all doubt, and that is the great achievement of the Nuremberg trial…but we had no idea why they had done what they did" (*A Train of Powder* 60). West's sense of the insufficiency of the trial caused her to revise her initial article on Nuremberg into longer essays on postwar Germany in the 1950s. Accounting for West's convoluted style in *Greenhouse with Cyclamens*, Lyndsey Stonebridge posits that "[s]upplementing in her prose what the trial could see but not say, West gave one of the first critiques of the extent to which Nuremberg's radical jurisprudence failed to find an imaginative form adequate for its moral ambitions" (Stonebridge 41). Though the judges sentenced some of the war criminals in an unprecedented trial for aggressive warfare and crimes against humanity, they provided neither an explanation for the causes of the deeds, nor a satisfying conclusion. Several of the criminals were subsequently acquitted.

As a result of her direct experience of the Nuremberg Trials, West recognized the need for law to restrain the human potential for barbarism. Though she seemed to believe in the ability of the courts to try war criminals, the arrangement of her essays in *A Train of Powder* suggests that West was skeptical about the process and effectiveness of judgment. Whereas in the first installment of "Greenhouse with Cyclamens" judgment is passed on Nazi war criminals by American judges, the second essay, "Opera in Greenville" focuses on problems of justice and racial inequality in the United States.

West calls attention to the fact that the nation that presided over the judgment of war criminals, the United States, has its own problems at home.

While West welcomed the wielding of justice over war criminals, she felt, as did many of her contemporaries, that the Nuremberg Trials were presided over by the victors. As Tony Judt has noted, the "presence of Soviet prosecutors and Soviet judges was interpreted by many commentators from Germany and Eastern Europe as evidence of hypocrisy…To have the Soviets sitting in judgment on the Nazis—sometimes for crimes they had themselves committed—devalued the Nuremberg and other trials" (Judt 54). West's ambivalence about the power exercised by the victors over the Nazi war criminals prompts her to devote the final section of "Greenhouse With Cyclamens I" to the ethical dimensions of death by hanging. She warns that the "strain of evil in us, which, given privileges, can take pleasure in the destruction of others by pain and death, takes delights in dreams about hanging, which is the least dignified form of death" (*A Train of Powder* 69). She describes the development of more humane methods of hanging, especially William Marwood's "great work of mercy" (71) in lessening the pain of the hanged person. Marwood, a cobbler from Lincolnshire who was appointed public executioner in 1871, "was visited by the idea that the hanged men still suffered the pains of strangulation because the usual drop was not long enough to cause a fall of sufficient violence" (71). Though his reforms greatly lessened the suffering of hanged prisoners, West points out that no such humanitarian concerns governed the hangings of the Nazi war criminals, and that as a result, "the ten men slowly choked to death" (72). West also worries that if they are allowed to become spectacular, public hangings compromise the respect due to the condemned person and corrupt the dispensation of justice. In such

cases she finds that "[t]here was never a lawful occasion which smelled so strongly of the unlawful" (72). West's recognition of the pleasurable dimension of judging and administering the death penalty reinforces her sense of the limits of judicial processes and contributes to her postwar anxiety about Britain's role in the prosecution of criminals. This concern with finding appropriate yet ethical punishments for criminals in the postwar period also led to the creation, from 1949 to 1953, of a Royal Commission on Capital Punishment, to which Elizabeth Bowen was appointed (Hepburn, "Trials and Errors" 139).

West finds that part of her role as an observer consists in being concerned for the fairness of the trial, lest its judgments be disregarded. She worries that by trying the Nazis in an unprecedented tribunal, the Allies' justification for legal control over Germany could dangerously approximate the alibis that the Nazis had used to justify invasion. The Nazis invaded Poland and Czechoslovakia on the pretext that there had been a collapse of "civil order" in both countries and that German civilians living there had to be rescued. The Allies' claim that the collapse of civil order in Germany warranted the re-establishing of legal order by an outside force or tribunal could be interpreted as a betrayal of sovereignty. Because "aggressive warfare" is a new crime, "no international body has even given its sanction to a mechanism by which crimes committed in one nation which has gone unpunished because of a collapse of civil order could subsequently be punished by other nations" (154). Even though West does not doubt that the Nazis' actions were criminal, she worries that the international community is imposing its vision of justice on Germany.

The differences between judicial systems across nations can create a misunderstanding of procedures. West worries about the possible abuse of power on the part of the Americans and British, who determined the court proceedings according to British and American law: "Again, it must be asked whether the defendants would properly be defended by counsel who did not understand the court before which they were pleading" (244). Cross-cultural legal differences can also lead to the loss of public support for the trials. While the Allies detained the Nazi defendants in jail for fear that they might be rescued, the German anti-Nazi populations felt that it was unfair to detain the Nazi defendants before they were proven guilty:

> All the defendants thought it scandalous that they were detained in jail before they were convicted. It was, of course, sheer impudence of the Nazis to quarrel with the justice that overtook them on any ground, since they had done their best to murder justice; and it is probable that had the Nazis not been jailed some fanatics would have tried to rescue them. But there is some substance to this complaint. It is one of the injustices inherent that it is impossible to handle persons awaiting trial without inflicting on them hardships which are a reproach to the community if these persons are proved innocent…There can be no doubt that many anti-Nazis were shocked because defendants in Nuremberg were kept in jail…Here again, proceedings which the British and Americans took as normal and inevitable must have been regarded by German spectators as an abuse of the power given by conquest. (243)

As a journalist, West does not only represent the British opinion, but also translates and interprets the perspective of the German public on the trials.

She points out further pitfalls in the process of international law, such as failures in communication:

> But the confusion which circumscribes us goes deeper than language. All of us had our earphones, there was not a person in court who did not understand the literal meaning of every word that was said. Yet there was this misunderstanding, this frustration, this incapacity to demonstrate the Rule of Law anything like as clearly as had been hoped. (244-245)

To hear every word of a court proceeding does not mean that one understands what is being said. West's role then, as an investigative journalist, is to create a cogent narrative from information that seems chaotic.

West's report on the Nuremberg trial stresses the boredom that permeates large-scale international tribunals. Whereas catastrophe and destruction can happen quickly, the process of rebuilding takes a long time. Conducted in a courtroom that is a "citadel of boredom," (3) the Nuremberg trials are presided over by officials "sick with the weariness left by a great war" (246). West relates this fact and is troubled by its inappropriateness considering the seriousness of the occasion: "Here was a paradox. In the courtroom the lawyers had to think day after day at the speed of whirling dervishes, yet were living as slowly as snails, because of the boredom that pervaded all of Nuremberg and was at its thickest in the Palace of Justice" (17). Boredom is not only a side effect of long proceedings and bureaucracy; in West's essay it becomes a rhetorical device. In a recent study Ravit Reichman also analyses West's foregrounding of boredom

at the trial: “By making the Nuremberg trial dull, ordinary, and, above all, relevant, West puts forth a new sense of responsibility for history” (132). By dwelling on procedure, West insists that the importance of the trial both as an event and as an experience requires mediation by witnesses. Even though the proceedings may seem interminable, even to the judges, only journalists like West can contextualize the proceedings and report the significance of the facts. The judges cross-examine the defendants and decide on their fates, but West explains the significance of the proceedings in the context of postwar European politics. She does not arrive to Nuremberg by land, but by plane, and gives an aerial description of the area. From her wider viewpoint she looks to the context of the rebuilding of the city, the country, and the whole of Europe. West’s position as an observer of postwar politics in several nations also allows her a comparative perspective. She can relate the events at Nuremberg to trials taking place in other countries; she compares the motivations for different kinds of crime. While judges do the work of sentencing the accused, journalists arbitrate the judges’ decisions for the public.

Cold War Treason

West is motivated by the desire to forge better relations between the United States and Britain. As a proof of solid American-British ties, she argues in her reports that Britain will prosecute traitors during the Cold War. Even as she does so, she paradoxically reasserts an idea of the nation that is closed to foreigners: traitors can only exist when the State coincides with the nation. In 1945, the year before she witnessed the Nuremberg Trials, West covered the trial of William Joyce and John Amery for the *New Yorker*, and in 1947 published these articles in book form as *The Meaning of Treason*.

While the Nazi bureaucrat exculpates himself from his actions, the traitor is animated by an overwrought sense of his individual agency and his ability to change the course of history. The Nazi criminal glorifies procedure; the traitor, his megalomaniac ideals. Just as West returned to Nuremberg after her initial reporting on the trials, her direct experience of the treason trials influenced her thinking after the war and throughout the Cold War. She continued to revise and add to this collection, reissued in 1964 as *The New Meaning of Treason*.

In her definition, West's associates treachery discursively with home and domesticity: "For what is treachery? It is the betrayal of familiars to strangers, of those who are near to those who are far, of those to whom one is bound by real interests to those who, being foreign, will treat one as a foreigner and maybe, in the end, turn against one" (*The Meaning of Treason* 276). West, drawing generalizations and conclusions about the nature of betrayal on a political scale, develops a rapprochement between public and private. She compares patriotism to a marital relationship: "Today we have forgotten that we live outward from the centre of a circle and that what is nearest to the centre is most real to us…[and] [a]s a divorce sharply recalls what a happy marriage should be, so the treachery of these men recalled what a nation should be" (*The Meaning of Treason* 301, 306). Rather than dissolving the nation in the wake of the war, she assumes that relations of trust and candour begin with what is proximate and extend, by degrees, to what is distant, namely, other people in other nations.

Although West advocates a conversation between points of view—she turned to the radio in the 1930s to defend the position of Yugoslavia in Britain—her analysis of William Joyce's use of the medium points to its malleability and its vulnerability. In her

account of the trial of William Joyce, West insists that both the trial and the charge are unprecedented: “Everybody in London wanted to see William Joyce when he was brought to trial as a radio traitor, for he was something new in the history of the world” (3). Her description of William Joyce, begins, understandably, with his voice—he was a radio personality—and contrasts his voice with his appearance: “Never was there a more perfect voice for a demagogue” (6). West includes herself among those fascinated and repulsed by Joyce. Though his lulling voice speaks of the destruction of Britain, it remains seductive: “there was an arresting quality about his voice which made it a sacrifice not to go on listening. It was a rasping yet rich voice, like Father Coughlin’s, and it was convincing in its confidence” (3). The radio, a modern invention adapted, in this instance, as a weapon of war, brings the voice of betrayal and doom into citizens’ homes: “Never before have people known the voice of one they had never seen as well as if he had been a husband or a brother or a close friend” (3). West’s account registers the shock of the British public’s expectation that familiarity should be synonymous with kindness and protectiveness: “They would not have imagined that the familiar unknown would speak to them only to prophesy their death and ruin. All of us in England had experienced that hideous novelty” (3). Through modern technology, the enemy literally becomes familiar, an evil domesticated by radiophonic accessibility. Just as the radio can be effective in creating dialogue between countries, it can also be an effective loudspeaker for tyrants’ monomania.

West’s description of the Central Criminal Court in which Joyce’s trial is held sharply recalls the destruction of London, to which Joyce contributed and about which he rejoiced. She makes sure that the effect of wartime treason is not lost on the reader. The

courthouse "stands in a district once congested with unlovely commercial buildings, which the blitz has converted into a beautiful desert" (*The Meaning of Treason* 4). She continues: "the courts themselves startle the eye that knew them as they were, housed in a solid building built of grey stone in the neoclassical style. Its solidarity has been sliced as though it were a cake" (4). The effects of the war are still materialized within the courthouse, as "at the time of Joyce's trial, because of the sealing off of the bombed parts, and the heavy blackout, which could not yet be removed owing to the lack of labour, all the halls and passages and stairs were in perpetual dusk" (4). Though the courthouse is damaged, the legal process and justice will right what has been wronged, as "the strong electrical light" which illuminates the courtroom is also "merciless to William Joyce" (4).

That West's analysis turns on the question of nationality is further suggested by the way in which she analyses Joyce's motives. She points out that Joyce is frustrated by not having been a British subject. In his testimony he claims to have been born in England of Irish parents. He further claims that the family moved to the United States when he was two years old. His birth certificate, however, proves that he was born in Brooklyn. The question of Joyce's nationality puzzles West:

> But why, when William Joyce was making later declarations that he was a British subject, had he sometimes said that he was a British subject, had he sometimes said that he was born in Ireland and sometimes that he was born in America, when he had a birth certificate which gave his birthplace as Brooklyn? The answer is that he was probably never sure of the real facts regarding his own and his father's status till he learned

> them from his own defence lawyers just before the trial. Therefore William Joyce was by birth an American citizen and owed the king of England no allegiance arising out of British nationality. (11)

In West's estimation, Joyce represents a modern man who has no allegiance to any nation. Like the diplomat, he is mobile, therefore answers to no authority other than his own. He seeks power outside the state: "What could the little man do since he so passionately desired to exercise authority, and neither his nor any other state would give it to him—but use his trick of gathering together other luckless fellows, that they might overturn the sane state and substitute a mad one?" (6). Though she condemns the criminal, West admires the traitor's independence of spirit and his ability to act outside the jurisdiction of the state. As Phyllis Lassner notes, women writers during the Second World War sought "to redefine patriotism as an emotional and political commitment to a nation and to social roles they would change" (11). Although West hopes for international cooperation, in the postwar period she demands clear lines to be drawn on questions of national allegiance.

West's reportage on the trial of William Joyce continues the method she developed in *A Train of Powder* and *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*. Categorizing Joyce's illness as psychological fails to convince her. Instead, she looks for a political explanation of traitors' actions. As she writes in her 1947 edition of *The Meaning of Treason*,

> Neither John Amery nor Norman Baillie-Stewart was certifiably insane. They never saw things that were not there. They never committed actions which gave the community an instantaneous shock. Their suicidal

> policies were long-term, and they could successfully apply their logic to their experience on a small scale…Nevertheless, the minds of both of these men were not so adjusted as to bring them happiness or favour their survival. They were what are called psychotics: they fell into the darker of the two categories into which the maladjusted are divided. Neurotics, who cause less distress to themselves and their neighbours than those in the other category, are at war with their own natures…Psychotics, and it is those who commit purposeless crimes and prefer death to life, are at war with their environment… This has its bearing on power politics. The psychotic will very readily take sides against his own country. He is as if decreed by Heaven to be a prop for any neighbouring power which desires to swallow his fatherland. He hates the people around him, he hates his fellow-countrymen, because he hates the real world, which he knows through the testimony of his senses. (241-242)

In contrast to the Nazi war criminals, who refused to blame themselves and claimed that they were following orders, traitors act as individuals against the state. There is a tone of admiration in West's statement that "All men should have a drop or two of treason in their veins, if the nations are not to go soft like so many sleepy pears" (306). She admires the traitor's ability not to do what is expected of him. West reminds her readers that though there is a need for allegiance to one's country in times of war, yet everyone must remain a little sceptical of nationalism as war propaganda. In wartime, her sense of patriotism is complicated by her critique of power and by the need to defend the nation against Nazi aggression. She perceives a similarity between the traitor and herself as a

journalist, in that she criticizes her government even in a time of war.

West's admiration for the traitor's independence is echoed in Nigel Balchin's thoughts on treason. In a 1952 BBC radio broadcast, Noel Annan, Balchin, Alan Moorehead and Elizabeth Bowen discussed the foundations for national loyalty and the possible motivations for treason. Alan Moorehead, whose book on the atomic spies looks for the motivations for scientists' treason, considers the traitor's conscience to be faulty and maladjusted to social requirements. He maintains that conscience can be trained into decency. Balchin, while he supports the condemnation of the traitor, argues, much like West, for the independence of mind of the man who believes he is doing right. Society, he feels, should not be the guide of conscience, since "[a]s far as I can see one of our great objections to the Germans we tried at Nuremberg was that they'd accepted the view of the society in which they lived…when their consciences ought to have told them otherwise" (312). Elizabeth Bowen suggests that the atomic spies' lack of loyalty might be due to their isolation from society. She distinguishes between traitors and moralists, finding that moralists "declared war on society, before carrying on an act of war" (Hepburn, *Listening* 316). Whereas their conclusions remain provisional, the interlocutors agree that society should both judge traitors, and preserve the individual's right to act according to his or her own convictions, however flawed and dangerous those may be.

The 1964 revision of *The Meaning of Treason* demonstrates West's concern with traitors as an ongoing danger in the postwar and the Cold War: "We all fear death, and the agitation against atomic weapons has obsessed us with the fear of death at the hands of the Soviet Union" (335). West's 1949 Nuremberg article charts the new networks of postwar power and a mounting fear of Russia. The sense of closure that the Nuremberg

trials provided for Europe in 1945 was short-lived. The old multinational world had been divided into two powers that checked and counter-checked during the Cold War. Despite the faint promise that Allied victory in 1945 meant the beginning of internationalism, global cooperation continued to be elusive (Judt 194).

In partitioned Berlin in 1949, West detects "the blankness of a new page of history" signaled by "a fear of the Russians". She finds little cooperation among the Allies. Instead, "everybody in Berlin was a prisoner," (*A Train of Powder* 141) as each power tried to maintain control over its section. "The British could not leave Berlin lest the United States and the Soviet Union take their withdrawal as an admission that they were a bankrupt people destitute of power: a misunderstanding which also might have hastened the outbreak of a Third World War..." (141). As the Allies tried to maintain order after the War, new tensions and mutual distrust erupted into further conflict.

During the Cold War, as the arms race and the threat of nuclear conflict intensified, a preoccupation with maintaining good relations between the Allies against the Soviet Union became the focus of West's articles. Due legal process acquires a different importance in this period, as each country shows its good faith in prosecuting traitors. Not doing so risks upsetting the alliance. West's accounts of the treason trials of scientists and of the scandals in the Foreign Office manifest anxiety about the state of relations between Britain and the United States. While she emphasizes British-American cooperation, she also contrasts British and American justice and takes issue with capital punishment. Britain, she maintains, would not have executed the Rosenbergs. She considers capital punishment to be "an act as discreditable to our civilization as the crime it punished" (205). To her mind, the British legal system delivers better justice. Even as

she hopes for the continued alliance between the two countries, she imagines British identity in contrast to American identity.

British-American relations are also threatened by a gradual loss of confidence in the ability of each country to protect its scientific and State secrets. For example, West points out in her reports that some of the espionage rings were "designed to destroy American confidence in British security organizations so far as their power to protect their atomic projects was concerned" (214). The cases of Donald MacLean, Guy Burgess, and William Vassal, British Foreign Office members who defected to the Soviet Union, further upset political stability. Diplomats are particularly difficult to police, since their mobility and their prolonged stays in different countries test their loyalty. The failure of the Foreign Office to police its ranks results in the loss of confidence in diplomacy. As diplomats are subject to the misuse of national information during the Cold War, journalists like West question the circulation and use of information in their public reports.

Scientists, like diplomats, trade in information. Information is in itself neutral: it poses a threat when applied wrongly. Atomic secrets, in particular, depend on conceptions of right and wrong as defined by nation states. In her discussion of Klaus Emil Fuchs, a nuclear scientist "who may have brought the irreparable ruin of atomic warfare on Great Britain and the United States" (*The Meaning of Treason* 190), West insists that scientists must be loyal to their nation even though their knowledge is international. Allegiances to the scientific community should not supersede loyalty to the nation, in West's opinion. When scientists do betray their countries, however, it becomes the journalist's task to make the case known to the public. In a time of fear and of secrets,

open communication is an antidote. West insists that, in the reports on the Fuchs case, not only must his wrongdoings be brought to light, but that the facts of the case must be made known to the public, in order that the Communist angle on the case lose strength. In West's mind then, the reporting of trials also contributes to the British and American side during the Cold War.

In addition to reporting on cases, journalists' interpretations of the facts curb the possibilities for these to be used in Soviet propaganda. Keenly aware of this, West explains:

> Little can be said in defence of this policy of trying the criminal in a manner which concealed the nature of the crime from the public which had suffered from it. It helped the Communists, enabling them to present the scientist Communist spies as starry-eyes altruists who imparted secrets to other powers just because they were scientists and wanted their fellow scientists to have the benefit of their own discoveries, and were so unworldly that they did not know that they were doing any harm… (*The Meaning of Treason* 190).

Journalists can limit the number of incorrect and politically dangerous interpretations of these crimes. Although criminals can be tried, the interpretation of information cannot be policed. Even if journalists interpret information in narrative form, it can be re-circulated, cast into another form, and acquire a contrary significance. While governments protect scientific information during the Cold War, information about traitors must be disseminated to the public.

In West's reportage, the Cold War becomes a battle for the interpretation of information between journalists and traitors. The journalist's responsibility is tied to the transformations brought about by modernity. She notes that in the Middle Ages, "it was possible for man to keep his right hand from knowing what his left hand did," because "space and time were real barriers…But now we know nearly everything about our own tragedy. We have the Press, the cinema, a people sufficiently educated to tell their own tale" (249-250). As information proliferates and circulates at greater speed, it also changes valences. Information can be used to different ends, for good or ill, in the hands of scientists, journalists, and diplomats. For West, then, the role of the journalist in the postwar period is hermeneutic: the journalist articulates an interpretation of the facts which reduces the power of alternate explanations.

After she wrote her pieces on postwar treason, West turned her attention to global changes. In 1960, she was sent by the *Sunday Times* to report on apartheid in South Africa. In March and April of that year, she produced a series of four articles that described the political situation and the daily hardships of black South Africans. She is vehemently critical of Dr. Verwoerd's extremist policies on the grounds of their discriminatory practices against black South Africans. She also criticizes him for his imperviousness to membership in an international community. Perhaps because of her mobility, both as a journalist and as a white traveler, West is particularly critical of the Pass Laws, which controlled the mobility of black South Africans. Writing for a London audience, West explains: "No African can get a house in a township unless he has been born in that particular urban area, and has lived there ever since…Imagine that a section

of the British people…were forbidden to have houses within working distance of any town" ("Cauldron" 1.12).

While on her travels in South Africa, West also attended a "Treason Trial" where more than a hundred black defendants accused of turning in their passes to protest the Pass Laws were to be tried. West, who championed legal means to re-establish order in the postwar period, is at a loss when confronted with an unjust use of the law. As Bonnie Kime Scott explains, the Treason Trial was "a proceeding that stretched over three and a half years and involved 156 individuals accused of secretly intending revolutionary action and violence. West suspected that the accused were guilty merely of affiliation with the African National Congress" (303). West's liberalism and her belief in reason and the rule of law are of little help in dealing with racist policies. Loretta Stec points out that West's response to the events in South Africa illustrates "the insufficiency of that ideology when confronting the radical racism of the era" (64). Although liberal arguments were useful during the Suffrage movements, in South Africa "the insistence on colour-blindness in a society in which all life chances are determined by colour eliminates this fact" (Stec 68). Although West is appalled by the events she witnesses and produces eloquent articles describing the atmosphere in the country under the Emergency following the Sharpeville massacres, she does not offer suggestions for dealing with the racist system of apartheid. The Sharpeville massacre, as Bonnie Kime Scott notes, refers to a "black township where racial violence arose on March 21st, 1960, when the Pan-Africanist Congress organized a nonviolent demonstration calling for the abolition of South Africa's pass laws. After some demonstrators stoned police, about sixty-nine

demonstrators were killed when the police opened fire. The incident focused worldwide attention on apartheid" (Scott 356).

In the 1960s, West's interests in global institutions focuses on those that assess issues of human responsibility and international law. Her sense of postwar Britishness continued to be confronted with events tied to the aftermath of the Second World War. In February 1960, one month before West visited South Africa, Harold Macmillan, then British Prime Minister, delivered his "Wind of Change" speech in Cape Town. Macmillan expressed the acceptance of decolonization and of independence movements. As Carl Rollyson points out, West accepted to report on South Africa in part because she did no know how to conclude the second volume of her postwar saga, *This Real Night*. Her concern with international politics is evident in the latter volumes of the trilogy and her experiences in Africa may have contributed to her novelistic response to a vanishing empire.

***Cousin Rosamund*: Endings and the Future**

Haunted by the loss of British power in the postwar period and by the topical reportage of mass murder and treason after the war, West turns to fiction to re-examine her commitments. In her *Saga of the Century*, West narrativizes public catastrophe and revisits her modernist preoccupation with questions of personal and political responsibility and the role of women as agents and witnesses in history. In this unfinished saga, West examines the repercussions of public catastrophe on a family just as she represented the effects of trench warfare on women living in a country house in *The Return of the Soldier* thirty years earlier. Using an Edwardian setting, she re-envisions

pre-war England not as a place of peace and pastoral bliss, but as a nation that is inherently violent.

In the late 1940s, West began writing *The Fountain Overflows*, the first volume of *Cousin Rosamund: A Saga of the Century*, a series of novels that chronicle the fate of the Aubrey family against the larger tapestry of twentieth-century history. A typescript of an unpublished synopsis of the *Saga of the Century*, probably written in 1949 or 1950, indicates that West had initially intended to write a tetralogy, which would have traced the story of the Aubreys to the Second World War and the Nuremberg Trials. In 1956, West sent a 150,000-word typescript of *The Fountain Overflows* to her agent, A.D. Peters, who suggested that she abbreviate it so the book might more easily be published as one volume. Before being published in book form, *The Fountain Overflows* was serialized in the *Ladies Home Journal* from July to December 1956. The novel became a bestseller, as West's copious fan mail from the period indicates. Though she continued to work on the sequels to *The Fountain Overflows* until her death in 1983, she never completed her *Saga*. The second and third volumes, *This Real Night* and *Cousin Rosamund*, based on typescripts West left behind in her papers, were published posthumously in 1984 and 1985.

In *Cousin Rosamund: A Saga of the Century*, written fifteen years after the end of the war, West writes a saga worthy of that name. The word saga derives etymologically from the Old Norse "to see"; West's novel is a saga that sees retrospectively. While Bernard Schweizer has argued that the trilogy is generically similar to an epic, it is also possible to read the novel as a retrospective saga. While an epic moves forward in time, chronicling the exploits of its heroines, West's retrospective narrative lingers on

childhood and looks back in time rather than to the future. The *Saga of the Century* "sees" from the perspective of the uncertain 1950s. Characters' actions tend toward reinterpreting the past in light of future events. The narrative shuns nostalgia for the Edwardian past but looks toward it for elements that can be sustained in the present. The narrative also specifically stresses the repercussions of political violence on personal life. West fictionalizes the large-scale concerns that she wrote about in her non-fiction. Her direct experience of the postwar trials convinced her that the effects of the war extend beyond the signing of a peace treaty. She would have agreed with Martha Gellhorn that "war happens to people, one by one" (Gellhorn xiii). That she represents betrayal and historical events such as the Nuremberg Trials into her *Saga of the Century* also attests to her need to find conclusive judgment on these events. While in her non-fiction West could leave behind the trials and the horrors on which she reported once her articles were submitted, in her fiction she imagines the aftermath of violence on individual consciousness.

If West uses journalism to investigate different aims of postwar Britishness, she uses novels to imagine a longer history for British identity, to explore its transition from an imperial power at the beginning of the twentieth century to a more modest nation in a global community in the 1950s. In her postwar fiction, West articulates an anti-essentialist idea of the nation. Rather than presenting Britishness as an enchanted circle which is threatened from without, she represents it as threatened from within. The postwar trilogy suggests that international events influence daily life, and also that in the postwar period, the future remains uncertain. West articulates this uncertainty fictionally by insisting on the fragility of childhood. By not finishing the trilogy, she also shows that

the uncertainty of British futurity makes imagining a future novelistically difficult.

Cousin Rosamund is narrated by Rose, one of four Aubrey children (Mary, Cordelia, and Richard Quin are the other three). As the story opens, the children have gone to spend the summer in the Scottish countryside with their mother, Clare Aubrey, while their father, Piers Aubrey, looks for work in London. The family moves to a house in Lovegrove, a suburb of London, where the children go to school. Piers, a brilliant but outspoken journalist and a gambler who often loses his jobs and squanders the family income, abandons his wife and children. He does not give them news of his whereabouts, and they eventually learn that he has died. As they grieve the loss of Piers, the family take in other women who come to form an extended family with the Aubreys. First, Nancy Philips, a school friend of Rose and Mary whose mother Queenie poisoned Nancy's father, arrives. Clare Aubrey's cousin Constance and her daughter Rosamund, the eponymous heroine of the novel, also come to live with the Aubreys at Lovegrove. As in *The Return of the Soldier*, war is never directly represented in these novels, but the Aubreys nonetheless feel its effects through various dispossessed and homeless domestic refugees.

In *This Real Night*, Richard Quin is killed in the First World War. According to West's synopsis, the Second World War and its aftermath were to figure prominently in subsequent volumes of the *Saga.* The synopsis emphasizes acts of witnessing:

> The Second World War breaks out. At the end of the war Mary and Rose are called to Germany because an Englishman has been arrested, who has been engaged in treasonable activities during the war…In a state of great distress they go on their way through Germany, and stop near Nuremberg

> to make an official visit, and are taken to the Nuremberg trial. From the evidence given by the witness they realize that Rosamund is a woman who died in Belsen Camp, and as they look back through the past, they see that all she did was planned to the one moment described by the witness, when she appears as doing a deed of unique mercy. These last two books are highly complicated and I have not given a fair account of them. ("Synopsis" 7-8)

From the synopsis of the *Saga,* it is clear that West was still preoccupied in her postwar fiction with the events about which she had reported ten years earlier: the Second World War, the Nuremberg Trials, treason. Non-fiction and fictional representation of these issues overlap. West wrote the third instalment of her reportage on the Nuremberg Trials, "Greenhouse with Cyclamens," in 1954, just as she was composing *The Fountain Overflows*. Her fictional response to the war, therefore, came a decade after the signing of the Peace Treaty. As West claimed, "[y]ears must pass before the ferment settles down and any true and convincing works of art are precipitated" (*A Train of Powder* 249). In the *Saga*, international events press upon the lives of characters whose fates are bound up in those events.

West's postwar novels continue to insist, as does *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, on observation, seeing, and witnessing as aspects of history and historiography. In *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, West's direct witnessing of Yugoslavia became an appeal against the sleepiness of Britain relative to the international situation. In *Cousin Rosamund*, retrospective seeing allows West to re-visit the earlier part of the century and see it historically. Her *Saga* demonstrates continuities with the modernist novel and

departs from its conventions. For example, West applies the Jamesian technique of leaving out important scenes: the reader is prevented from seeing scenes whose consequences are felt in the plot. Richard Quinn is not represented at the front, and the narrative never directly describes the Nuremberg trials. Nevertheless the consequences of these events permeate the text, and the outcome of the Aubrey's lives and of Rosamund's are inscribed in the narrative even as West did not finish her projected tetralogy. The expansiveness of the novel attests to its preoccupation with loss and with the consequent attempt at using the novel to archive events without looking back nostalgically.

Just as West bears witness to the Second World War and its aftermath in her reportage, Rose Aubrey in *The Fountain Overflows* witnesses her own catastrophic family life and the chaos engendered by disruptive political events. References to the *Saga of the Century* in West's correspondence with her agent and with friends in the mid-1940s through the early 1950s indicate that she began to write *The Fountain Overflows* while revising her *New Yorker* articles on the Nuremberg Trials and the treason trials. The composition of the fictional *Saga* thus coincides with West's ongoing revision of her response to the events of the Second World War and its aftermath. She recognized that the British presence on the international scene was going to be more modest than it had been before the war. In turn, her narrative represents British life in the pre-war period in light of later events. Her reportage on the trials of traitors such as William Joyce prompted her fictionalization of treason as domestic betrayal in *The Fountain Overflows*. In the postwar novel, threats come both from within the nation and from within the family. Such domestic threats, however, do not exclude threats from outside the home or the nation. West continued in her postwar fiction to personalize history.

The Second World War convinced West that the home offers no protection from political catastrophe. The Aubrey family lives in a state of insecurity similar to that which haunted West in the postwar years. Rose complains that "we were all living in a more dangerous way than the children I knew at school" (106). In the *Saga*, Piers, a threatening father and husband, throws the family into a state of insecurity. When Clare Aubrey and the children first arrive at their new house in Lovegrove, they find Piers standing by the chimney: "One of the doors opening into the little hall was ajar, and from the room beyond there came a little scraping noise. She [Clare] thought, and so did we, that a burglar had got into the house…My father was standing beside the chimney piece, scraping with a penknife at the wallpaper where it joined the marble" (47). Piers's intrusion into the house foreshadows his later theft of the money hidden in the secret cupboard behind the chimney. He even enters the house as a burglar would: "'I know a dozen ways into the house,' said Papa, in the mocking voice that people hated so much. 'This time I came in by the coach-house roof'" (41). He does not abide by the same rules for entering and exiting the house as does the rest of the family. His relation to domestic space in no way conforms to convention.

A break with the nineteenth century and a loss of culture are figured in the text through the loss of furniture. Piers sells the Aubreys' only valuable possessions—furniture left to Clare by an aunt—and gambles away the money from the sale. Clare arrives home only to find that the furniture has disappeared:

> 'Aunt Clara's furniture has gone'…My mother got out of her chair, very stiffly, and went out into the hall and stood for a time with her hand on the knob of the front door, her other hand across her mouth. The man

> from Soames in George Street had sent for it the very day and hour he had said he would, when he came with Papa to buy it, just as we left for the Pentlands… She muttered to herself 'he will have sold it for a fraction of its value…I cannot compete with debt and disgrace, which is what he really loves. She lifted her arms to embrace a phantom, but they fell by her side. (43)

Piers precipitates the loss of the family's history through the sale of the furniture. West's sense of loss in the postwar years is thus fictionalized through the disappearance of material objects. In this regard, she resumes the narrative concern with domesticity and containment initiated decades earlier in *The Return of the Soldier*. By having the threats to the family come from both within and without, she creates a world that is not a sentimental re-casting of the prewar period.

Despite his unreliability as a father, Piers shows a concern for justice when he intervenes in the trial of Queenie Phillips. West's representation of a trial in *The Fountain Overflows* bespeaks the skepticism about justice that she developed after witnessing the Nuremberg Trials. In the case of Queenie Phillips, the law is unjust rather than absolute. Through Piers's help and unquestioned commitment to her case, Queenie is eventually granted a reprieve. Yet Piers's concern with upholding the law for the sake of an individual is inconsistent with his gambling and lying. He takes a greater interest in saving Queenie Phillips from the gallows than he does in ensuring the well-being of his own family. Rose, who witnesses this episode, is pained by her father's paradoxical character:

> I was again exalted by his bravery. And again I was chilled by his vast indifference to my fate. He had woven a cobweb of thoughts and feelings about his intentions to run the risk of imprisonment, and not one of these thoughts and feelings related to me or any of his family, I had a glorious father, I had no father at all…Papa was brave, he was cruel, he was dishonest, he was kind…I might have added to the list of his paradoxical qualities that he was penniless and discredited and enormously powerful; for twenty-four hours later Mr. Brackenbird reprieved Queenie Phillips. (274)

Piers uses his influence as a journalist to have Queenie reprieved, and proves that journalists can change the course of public events.

West's novel dramatizes the effects of public events such as a murder trial on children's daily lives. The Aubrey children are not sheltered from the gruesome details of the murder; these become the mainstay of dinner-table conversation:

> We went down and found Mary and Cordelia sitting side by side and studying the evening paper, which they had spread out on the table between them. They lifted solemn faces, and Cordelia asked, 'Does this mean they think Nancy's Mamma killed her Papa?' We understood quite a lot about murders, chiefly because there were some famous cases in the bound volumes of *Temple Bar* in Papa's study. (218)

Queenie's trial, "one of the most notorious murder cases of the Edwardian era" (230), unsettles the Aubrey family. Though Rose blames Piers for not protecting the children from violence, she admires the agency that involvement bestows: "he never concurred in

the insulting pretence that the young must watch things happen without being told the explanation: a pretence which imposes on them a peculiar suffering, as of the carted animal, which few adults could support" (283). Rose's awareness and understanding of politics afford her keen powers of observation and the stance of a witness. Paradoxically, the very pain resulting from the loss of childhood naivety enables her to narrate the family saga.

West's own childhood, like the Aubrey children's, forced her to become aware of the pressure of political events on private life. In her 1962 tribute to her father for *The Sunday Telegraph*, West credits him with her keen awareness of the proximity between private and public events. She recalls that Charles Fairfield emphasized that hers would be a turbulent century:

> I also acquired a vision of the world in which only landscape and the animal creation were stable. Bracken and heather and chestnut trees and the mellow brick of Hampton Court and the sea would always be there, and so would dogs, horses, cats and rabbits. For the rest, the world would change according to the ideas accepted by human beings. If these ideas were true, then the world would get better; if they were not, it would get worse. I owe it to my father that I have never been much perturbed by being born into a time of historic crisis, for he constantly impressed on my infant ears that that was just what had happened to me. He did not represent this as a hardship. Obviously there was no alternative. ("My Father" 4)

The Aubrey children are, like West, aware of the large-scale catastrophe looming over

Europe. Piers's pamphlet on "The Future of Europe and our Foreign Policy" predicts never-ending war. Rose recalls that upon the publication of the pamphlet, an incredulous friend of the family, Mr. Pennington, visits Lovegrove to report to Clare Aubrey that Piers has dismissed his nineteenth-century belief in progress and holds instead that

> we're not going forward, we're going backward. He says that civilization's going to collapse. It's going to shrink instead of spreading. …He says this may happen in Europe. And he goes on to say the most extraordinary things about the wars we are going to have after the criminals have taken over…He takes aeroplanes seriously. He says they may wipe out cities. Oh, he makes the most dreadful forecasts. (316)

Like West's, Piers analyzes the current situation and prophesies the future. By contrast, Mr. Pennington is a stand-in for the British public, who did not believe, by and large, that mechanized warfare was possible. Piers also predicts that criminality will infiltrate the public service, just as it did under Nazism. He functions as a mouthpiece for West's post-Nuremberg concerns about holding entire nations accountable before the law. Mr. Pennington continues,

> Your husband says that it far more difficult to punish the State than it is to punish individuals, and that there is no reason to suppose that the State, if given as free rein as the individual, will be any less likely to deserve punishment. The only way to control the State is to leave so much power in the hands of individuals that the State is at the disadvantage in dealing with individuals unless it acts in conformity with their desires. It is impossible to exaggerate the calamities that would befall if this precaution

were abandoned. (*FO* 315)

Although, as Rose points out, Piers had once been "a disciple of Herbert Spencer" (56), his belief in Victorian ideas of progress is replaced by an apocalyptic sense of loss. Much like West when she repudiated socialism in the 1930s and 1940s, Piers's unpopular predictions alienate him from the London journalistic community. Eventually, he is discouraged by his own pessimism. Although he risks imprisonment to save Queenie from an unfair ruling, he does not show the same willingness to resist catastrophe on a mass scale. His loss of faith in his ability to transform the ideas and actions of his fellow citizens through journalism results in his abandonment of the family. Piers escapes the future that he predicted and, as a figure of the nineteenth century, does not live on into modernity.

Piers's despair over the future that he envisages for Europe leads him to lose his faith in reason and to gamble away the family's remaining money. Rose reports, "[i]t was quite clear to us that our father had once again resolved to set aside the useless tool of the intellect and trust himself to blind chance, which he imagined was the presiding genius responsible for the successes of those who had another sort of intelligence than his" (290). Although West had championed reason from the beginning of her career and had regarded irrationality with suspicion, her belief in human rationality, *grosso modo*, waned after the Second World War. Piers's depression and desertion of his family weigh heavily on Rose: "Whenever I read the word 'estrangement' I think of my father's relations with us at this time. It is a word misused as a synonym for hostility; its pure meaning describes our situation. My father had no enmity towards any of us, but he had become a stranger. There was no warmth between us" (291).

Children and the Future

As Nick Bentley notes, "the way in which [Englishness] is narrated, the form or mode of narration deployed, can determine the type of nation that is evoked, and this can have ideological implications. For example, a sense of traditional national identity has been equated with the realist mode of fiction" (488). If West's realist novel is used to represent a traditional vision of the nation, the stability is nevertheless undercut by her use of the gothic and by the uncertain ending of the narrative. While she chooses to situate her 1950s novel in the tradition of the nineteenth-century realism, which associated with a rise of nationalism, the gothic elements in *Cousin Rosamund*—a poltergeist, visions of the dead, psychic ability, prophecy, the disappearance of characters—upsets realism and its certainties. Rose and Rosamund are figures in an interrupted *bildungsroman* that keeps them suspended in childhood. The narrative ends when they marry, yet their roles on the international stage attain no conclusion. As Jed Esty points out in his discussion of Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September*, the gothic realist novel is alert to the problem of endings (258). Bowen's novel is, much like *Cousin Rosamund*, a narrative of development complicated by the interruption of traditions and cultural conventions. Quoting Victor Sage, Esty claims that the gothic is a genre that writes a "tacit obituary" (262). Bowen's 1929 novel and West's postwar saga complicate, respectively, late modernism and the postwar period by suspending children's narratives of development.

The narrative suspension created by the prolonged description of everyday life and sense of mystery around Rosamund prevent the heroines from achieving maturity, as

if the political uncertainties of the period were reflected in the fate of the characters. Just as Rosamund has difficulty uttering a word or a sentence, pausing and stammering in its midst, the narrative too, stammers and suspends its conclusions. In this regard, the novel expresses some of the symptoms of the period in which it was written. West felt that the inheritance of Herbert Spencer on the one hand and of Edmund Burke on the other held her caught between nineteenth-century notions of progress and conservatism. The national "sleepiness" and nineteenth-century attitudes towards foreign policy that West diagnoses in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* from the perspective of Yugoslavia are in *Cousin Rosamund* investigated from the perspective of domestic life.

While the Aubreys are threatened by Piers's focus on the future, Rose's cousin, Rosamund, is threatened by her father's desire to return to the past by communicating with the dead. Jock, Clare's cousin and Rosamund's father, funds the *Society of Psychical Research*, a spiritualist group of which he is a member. He leaves Constance and Rosamund with so little money that they take in sewing to support themselves:

> Rosamund's father was a malevolent eccentric, a successful business man who was so averse to spending money except in the investigation of spiritualist mediums that she and Mamma's cousin Constance, had to seek refuge with us. Our father gambled, Rosamund's father wasted his time and money sitting in the dark accosting the dead who were not there, because both of them disliked this world and were leaning out to that other world. (*This Real Night* 5-6)

Jock's spiritualist practice further jeopardizes the security of the home by bringing evil spirits into the house. When Clare and Rose visit Constance and Rosamund, they find that

the house is plagued by a poltergeist. Though West wrote in her synopsis that the poltergeist is a metaphor for the war, a male figure, significantly, brings danger into the house. Rather than protect his family from outside dangers, Jock, like Piers, is responsible for bringing them into the domestic space.

After disappearing, Cousin Jock returns, without explanation, on the night of Clare Aubrey's death. Rose thinks she sees him through the window, but she cannot decide if he is alive or if he is a ghost: "He was slender, he was ageless…It might be that the way he stood was so shocking because he was not standing at all, but hanging from the lamp-post, with his feet just touching the ground. I was not even certain, whether standing or hanging, he was physically there at all" (264-5). Jock and Piers dismiss rational political action in favour of irrational responses to catastrophe. By disappearing, they leave women to handle upheaval and to narrate history.

West was keenly aware of the plight of children in wartime and of the pernicious effects of children's suffering for the future. She represented threatened children in her postwar fiction and also wrote non-fiction articles about her fears for the future of childhood. In "Children of Europe," a 1943 article for the *New York Herald,* she writes that during the war, "[p]recious material of the most precious sort, which is human material, has been destroyed for good and all…[the] most irreparable damage of all is that which has been done to the children of Europe" ("Children" 1). She concentrates on the suffering of Slovene children who have been killed, wounded or deported as an example of the widespread horrors to which children in all of Europe are exposed during total war:

> Put your thumb down on any spot on the map which marks a town in France or Belgium and under your thumb you have the site of an infinity of anguish felt by children who have seen their fathers sent off to work in Germany and have been left with their despairing brothers. Put your thumb down almost anywhere on the map of Norway and you mark the spot where a child is suffering agonies of apprehension, because his parents are resisting the invaders and may be taken away by the Gestapo, or because they are 'collaborating' and may be sentenced to death by their neighbours. (2)

She considers how the widespread "blows of a material nature" have affected children, but concludes that "innumerable blows at the mental health of childhood" (2) have longer-lasting effects. The Second World War has set up what West terms "the persecution of childhood" (4). Not only have individual children suffered: the very state of childhood itself has been victimized. Envisioning the difficulties that will persist after the war, she imagines the continued suffering of parents looking for the children from whom they have been separated. She fears that having lacked care and education at an early age, those children who have survived will not be fit for participation in civil society:

> The children who will have to be fed and clothed and taught by the relief workers will most of them have become little horrors, meat for the psychological clinic. Many of them will have forgotten the meaning of cleanliness and decency, some of them will have been infected with the sadism of the Nazi faith, all will be nerve-shattered. (7)

West urges her readership to help by prophesying future horror if these present victims are not returned to stable civilian life. She warns that the Americans "must not grudge the heaviest expenditure on sending relief" (6), even at the cost of being deprived of material goods at home. In 1943, even before the end of the war, West was thinking about it aftermath and the endangered future.

The loss of continuity that marks civilian life and cultural production after the Second World War is figured as the death and loss of children in *Saga of the Century*. West's novels fictionalize anxieties about the future by representing children as threatened and endangered. Changing ideas of Britishness in the postwar period led to uncertainties about Britain's future. In both *The Return of the Soldier* and the *Saga* children do not survive traumatic and violent public events. In *The Return of the Soldier*, the cause of Oliver's death is unexplained: "We never knew. He was the loveliest boy, but delicate from his birth. At the end he just faded away, with the merest cold" (*The Return of the Soldier* 77). Jenny blames Oliver's death on the historical moment: "children are not begotten that should have had the loveliest life, the pale usurpers of their birth die young. Such a world will not suffer magic circles to endure" (78).

West's postwar fiction demonstrates her belief—one that she shared with many of her contemporaries—that the Second World War threatened civilians more so than had the First World War. The *Saga* registers the threat that war presents to civilian life and to the future by showing the effects of violence on children. In *The Fountain Overflows,* children are denied a childhood or disappear altogether. They worry about the future. Rose confesses that, "[i]n the night, in our bedroom, we had wondered whether there was anything to prevent the world deciding that it would not wake up and have a spring, and

then everybody would get colder and colder, and the days would go on getting shorter and shorter, and in the end there would be only darkness" (114). Rose explains that as a result of this awareness, "[w]e were experts in disillusion, we had learned to be cynical about fresh starts even before we had ourselves made our first start" (*FO* 42). Postwar cynicism prohibits any fresh starts or even first starts. No child in the postwar can pretend to be innocent of history.

The Aubreys' adored youngest child, Richard Quin, is named after an uncle who died young. In a conversation with her father about his own childhood, Rose learns that her uncle

> had been christened Richard Quinbury to distinguish him from another Richard in the family, and Papa had loved him so much that he had called our little brother by his name, and we regarded our little brother as much the nicest of us four children so we thought of our dead uncle as a joy stolen from us and were always trying to recover him in our father's stories. (*FO* 5)

Richard Quin's life thus continues the dead uncle's. As names are recycled, his life is taxonomically bound to the family's past. Richard Quin does not repair the past nor ensure the survival of the family—he is killed in the First World War. Richard Quin's childhood merges seamlessly with his life as a soldier. He goes from living at home, the walls of his room "hung with his musical instruments, his boxing-gloves and his fencing foils, his rackets and his bats" (209), to fighting in the trenches. West therefore shows, just as she had in *The Return of the Soldier*, that the experience of war destroys not only the naivety of childhood, but children and the very concept of childhood. Richard Quin's

disappearance is never fully elucidated in the text: West's synopsis indicates that he is eventually betrayed by a fellow soldier who is tried for treason while assuming Richard Quin's identity.

Rosamund, the heroine of the *Saga of the Century*, is destined, according to West's synopsis, to sacrifice her life at Belsen. Although West did not complete the volume that would have narrated the Second World War, she insists on the foreordained quality of Rosamund's actions. Her childhood is marred by the presence of evil spirits in her house; like the Aubrey children, she is familiar with domestic calamity. When Rose and Clare visit Rosamund and Constance, Rose notices that:

> [a] few yards from the house there was a clothesline, on which there were hanging four dishcloths. Three heavy iron saucepans sailed through the air, hit the dishcloths, and fell on the ground…I realised the nature of the violence raging through the house…'Is that what you call a poltergeist?' I asked Mamma…'Yes, Rose', said Mamma, her voice quivering with indignation, 'you see I am right, supernatural things are horrible.' (*FO* 91)

West's postwar *bildungsroman* engages with the traumas of the First and Second World Wars by representing domestic spaces as inexplicably haunted. In her tetralogy, history is personalized and the daily realities of political decisions are made manifest. As Allan Hepburn points out, "The adjudication of good and evil preoccupied tribunals and writers in the years around World War II…[a]s a narrative structure, the trial creates opportunities for confession, alibi, and verdict" ("Trials and Errors" 131). The *Saga of the Century* re-casts the concerns West wrote about in her reports on postwar trials into fictional narrative form but suspends its verdict: it remains unfinished.

Endings

Rosamund is represented throughout the *Saga* as a prophetic figure who does not understand her role in history, but who fulfils it nonetheless. Rose notices her cousin's passivity towards the future as she watches her play chess with Piers. Rosamund seems to know in advance which piece she will move next:

> When it was time for Rosamund to make a move it was as if the game already existed, and she was waiting for her slow senses to tell her not what the next move should be, but what it unalterably was…Her hand had a sleeping look as it travelled across the board and moved the piece that was foreordained to move…here was Rosamund, not using her reason at all, simply knowing what moves succeeded each other in a game that existed somewhere in full completion, even before they had sat down to play it. (*The Fountain Overflows* 293)

Rose tries to understand what motivates Rosamund, but finds that she is enigmatic: "like one of the Greek statues at the British Museum, she [is] like stone that dreamed" (293). Rosamund's passivity and resignation are indicative of traumatic affliction. As Ankhi Mukherjee, quoting Judith Herman, notes, "'traumatic memory…is wordless and static'" (51). Rosamund's immobility makes her unable to change her situation. Her trauma is further manifest by her stammer. In Mukherjee's terms, stammering "is both symptom and strategy, struggling psychosomatically between contingency and intention to articulate small, private protests" (56). Rosamund's stammer is, however, not the result of past traumatic experience, but of her knowledge—her pre-cognition—of future

catastrophe. She is pre-emptively traumatized. The narrative preoccupation with Rosamund's voice, with her inability to form sentences, bespeaks West's anxiety about the articulation of trauma. Just as the narrative is interrupted before reaching the episode in which Rosamund sacrifices her life at Belsen, she never discloses the nature of her premonitions. According to the logic of the narrative, Rosamund must be written out of the text. Concluding the tetralogy according to the plan outlined in her synopsis proved a challenge that West could not surmount. On the first page of a typescript draft of *This Real Night*, a handwritten note reveals her anguish at having to finish the novels: "The Agony. Getting back to the book in May 1959. If I can do this I can do anything. But I fear I can't" (West Papers 2.20:2, McFarlin). In this regard, West's narrative stammers, as does the eponymous heroine.

Tony Judt points out that collective amnesia played an important role in postwar recovery in Europe: "In a continent covered with rubble, there was much to be gained by behaving as though the past was indeed dead and buried and a new age about to begin" (62). Driving through Berlin on her first visit to the city after the war, West was disconcerted by the state of the bombed houses. They are nothing but "diagrams of habitation," exhibiting "familiar form without familiar content" (*A Train of Powder* 32). In order to metabolise the war, West re-configured its events in terms of novelistic narrative. The epigraph to *The Fountain Overflows* is taken from William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: "The cistern contains; the fountain overflows." In choosing this epigraph, West envisages two possibilities for the purpose of the novel: it can either contain the events it narrates or be outdone by them. The postwar saga does not "contain" all of experience; the remaining volume was left unwritten. Whereas in her

reportage West's impulse was to disclose motivation, the novel withholds more secrets than it unmasks.

In their introduction to a recent collection of essays on modernism in the 1950s, Marina MacKay and Lyndsey Stonebridge write that "mid-century family sagas refuse to whitewash the national past with narratives of private transcendence, but see in private violence the symptomatic foreshadowing of an atrocious century" (8). Read in this light, the accumulation of catastrophes that befall the Aubrey family would indicate that West saw no end to conflict in the twentieth century. Storm Jameson, in response to a reviewer who faulted her for not being able to outgrow war, retorted that "the war we could not outgrow was not the one we had survived but the one we were expecting" (MacKay and Stonebridge 7). West may have agreed. The expansiveness of the postwar novel offers a way of coping with the postwar climate of uncertainty. Rather than speeding up the action of the novel, the serial novel creates suspension of events and of time: West expands the catalogue of information by detailing everyday life. Her difficulty with endings is a symptom of the 1950s political uncertainty about the future of Britain. As Randall Stevenson points out, "such elements of international background or experience are perhaps a particular stimulus to novel-writing, establishing a critical distance from British society which provides both an incentive and a specific perspective for its observation" (225). West's travels in the Balkans, to postwar Germany, to the United States, and to South Africa provided her with comparisons with her native Britain and forced her to represent the increasingly modest role of Britain on the international scene.

Diplomatic Revisions: Lawrence Durrell and the Postwar Novel

Mountolive, the third volume of Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet,* chronicles David Mountolive's rise and fall as a British ambassador in Egypt. Set in the interwar period but informed by postwar events, the novel examines the loss of British power in Egypt and constitutes Durrell's response to what Jed Esty has called the "shrinking" of British international influence in the second half of the twentieth century. The *Alexandria Quartet* as a whole writes a palimpsestic history: the four novels look back on the catastrophes of the twentieth century alongside events from previous centuries. At the same time, the tetralogy looks forward to the consequences of historical events. Durrell's *Quartet* writes the aftermath of the Second World War by reflecting on the motives and effects of British foreign policy in the Mediterranean. By focalizing *Mountolive* through the character of a diplomat, the narrative dwells on questions of the private and public responsibilities of ambassadors. David Mountolive's failure to act is emblematic of the fatigue of the postwar period and of the end of British imperial dominance.

In the *Quartet* Durrell conceives of the novel in relation to the discourse of diplomacy. Concerns with diplomatic work in *Mountolive* are more specifically a way to reflect on wartime relations among nations. While all the characters in the *Alexandria Quartet* circulate information, Mountolive's communications are performed according to diplomatic protocol. The figure of the diplomat provides the narrative with a minor character who can observe events from his marginal position behind the scenes of political decision-making. Steeped in the procedure and paperwork involved in foreign

affairs, Mountolive not only witnesses events in the making as they unfold by increments, but he is implicated in the revision of statements within documents which themselves constitute an event. The *Alexandria Quartet* thus foregrounds the textuality of the novel through a preoccupation with documents, information, and history. A sense of loss occasioned by war permeates the text, prompting an excavation of history throughout the series. The Alexandrian past presses on its present; the *Quartet* does not archive the past, but imagines it as interacting with the present.

Although critics such as Bernard Bergonzi have deemed mid-century fiction a "conservative literature of retreat" (MacKay and Stonebridge 2), the *Alexandria Quartet*, and *Mountolive* in particular, are implicated in international political events. The Second World War is not directly represented in the *Quartet*; it is written into the text by separating the action of the third and fourth volumes. As such, the war plays a pivotal role in the *Quartet*. Whereas *Justine* (1957), *Balthazar* (1958) and *Mountolive* (1959) are set before the War, *Clea* (1960) affords a postwar view of Egypt and its geopolitical situation. *Mountolive,* concerned with the politics of decolonization, takes place during a period of political transition when Egypt, a British protectorate, gained increasing independence from Britain. Relations between the two countries required a new diplomatic approach. Mike Diboll suggests that Durrell's representation of politics in *Mountolive* is based on the rise of the liberal Wafd party in Egypt. While the party favored independence, it also promised friendly relations with Britain and guaranteed the British control of Suez: "David Mountolive corresponds to the newer, twentieth century generation of imperialists in the mold of High Commissioner Windgate who were prepared to…entertain the idea of some kind of self-rule for the country, probably under

Wafdist government" (Diboll, "Secret History" 91). Through a series of policy errors, however, Britain forfeited a chance for peaceful international relations in Egypt and in the Mediterranean. In *Mountolive*, Durrell is sharply critical of British diplomacy in Egypt. David Mountolive's antiquated and orientalist notions ultimately prevent him from seeing the situation clearly. A postwar and post-Suez novel, *Mountolive* rewrites the 1930s as the beginning of British loss of power in Egypt and in the Middle East.

Cultural Diplomacy in *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus*

While the *Quartet* purports to narrate the minor intrigues of a group of British expatriates, in *Mountolive*, the sequence takes on a more overtly political significance. The representation of diplomatic life in Egypt draws on Durrell's work as a minor official for the British Foreign Service and the British Council. From 1942 to 1945, he worked as Public Information Officer in Cairo, Alexandria, and Rhodes, where he oversaw the publication of three newspapers aimed at keeping the Greek population of those cities and islands loyal to the Allied forces. In 1947, Durrell was sent to Argentina by the British Council, where he taught at the *Asociatión Argentina de Cultura Británnica*. From 1950-1956 he served as Information Officer in Belgrade and in Cyprus. Durrell thought of *Mountolive* as central to the concerns of his tetralogy. In a letter to Patricia Rodda, Durrell writes that "Mountolive is the clou to the whole set" (Durrell Collection, HRC), and to Alan Thomas, he refers to the novel as "the fulcrum of the Quartet [sic], the clou" (Durrell Papers, ADD MS 73114). Durrell worried about his critical representation of the British diplomat in the novel. In another letter, he confides, "There is so much politics in Mountolive [sic] who is an ambassador that (since I had served in Egypt) I thought it

wise to get vetted. MSS flying back up and down the coast to Sir Walter Smart, my ex oriental counsillor [sic], who kindly undertook to spot for possible resemblances and who lives nearby" (April 4, 1958. Durrell Collection, HRC). Critics have suggested that Durrell's fictional diplomat is modeled on Miles Lampson, Lord Killearn, who was the British High Commissioner and later Ambassador to Egypt from 1934 to 1946. According to Donald Kaczvinsky, "Mountolive, for example, as Britain's first ambassador to Egypt, is, historically, speaking, Lampson, but he in no way resembles that bluff and confident servant of empire" (164). Anna Zahlan suggests that "in portraying a fictional ambassador so startlingly different from his real-life counterpart, Durrell…may be ignoring the character and actions of the high-handed Lampson in order to convey the real impotence of England" (10). Writing retrospectively in the 1950s, Durrell chooses to represent British diplomacy in Egypt as ineffective. Durrell's diplomat is the reluctant servant of a fading empire.

Durrell's own work in the Foreign Service during and after the Second World War put him directly in touch with the control of information that was required to maintain power in colonies. Publishing newspapers and propaganda for Greek, British, and Cypriot readers, he interpreted political issues with these audiences in mind. This method of writing becomes an interpretive strategy in the *Alexandria Quartet* and in his travelogue, *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus.* Both published in 1957, *Justine* and *Bitter Lemons* offer a belated representation of the preoccupations of diplomat figures during the Second World War and the Suez Crisis. Durrell's diplomats do not possess any of the power that Harold Nicolson attributes to them; instead, they are powerless to change events once they are set on a course of inevitability. While *Mountolive* represents the Egyptian

political situation before the Second World War indirectly and novelistically, *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus* narrates his witnessing the 1955-56 EOKA revolt from his dual position as an inhabitant of the island and as a representative of the British government. EOKA, the *Ethniki Orgánosis Kipriakoú Agónos*, or National Organization of Cypriot Struggle, was a Greek nationalist and anti-colonial organization that fought against the British presence in Cyprus. In 1955 British forces suppressed a violent EOKA revolt and hanged several of its leaders. Durrell's travelogue of the three years he spent on the island addresses colonial violence in a report-like first person narration and mixes compassion for the Greek Cypriot struggle with a naïveté about British imperial policies.

In *Bitter Lemons* Durrell's narrative authority rests on his first-hand experience of Cyprus and his status as an outsider. A liminal figure, he straddles linguistic and cultural boundaries. Speaking "indifferent but comprehensible Greek" (*Bitter Lemons* 23) and living in a small village, he does not consider himself a member of the British expatriate community in Cyprus, but understands their way of life. He observes that the rituals and beliefs of the British abroad remain unchanged by their location. On Cyprus, Durrell recounts,

> the British Colony lived what appeared to be a life of blameless monotony, rolling about in small cars, drinking at the yacht club, sailing a bit, going to church, and suffering apprehensions at the thought of not being invited to Government House on the Queen's Birthday. One saw the murk creeping up over Brixton as one listened to their conversations. No doubt Malta and Gibraltar have similar colonies… (24)

Durrell's reference to Brixton connects Mediterranean island life with life in Britain. He

thinks of both countries as islands. Islands can allow for seclusion from global events, or islands can become reflections of global instability, as they did in Cyprus. That the British live a life of "blameless monotony" suggests that they are not aware of the political ramifications of their presence on the island and that they use tedium to maintain colonial power. Rituals and repeated activities keep them sealed in British customs and thinking.

In contrast to the British expatriates Durrell imagines himself as belonging to the local community. Living in a small house near Bellapaix Abbey apart from the British, he is transformed by his proximity with local Cypriots of all classes, languages, and political convictions: "By electing to live in my own village rather than in the capital…I retained a link with the rural community" (*Bitter Lemons* 126). Through conversations at the local taverna, with the builders of his house, or with fellow teachers and artists, he gains an understanding of Greek Cypriot culture from within. Durrell believes that inhabiting this interstitial cultural space will reward him with impartiality, knowledge, and a hermeneutic advantage. As he explains, "the truth is that both the British and the Cypriot world offered one a gallery of humours which could only be fully enjoyed by one who, like myself, had a stake in neither" (25). Durrell, belonging nowhere, observes and records the particularities of all the inhabitants of Cyprus.

The Enotist revolt challenged Durrell's allegiances and attachments despite his belief in his neutrality. Although he had championed Greek poets such as George Seferis a decade earlier, in Cyprus he became a purveyor of English culture. Needing money for home restorations, he first took a post teaching English language and literature at the Pan Cyprian Gymnasium in Nicosia. He was later offered the position of Director of Public

Relations for the Colonial Office. As he explains,

> I met the Colonial Secretary of the island at Austen Harrison's lunch-table, where he proposed that I should apply for the post of Press Adviser, then about to fall vacant. There was much that needed doing in the field of public relations and it was felt that someone knowing Greek and having a stake in the island's affairs might do better than a routine official. (*Bitter Lemons* 143)

That Durrell presents his meeting with the Colonial Secretary as an informal conversation over lunch obscures the importance of the job of Press Adviser. He portrays himself as an accidental and unwilling participant who works for the British government for money rather than out of political conviction.

Recent criticism and the release of archival documents from the Cyprus State Archives have challenged Durrell's representation of his role in Cyprus. Drawing on recently de-classified correspondence between Durrell and the Information Office, Barbara Papastavrou-Koroniotaki has argued that Durrell willingly worked on behalf of the British in Cyprus:

> Durrell's handwritten letter…to the British Governor, which accompanied his Application for Appointment…tried to enhance his candidacy for the position of the Director of Information Services and persuade that he is qualified for it by…invoking his relationship with the local literary circles (22-23)

Although he denied any allegiance to the British colonial government's anti-Enotist position, Durrell used his celebrity as a British writer and his fluency in Greek to

strengthen his candidacy for the position. Durrell's might have deployed his insider's knowledge of Greek culture either for the Enotist cause or against it. Although information is in itself neutral, it can be used to support radically different political ends. In this case, British Colonial administrators felt that Durrell's experience in cultural relations prepared him to conduct diplomacy through cultural means. Citing Durrell's "penetrating insight into the Cypriot mind" (Papastavrou-Koronitaki 25) in a confidential report, the Governor of the British Secretary of State for the Colonies recommended Durrell for the position. In turn, the Selection Board found that "the nomination of a well-known Philhellene to this post would unquestionably do a great deal to stimulate local interest in the Cyprus Broadcasting Service and to break down psychological barriers" (26). As tensions mounted, the Colonial administration in Cyprus thought that Durrell's knowledge of Greek culture would convince the independence movement to remain under British control than unify with Greece. Ultimately, however, Durrell alienated the Enotists as well as his Greek friends for working on behalf of the British:

> He who wanted to volunteer his services to the Greek Armed Forces during the Second World War…would now risk tarnishing his Hellenic image by working for the British colonial government at a critical post. Nevertheless, he appeared to accept the challenge of this attempt, despite the warnings of Maurice Cardiff, the Director of the British Council in Nicosia. (Papastavrou-Koronitaki 22)

Durrell did accept the challenge. In a 1954 letter to his friend Alan Thomas, he wrote: "Trying to save Cyprus for the British as this late stage after so many years of total neglect is really a hard nut to crack…" (c.1954. Durrell Papers, British Library). Despite

his image as an unwilling participant who happened to live in Cyprus at the time when events erupted, Durrell took seriously his work of "saving" the British colony.

The position of Information Officer engaged Durrell's skills as a cultural negotiator. One of his main duties involved taking on the editorship of the *Cyprus Review*. Founded in 1941, the *Cyprus Review* was published monthly in English and Greek. It was circulated in Cyprus, throughout the Middle East, in Greece and in the UK. Before Durrell's editorship began in October 1954, the *Review* focused on events of British politics and pageantry such as visits of the Governor of Cyprus, and British social events. The *Review* took for granted the universal appeal of British culture. Durrell's strategy was different. Informed by his work for the British Council, his approach aimed to bridge British and Cypriot culture. While the goal of the British Council was to encourage a familiarity with British culture abroad, its planning documents also specify that "neither objective (cultural propaganda and political influence) can be properly attained, the Council feels, unless we show real interest, both here and abroad, in the culture, history and ways of life of the other peoples" (BW 1/43). Under Durrell's editorship, changes to the layout of the magazine reflected the British Council's concern with reciprocity: British and Cypriot culture were given equal space in the pages of the magazine. British culture was no longer central and Cypriot culture secondary.

In the December 1954 issue, Durrell explained his purpose in an editorial note:

> Cyprus is something more than a vital communication center in the Eastern Levant; it is a point of confluence for three cultures, British, Greek, and Turkish, which gives it both a certain incongruity of styles in living and also a delightful variety. We want to represent the island's way

> of living and not only emphasize the pictorial side of its magnificent landscape and climate—the tourist aspect. But we would also like to build a journal which, apart from its notes on folklore, customs, archaeology and art carries authoritative articles covering the contemporary Middle Eastern scene. Is this too ambitious a hope? Time, contributors and a public are the factors upon which an answer to such a question depends. (*Cyprus Review* 1)

To align British and Cypriot interests, Durrell featured articles about the visits of British officials that appeared alongside articles about Cyprus. The magazine showcased articles about traditional arts such as felt-making, and celebrations for the festival of the Epiphany; it included portraits of contemporary Greek Cypriot artists such as Eve Macrides alongside European artists who were living on Cyprus, including Sigmund Pollitzer. Travellers' personal reminiscences of Istanbul or of Cyprus before the First World War, as well as portraits of historical figures who all lived for a time in Cyprus—such as Alexander the Great, Beccafico, and Arthur Rimbaud—constructed a *lingua franca* and a common past for all current Cypriots. Through the medium of the magazine, Durrell created alliances among British, Greek, and Turkish cultures. His dual position—as British functionary and as fluent speaker of Greek—enabled him to present Cypriot territory as tri-cultural in the pages of the *Cyprus Review*.

As he recalls in *Bitter Lemons*, Durrell's friendships with both local Cypriots and British officials helped him to tailor the message of the *Cyprus Review* to the tastes of his readership and to the political ends of the British government. A true child of Hermes, Durrell collects information from different sources and keeps it in circulation. Pieces of

intelligence amassed from locals, from his students, from myths, and from history, he believes, furnish him with a better understanding of the contemporary situation in Cyprus. As Durrell explains, his "conclusions did not come altogether, but singly and from many sources; the picture [he] formed was a composite made up of many fragments of gossip and thought, of many stray meetings in coffee-houses and or along the hospitable sea-shore" (*Bitter Lemons* 125). His friends Freya Stark, Rose Macaulay, and Patrick Leigh Fermor, travellers with an interest and expertise in the region, reported to him the perceptions of Cyprus within an international context and informed his opinions.

Recognizing that knowledge of the language—the diplomat's expected qualification—does not furnish a sufficient understanding of cultural codes, he also sought the help of local guides. Durrell recounts that a Turkish Cypriot, Mr. Sabri, tricks a family into selling Durrell their house along with water rights. Durrell flatters Sabri by telling him that he has a "reputation for being a rogue," that is, "*cleverer* than other people" (*Bitter Lemons* 40). Durrell makes use of diplomatic negotiation in his dealings with Mr. Sabri, confiding to the reader that he had "scored a diplomatic stroke in throwing myself completely upon the iron law of hospitality which underpins all relations in the Levant" (49). Far from not knowing cultural codes in this case, Durrell appeals to Sabri with full knowledge that he cannot be refused. His closeness to the villagers enables him to collect information and get a sense of popular opinion. Durrell considers the Pan Cyprian Gymnasium where he teaches English as "the perfect laboratory to study national sentiment in its embryonic state" (20). While the British rulers are unsure of what is really going on in Cyprus, Durrell has sources in several different districts of the island: in his village, in the capital, Nicosia, in the Pan Cyprian gymnasium among the

youth, in the Greek, English, and Turkish-speaking worlds of the island.

In *Bitter Lemons*, Durrell creates an archive of the passages of other travellers and empires through the island. His experience of Cyprus is textually mediated. The travelogue stitches together different types of documents: novels, travelogues, histories. Durrell reminds the reader that many other writers have been there before him. He recalls that "in Cyprus I stumbled upon many more such echoes from forgotten moments of history with which to illuminate the present" (20). He also reflects on the history of colonization of Cyprus, and his repeated references to other texts is a practice consistent with the "citationary nature of the orientalist tradition" (Bowen, "Closing the 'Toybox'" 167). Chapters in *Bitter Lemons* are introduced with epigraphs from Cypriot proverbs, or from excerpts from colonial reports, such as Hepworth-Dixon's 1888 assessment of Cyprus, when the island was first a British suzerainety. He cites Samuel Brown's prophetic description of violence on the island in the sixteenth century and Arthur Rimbaud's days on the island when he worked as a builder on the Governor's summer lodge in the Troodos Mountains at the end of the nineteenth century. Durrell is aware that Cyprus has been visited and conquered many times before. His authority as a cultural diplomat rests in his knowledge of history of the documents that have described a location and a passage before his own.

Whereas Durrell defends the empire through his work as Press Officer, *Bitter Lemons* addresses the rise and fall of empires. Durrell's historical understanding makes him aware that the British will not hold onto the island forever: his interest in historical accounts about Cyprus and his sense of the continuity between past and present make him cognizant of the impermanence of political power. He recounts that "walking about at

dusk in the iron parallelogram of Famagusta, these thoughts became absurdly mixed with evocations of past history, no less cruel and turbulent than the times in which we lived" (162). He reminds his readers that before the British were on Cyprus, the island was, at different times, under Ottoman, Venetian, and Greek rule; he remembers that there were other invaders "like Haroud Al Rashid, Alexander, Coeur de Lion: women like Catherine Coronaro and Helena Palaeologus" (20). Reading historical records and visiting monuments on the island, Durrell sees the ruins of past centuries in much the same way that Rebecca West in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* treats various invasions and settlements in Yugoslavia as co-terminal with present political administration. Durrell wonders, in conversation with Rose Macaulay, how to interpret the ruins of a fortress:

> how it is that the utilitarian objects of one period become objects of aesthetic value to succeeding ones? This thing was constructed purely to keep armies at bay, to shatter men and horses, to guard a pass. How do we find it more beautiful than the Maginot line? Does time itself confer something on relics and ruins which isn't inherent in the design of the builder? Will we ever visit the Maginot line with such awe at its natural beauty? (*Bitter Lemons* 94)

Durrell and Macauley ask if the passage of time reveals the past more sharply. Durrell insists that interpreting monuments as aesthetic objects does not satisfy. In an interview for the BBC's "Midday Dialogue" with Marius Goring, Durrell echoed this sentiment, asserting that "the past shouldn't be a funk hole or an escape, but that it should be…just as informative as it is seducing." Looking at the ruins of a town built by Caesar's legions in Provence, Durrell explains that, for him,

> The remains of those monuments are not simply remains. They contain…information that is not just archaeological—or what Byron called 'Antiquarian Twaddle'…They contain a great deal of contemporary information…In fact you become more contemporary the more you look at these old stones (Durrell Scripts 10-11, BBC Archives)

Seeing the past as merely decorative robs it of its political significance. Writing in the aftermath of the rise and fall of many imperial powers allows Durrell a vision of the consequences of events. As a postwar text, *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus* asks how the mid-century writer should reconfigure the fragments of the past. Durrell rejects the high modernist transformation of the fragment into an aestheticized object; instead he re-invests ruins with political meaning.

The specter of the Second World War hangs over Durrell's representation of the political situation in Cyprus in the 1950s. The creation of the United Nations in 1945 changed the way in which both the British and the EOKA militants make their case in their dispute. In the postwar context of greater international vigilance, Britain was careful to behave democratically in order to be perceived as a benevolent power and to avoid any comparison with the totalitarian regimes of the previous decade. "If we had been Russians or Germans the Enosis problem would have been solved in half an hour—by a series of mass murders and deportations. No democracy could think along these lines" (*Bitter Lemons* 202). In the *Cyprus Review* Durrell echoes the British government's anxiety to be seen as maintaining a conversation with the Cypriots, and not just as imposing rule through force. Durrell criticizes the British government, however, for its backwardness, as officials see "the whole problem as essentially a colonial rather than a

European one, and apply the dusty yardstick of other colonies to it" (123). The British can no longer respond to unrest as they did to a mutiny at the height of their imperial power; they must bow and adhere to international law and behave as a democracy. He sees that the events in Cyprus can have global repercussions: "However negligible the Cyprus issue might seem it was after all soon to emerge on the plateau of international relations" (123). The international standard also applies to the Enotists, as Durrell's friend Alexis explains: "'they will need something stronger than the moral case if they are going to interest UN which has so many other problems….The world must be convinced that the problem merits international consideration'"(120). In the crisis in Cyprus in the 1950s then, the UN emerges as an international arbiter. The methods of the nineteenth century and British imperialism must give way to a postwar climate of negotiation.

Despite his versatility as a negotiator, Durrell is nonetheless rendered powerless by the violence that erupts in Cyprus. Maintaining at first that he "had come to Cyprus as a private individual, and had no concern with policy" (118), he becomes implicated in the failing enterprise of trying to keep Cyprus as a British colony. Predictions for British control in Cyprus become dire: "events now were drawing in, closing in upon us, and hardly a day went by without the arrival of some new visitor or some new and disturbing fragment of news" (164). Durrell is forced to leave Cyprus. He loses the house that he acquired with the roguish ways of Mr. Sabri, just as Britain loses its power and presence in the Mediterranean. Durrell's posting on Cyprus was his last with the British Foreign Office.

After the Second World War, Durrell wrote three books about islands: *Prospero's*

Cell, Reflections on a Marine Venus, and *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus.* Geographically cut off from land-masses, islands rely on networks for their defense and their survival. Islands of strategic importance for the British during the War, like Rhodes, the Dodecanese Islands, and Cyprus, became even more important in the postwar period, as Britain struggled to retain some influence in the Mediterranean. In a recent study of wartime writers, Adam Piette has included Durrell among writers who deliberately refused to write about the war. Focusing on Durrell's 1944 collection of poems about Greece, *A Private Country*, Piette claims that Durrell participated in what he calls the "island dream":

> Alan Ross reviewed Durrell's *A Private Country* in 1944 and found Durrell's vision of Greece wanting, because it seemed to write the war completely off the map of the mind…Everything Ross says about Durrell's Greece is pertinent to the island dream, and therefore to something extremely unsettling about the British imagination at war. The dream, fabricated by 1940 propaganda, was allowed to enter the minds of combatants and to constitute the way they dreamed of peace and the anti-Nazi cause. Yet as Ross intimates in his critique of Durrell's Greece, the island dream specifically pacifies and ignores the European war. Because the islanded mind prefers its own deep blankness to feeling part of Europe's suffering body, the imagination transforms itself into something unreal and remote. The mind dreams itself into mock nostalgia for a holiday private happiness which the public disease of war has by now rendered pre-war and self-deceiving. (Piette 271)

While Durrell's wartime collection of poems, *A Private Country*, focuses on his impressions of Greece and represents the country as unaffected by the War, his postwar travel books and novels are concerned with the effects of the War without representing it directly. As the consequences of the war made themselves clearer in its aftermath, Durrell reconsidered the significance of earlier events in his postwar fiction.

Mountolive and Diplomacy

Durrell wrote the *Alexandria Quartet* when he lived on Cyprus. Composition interrupted his duties as Information Officer, as did the Second World War. Ian MacNiven notes that Durrell began writing the *Quartet* as early as in 1937 while living in Corfu, and that the first 100,000 words of the novel were left behind when Durrell had to flee as the Nazis approached Greece. The soldiers apparently used those early drafts of the *Quartet* to light fires. Durrell re-wrote the largest part of *Alexandria Quartet* while living in the south of France in the mid-1950s, but MacNiven notes that when Durrell tried to work on his book again in 1952 while serving in Cyprus, "the big book that he had been planning to write since at least 1938 refused to give birth to itself and he found his duties too distracting and too time consuming to permit him to work on anything requiring uninterrupted concentration" (380). Durrell's manuscript draft of *Justine* (entitled "Justine I") indicates that he wrote the early drafts of the *Quartet* in official notebooks marked "Supplied for the Public Service" on the front cover. On the inside cover of the second of three notebooks housing the draft, he notes in red ink: "Draft begun in Venice 21st Jan. 1954 on notes from '46-'47—some passages—shoot Mareotis—in 1943. Kyrenia 6 months with S." In blue ink on the top right of the page

Durrell wrote "notes for Alex" and on the left top corner, in pencil, his tentative title: "The Book of the Dead" (Durrell Papers, ADD 73099, British Library). The manuscript of *Justine* indicates, then, that Durrell was working as a minor Foreign Service official at the time he began to write the novel. In this early draft, while Durrell is still debating the names of characters—the central family are called the Fabers, not the Hosnanis—he is planning to include a recessed novel, entitled *Justine*, within his "Book of the Dead." These notes indicate that, from the outset, he planned to thematize textuality by introducing a book within a book and notes towards future books. The highly textual work of diplomacy and cultural relations informs the structure of the novels, while the passage of time caused Durrell to represent Alexandria from the point of view of the later postwar period.

The *Alexandria Quartet* represents the postwar loss of British global influence. Each of the four novels engage with diplomacy, insofar as information circulates and characters revise documents. By representing characters who interpret information, Durrell thematizes the dual etymology of the tradition of Hermes. While Durrell's preface to *Balthazar* announces that the novels are "an investigation of modern love," the series instead illustrates the political motives for characters' lies and elaborate deceptions. While the narrator, L.G. Darley, believes Justine Hosnani is in love with him, she is merely using their affair to divert the attention of the British away from Nessim Hosnani's plot to set up an independent Jewish state in Palestine. In *Mountolive*, Leila Hosnani's disabled husband, Faltaus, suggests that she take Mountolive as a lover in order to blind him to Nessim's machinations. As these instances prove, love is a form of dissimulation in the *Quartet*. The narrative gradually reveals that characters use their

lovers to satisfy their desires for information, spying, gossip, betrayal, and *realpolitik*. The narrative rewards those characters who can see beyond the romantic surfaces of relationships. Mountolive is duped by Leila; Darley by Justine. Justine's affairs do not fulfill her personal desires; they mask her political allegiances.

Just as diplomats pursue, record, interpret, and pass on information, characters are involved in complex and obsessive games of encoding or decoding the information that they find. In Alexandria, seemingly marginal characters such as the barber Mnemijian are important sources of information. Darley finds that Mnemijian "is the Memory man, the archives of the city. If you should wish to now the ancestry or income of the most casual passer-by you have only to ask him; he will recite the details in a sing-song voice as he strops his razor and tries it upon the coarse black hair of his forearm" (32). His shop functions as an informal meeting place where the French diplomat Pombal and the writer Darley exchange information. Entrusted with the task of preparing bodies for burial, Mnemijian is also privy to the secrets of the dead. In the *Quartet*, information is not province of male characters alone; women also circulate information and actively participate in political events. While Justine and Leila Hosnani seem to be interested in seduction, they have political goals and political agency. Justine is indifferent to Nessim until he confides in her that his family are involved in plans to establish an independent Jewish state in Palestine. '"For the first time he struck a responsive chord in her by a confession which was paradoxically very far from a confession of the heart...Yes, Justine, Palestine…the whole of our fortune has gone into the struggle which is about to break out there'" (552-553). Like Justine, Leila works on behalf of the Hosnanis by distracting David Mountolive. In their affairs, both Justine and Leila use the protocols of romantic

love eloquently to misinform their lovers and deflect their attention away from public matters.

Whereas the diplomat is bound to use information in the service of his government, spies have no such protocols to follow. David Mountolive is required to report the Hosnani scheme to London; his duty as an envoy prohibits him from making other use of this information. Darley notes that "it was interesting, too, to discover which of my acquaintances were really part of the espionage grape-vine. Mnemijian… patiently copied out his intelligence summaries in triplicate and sold copies to various other intelligence services" *(*139). While a diplomat produces a version of information that will be of use to his government's future foreign policy, the spy's use of information is untethered by such allegiances. Spies like Mnemijian and Scobie produce several versions of the facts and circulate them to interested parties. Diplomats, unlike spies, however, are agents of the state. They are bound by loyalty to their country to make information available to their departments strictly in order for their country to adjust its foreign policy. By making Mountolive the lynchpin of the *Quartet*, Durrell investigates the nature of postwar diplomatic agency and responsibility.

Documents, which circulate both information and misinformation, abound in the *Quartet*. They frustrate and outlive their users and producers. Justine's diary, found after her disappearance, is intercepted, read, and interpreted by Jacob Arnauti, who publishes *Moeurs*, a *roman-à-clef* based on it. Documents also frustrate those who seek information from them; they confuse more than they clarify. Darley searches through the pages of the diary for clues about the identity and motives of his lover, only to be further mystified. In *Clea*, Justine confesses to Darley that she and Nessim's favorite postwar after-dinner

pastime at their estate in Karm Abu Girg is to read aloud Mountolive's love letters to Leila. Yet documents also function as problematic inheritances for those who find them. After his suicide, Pursewarden's last letter to Mountolive forces the latter to act on the information that the letter reveals about Nessim. In other instances, written documents are revealed to be unreliable. *Balthazar* revises and corrects *Justine*. In his Interlinear, a correction of Darley's novel, Balthazar the physician and mage, supplies a much needed revision of Darley's erroneous beliefs about his Alexandrian friends.

The use of revisions in the *Quartet* draws on the discourse and methods of diplomacy. By definition, diplomats contextualize information for each interlocutor and reader. The *Quartet* emphasizes the provisionality of information and of the conclusions that can be drawn from it. Information circulates in the *Alexandria Quartet*, but it is never definitive. In Durrell's *Preface* to the series, he refers to the novels as "a word continuum." The first three volumes are related, he says, "in an intercalcary fashion, being 'siblings' of each other and not 'sequels.'" Just as the diplomat revises information and his interpretations, so the postwar novelist integrates various accounts of events into a narrative. In the *Quartet*, Darley recognizes through Balthazar's Interlinear that his understanding of Justine in the first volume of the series is inaccurate, and revises it in subsequent tomes. Durrell's inclusion of "Workpoints," or fragments that have not been incorporated into the novels at the end of each volume, further suggests an openness of interpretation. He explains that "among the Workpoints at the end I have sketched in a number of possible ways of continuing to deploy these characters and situations in further installments" (*Preface*). Hermes keeps information in perpetual circulation by preventing closure.

Seemingly more objective than the other novels in the series, *Mountolive* also defers full disclosure of the situation. The reader, like the diplomat, is forced to withhold judgment until more information is brought to light. *Clea*, the fourth and final volume of the *Quartet*, adds to but also does not complete the archive of David Mountolive. By presenting different versions of events in each of the novels, Durrell asks the reader, like the diplomat, to postpone a conclusive assessment of the *histoire* of the novels and make sense of events belatedly, as the narrator does.

This novelistic strategy borrows from the practice of diplomacy, in which the document of a policy is circulated and repeatedly revised by different commentators. The methods used by the Foreign Office also emphasize revision and collaboration in the drafting of policies. For example, during the period of Durrell's appointments, a minuted sheet was circulated among officials named at the top of the page and divided into sections where each person could add comments and revisions to the proposed policy. Thus, a policy draft was altered and revised in increments. Minuted sheets provide an overview of the process by which decisions are made in the Foreign Office and constitute a written archive of alternatives–of what might have been. The revisionary nature of the *Quartet* is reminiscent of the minuted sheet. By re-casting the same characters in each volume of the *Quartet* and by revising information from the previous tome in each subsequent volume, the novels ask the reader to consider multiple alternatives and conclusions similarly while moving by increments through the plot.

In *Mountolive*, the third person narration suggests that the assumed point of view is more reliable, because more neutral, than in the other three volumes, which are narrated in the first person. Donald Kaczvinsky and Alan Warren Friedman have argued

that *Mountolive* aims at a realist but not an objective presentation of events. The creation of a kind of narrative neutrality speaks to wider thematic concerns in *Mountolive*. Unlike the novels of the *Quartet*, *Mountolive* employs the discourse of the diplomatic report. It reads like a file on David Mountolive that interpolates the reader into self-conscious attention to the nature of communication itself. The third-person narration allows the reader to see David Mountolive's mistakes more clearly. In *Justine* and *Balthazar,* Darley scrutinizes his surroundings and his friends without deciphering their codes. Because Darley narrates exclusively, the reader has no other point of view on events. In *Mountolive,* however, the third-person narration allows the reader distance to see what bewilders the diplomat and to judge his actions. *Mountolive* offers the reader a primer on the rise to power of a young diplomat. Because "writing, for Durrell, increased confusion and misunderstanding, rather than clarifying it" (Pine 5), the novel employs the style of an objective report in order to expose its limitations but without giving the "truth" about events nonetheless. Like a diplomatic pouch holding multiple secret documents, *Mountolive* collects information about Egypt. The third-person narration allows the reader enough perspective to notice Mountolive's errors and to gauge his interpretations alongside other possible ones.

The abundance of information and documents in *Mountolive* indicates that the discourses of diplomacy influenced Durrell's novels and constitute a strategy for novelistic deferral. Mountolive gathers information to report back to his government, but fails to create lasting diplomatic relations between Britain and modern Egypt. Durrell criticizes Britain and Mountolive's antiquated notions about Egypt by using orientalist tropes ironically. While Roger Bowen has attributed the hyperbole and exoticism of the

novels as part of a "last hurrah" attitude of the *Quartet* (Bowen 164), the novels illustrate the problems inherent in orientalist thinking in diplomacy. Set in "Alexandria,…the city of the great library, whose inhabitants are dedicated to knowledge" (Gifford 99), Mountolive demonstrates that orientalist knowledge does not produce effective foreign policy.

Mountolive narrates and critiques the education of the young David Mountolive in order to chart the effects of orientalist knowledge on diplomacy. Mountolive is first introduced to Egypt by a powerful Coptic family, the Hosnanis. His acceptance among them is made possible by a letter of introduction—another document—which he carries with him upon his arrival. "He blessed the chanced letter of introduction which brought him to the Hosnani lands, to the rambling old-fashioned house built upon a network of lakes and embankments near Alexandria" (11). A "junior of exceptional promise" (11), and a diligent "student of manners" (30), Mountolive goes to Egypt to perfect his Arabic and to advance his career. The Hosnanis respond to his interest in them: "[N]ever had a stranger shown any desire to study and assess them, their language, religion, and habits" (24). A newcomer in a foreign culture, Mountolive at first finds that "it was hateful to be young, to be maladroit, to feel carried out of one's depths" (19). As he becomes immersed in the life of the Hosnanis, Mountolive loses his loyalty to Britain gladly. His inability to understand intrigues him and renders the whole country exotic and alluring: "He felt a million miles away from England; his past had sloughed from him like a skin" (19). Mountolive falls prey to orientalist dreams and loses touch with his loyalties at home.

The Hosnanis teach Mountolive how to read and decode the Egyptian landscape and the culture. Mountolive learns what he knows of Egypt by reading the Foreign Service primer on Egypt, Edward William Lane's outdated *Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. But Mountolive is not satisfied with Lane's antiquated and armchair view of Egypt. Not even Edward Lane's book can be a substitute for keen attention and swift judgment. Lane can provide him with basic knowledge of the country, the geography, and customs. But for the rest, he must have sources of information on the ground.

Like an anthropologist skilled in ethnography, the diplomat immerses himself in the field that constitutes his object of study. He keeps a notebook in which he records his impressions of the country and valuable lessons in reading and decoding:

> Sunday. Riding through a poor fly-blown village my companion points to marks like cuneiform scratched on the walls of houses and asks if I can read them. Like a fool I say no, but perhaps they are Amharic? Laughter. Explanation is that a venerable pedlar who travels through here every six months carries a special henna from Medina…People are mostly too poor to pay, so he extends his credit, but lest they forget, marks his tally on the clay wall. (29)

The Hosnanis show him that a textbook does not furnish the knowledge necessary to understand daily life in Egypt. The narrative satirizes Mountolive's hubristic and illusory belief that he understands the Hosnanis and their country:

> Mountolive who had already found the open sesame of language open to hand, suddenly began to feel himself really penetrating a foreign country,

> foreign *moeurs*, for the first time… [h]e felt himself slipping, losing so to speak the contours of himself. (21)

While Durrell satirizes Mountolive's orientalist understanding of Egyptian culture, the use of French words and the allusion to the *Thousand and One Nights* in this passage suggest that for Durrell, the novel is inclusive of many different languages literary traditions. The experience of being in a foreign place de-centers the diplomat, but the novel can provide a *lingua franca* for an exchange between cultures.

Falling in love with Leila Hosnani, Mountolive conflates her and his possession of her with his relationship to Egypt. Like Mark Anthony with Cleopatra, only later does he realize that "[i]n a sense she had been Egypt, his own private Egypt of the mind" (255). But Leila also conflates Mountolive with his country of origin. "It was clear that what she saw in him was something like a prototype of a nation which existed now only in her imagination. She was kissing and cherishing a painted image of England" (27). In this mirroring, Durrell reverses Mountolive's orientalist romanticism onto himself. As such, he becomes Leila's own private cultural ambassador, since Leila is cloistered in Karm Abu Girg and cannot visit the Europe which she longs to see. The unknown narrator declares that just as the Europeans seek treasures in the Middle East, "Europe for the Egyptians was simply a shopping center for the rich to visit" (22). While he is stationed in Europe, Mountolive returns the favour to Leila and becomes her faithful envoy, sending her books, programs of exhibits, and other fragments of European culture.

Their affair is entirely conducted through letters in which she sends him on missions. Mountolive uses correspondence to keep alive his relationship with Leila:

> 'You say you will be in Zagreb next month. Please visit and describe to

> me…' she would write, or 'How lucky you will be in passing through Amsterdam; there is a retrospective Klee which has received tremendous notices in the French press. *Please* pay a visit and describe your impressions honestly to me, even if unfavourable. I have never seen an original myself.' This was Leila's parody of love…(47)

Just like diplomatic discourse, the letters perform their genre—the love letter—by following protocol. Letters do not demand correspondents' sincerity. The letters liberate lovers from the pain of their separation and further mask each lover from the other. Nonetheless, the correspondence delivers the message that Leila intends; by maintaining an intimacy with Mountolive, she distracts him from paying attention to Nessim's plans, and Mountolive does not decode her hidden message. Private letters, like diplomatic reports and novels, require decoding.

The Hosnani estate figures prominently throughout the *Quartet* but acquires a larger and more political significance in *Mountolive*. Whereas in *Justine* Nessim's mystery is romanticized, in *Mountolive* it is revealed to be connected to the family's plot to return Coptic Egyptians to positions of power in Egypt. Faltaus, Leila's husband and Nessim's father, is a referred to as a "Coptic Squire" (20). Mountolive imagines Egypt as a *primitive* version of an England which has disappeared:

> It was a complete departure from everything he had known to be thus included in the pattern of a family life based in and nourished by the unconscious pageantry of a feudalism which stretched back certainly as far as the Middle Ages, and perhaps beyond. The world of Burton, Beckford, Lady Hester…Did they still exist? (21)

The political activity of the Hosnani family is contrasted with Mountolive family's "fatigue" and their absence from England. David's father has abandoned the family to live his remaining years in a monastery in India where he translates and interprets Buddhist texts:

> Mountolive senior had belonged to the vanished India, to the company of rulers whose common devotion to their charge had made them a caste; but a caste which was prouder of a hostage given to Buddhist scholarship than one given to an Honours List. Such disinterested devotions usually ended by passionate self-identification with the subject of them…At first he had been simply a judge in the service, but within a few years he had become pre-eminent in Indian scholarship, and editor and interpreter of rare and neglected texts. (87)

Both Mountolive and his father fail to maintain a detachment from the countries in which they are envoys. Mountolive's father, also a decoder, is an example of the kind of envoy about whom Harold Nicolson warns: Mountolive senior has forgotten his allegiance to England. David also shows signs of his father's tendency to up and leave. He is neither neutral not distant, nor is he even truthful in reporting information to the Foreign Office. He makes a fatal error in his response to learning about the Hosnanis' plot to overthrow the British in Egypt. Rather than maintain his allegiance to his government, of which he is the envoy, he tries to protect his friendship with the Hosnanis by hiding the memo he receives from Brigadier Maskelyne about the plot. Mountolive succeeds, however, in hiding his error by making Narouz, Nessim's brother, into a scapegoat and having him killed to dissipate the mounting concern. If *Mountolive* reads like a case report on David

Mountolive, it constitutes a narrative of his failure to act as a public figure, while also failing in his personal life in his relationship with Leila. In the end, Mountolive has intimacy neither with England nor with Egypt. His knowledge of Arabic only provides him with the ability to communicate linguistically in Egyptian society, but it brings him no deeper knowledge of the culture or of the political situation.

After refusing to help Leila and protecting himself by asserting that "diplomats indeed have no friends," (245), Mountolive attempts to rediscover the romanticized Egypt that he had found as a junior diplomat. Mountolive imagines that he has access to an insider's Egypt:

> he would go out and dine alone in the Arab quarter, humbly and simply, like a small clerk in the city, like a tradesman, a merchant. Somewhere in a small native restaurant he would eat a pigeon and some rice and a plate of sweetmeats…(255)

In the restaurant, he takes an elderly Egyptian man for a seer and a spiritual guide, because "His face had all the candour and purity of a desert saint" (259). "He had often heard stories of the bazaars and the religious men who lurked there, waiting to fulfill secret missions on behalf of that unseen world, the numinous, carefully guarded world of the hermetic doctors" (259). Mountolive, seeking affirmation of his insider's knowledge of Egypt, converses with the man, whom he follows. He ends up in a brothel, where child prostitutes rob him. Mountolive is further humiliated when he learns that Leila used him to hide Nessim's plot to bring armaments to Palestine. Meeting her twenty years after their affair, and cognizant of her treachery, he realized that "this old image had been husked, stripped bare…he had always hidden behind measure and compromise; and this

defection had somehow lost him the picture of the Egypt which had nourished him for so long. Was it, then, all a lie? " (255). Seeing the results of his inability to decode the Hosnani's motives, Mountolive recognizes his powerlessness.

Diplomatic Failures

While the *Alexandria Quartet* considers the large-scale consequence of diplomatic gaffes, Durrell's short comic pieces collected in *Esprit de Corps* (1957), *Stiff Upper Lip* (1958), and *Sauve Qui Peut* (1966) mock the behaviour of British diplomats and illuminate the errors, machinations, and banalities of their daily lives. In Durrell's illustrated "Sketches from Diplomatic Life," gaffes do not have consequences; they only contribute to the diplomats' general sense of fatigue and inertia. An unnamed first-person narrator, a young writer with some experience in the Foreign Office, records conversations had over lunch with a certain "Antrobus," a senior diplomat and an *habitué* of diplomatic life. The narrator collects these anecdotes in an "Antrobus file," as he calls it, and re-circulates the stories. These texts provide a key to the seemingly opaque world of diplomatic life. The "Antrobus" stories reveal the operations of diplomatic protocol and call attention to their own status as stories: the reader comes to these anecdotes third-hand, in full awareness that they have been heard and edited from the narrator's notes. The anecdotes masquerade as light satire—they are revealed in casual conversation—but Antrobus's stories of small problems at official functions reveal much about the British approach to diplomacy. Antrobus teaches his interlocutor that "in Diplomacy, quite small things can be one's undoing" and that "foreigners are apt to be preternaturally touchy about small things" (*Esprit de Corps* 35). Diplomatic transactions, encoded in protocol,

can seem to the untrained onlooker as shallow spectacle. Durrell's *Quartet*, like his satires about diplomats, demonstrate that the reader—like the junior diplomat in the Antrobus stories—must pay close attention in order to distinguish between those euphemisms used to make a serious matter more palatable and those used simply as surface lightness.

The accounts given of the foreign emissaries focus on the gaffes and eccentricities of an ambassador named Polk-Mowbray. In "Where the Bee Sucks," he develops odd interests:

> One week for example it would be Sailors' Knots. It was all right so long as he only sat at his desk playing with string but this was not all. He grew reckless, ambitious, carried away by all this new knowledge. He took to demonstrating his powers at children's parties, charity bazaars, cocktails—everywhere. He trussed the German Ambassadors' eldest son up so tightly that the child nearly suffocated…One day I walked into his office and found him clad for the most part in a bee-keeper's veil… "Antrobus," he said, "I have the answer to the monotony of this post. The murmur of innumerable bees, dear boy. A *pastoral* hobby, suitable for diplomats". (*Esprit de Corps* 47)

Durrell pokes fun at the ineffectiveness of the diplomats, who were often stationed far away from any supervision. No matter how far they might be from home, however, British diplomats retain their eccentricities. Durrell's attitude to the British in the "Antrobus" stories is ambivalent. As a "cosmopolitan colonial subject" (Kaczvinsky 200), he both mocks the diplomats who try to preserve their Britishness abroad and also

celebrates those eccentricities that demarcate the British diplomat from his foreign environment. The performance of "rituals of Britishness" among diplomats in Durrell's stories has still another purpose: by over-acting, the diplomats can pretend that Britain still possesses its strength and presence on the international scene. Through these stories, Durrell casts himself as a decoder who provides a "key" to the codes of Britishness.

The failure of diplomats to read codes has more serious consequences for British foreign policy in the *Alexandria Quartet* than in the lightly satirical Antrobus stories. "Codes of manners" are the central trope of *Mountolive* much as the codes of the novel are central to the telling of the *Quartet*. Mountolive's friendship with Nessim Hosnani is founded on his recognition of Nessim as one "whose life was a code" (24). Their understanding of their mutual hypocrisies continues until Nessim's betrayal of Mountolive. For those who live by codes, committing a gaffe is an inexcusable error; to commit a gaffe is to lose control of one's exterior or possibly to disclose secret information. In his early visit to the Hosnanis, Mountolive provokes an argument by forgetting that the Hosnanis are Copts: he "unwittingly provided an opening by committing one of those *gaffes* which diplomats, more than any other tribe, fear and dread; the memory of which can keep them awake at nights for years" (36). Mountolive's mistake makes clear that he has little concern for the role that the British have played in the worsening of the relationship between Copts and Muslims in Egypt.

Although Mountolive and Nessim are outwardly good friends, Nessim lies to him openly. This break in truthfulness foretells the beginning of Mountolive's crisis in Egypt. Visiting a cabaret in Berlin, Mountolive unexpectedly sees Nessim "seated at a table among a group of elderly men in evening-dress" and sends over a card. Nessim tells

Mountolive that he is there "trying to market tungsten" (75). Mountolive thinks nothing of it. His host, however, is more observant:

> 'Is your friend in armaments?' asked the Chargé d'Affaires as they were leaving. Mountolive shook his head. 'He's a banker. Unless tungsten plays a role in armaments—I really don't know.'
>
> 'It isn't important. Just idle curiosity. You see, the people at his table are from Krupps, and so I wondered. That was all.' (75)

Krupps, the German steelworks factory which produced Big Bertha and U-boats in the First World War, became the center of Nazi rearmament when Hitler came to power in 1933. As postwar readers of the *Alexandria Quartet* would know, Alfred Krupp was convicted of war crimes at the Nuremberg Trials. Mountolive misses clear signs that Nessim is planning a coup that will require armaments. Even when his Chargé d'Affaires becomes suspicious of Nessim's dealings with weapons producers, and reports it to him, he still refuses to draw the connections.

Durrell's interest in codes is not limited to those used in pragmatic political communication, or in the Foreign Office: he is also interested in the philosophical dimension of the code. As Richard Pine notes, Durrell believed in a coded "heraldic universe" which required deciphering. He thought the Elizabethans to be the most important travelers of their time and also the first to begin to set up the British Empire under the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Durrell considered the Elizabethan age as a time of "intrigue whose natural successor was the hall of mirrors of the seventeenth century" (Pine 242). Critics such as George Steiner have noted the impact of Durrell's interest in codes on his use of novelistic form. According to Steiner, Durrell "viewed the novel as an

artificial, baroque form, and that the *Quartet* tries to re-create the age of conceit" (qtd. in Pine 242). Richard Pine argues that the *Quartet* is a realist novel in its representation of communication:

> Durrell accepted the need for the conceits of the baroque because…at one moment two people understand different messages from the same set of words: what is meant, what is said, what is heard and what is understood, may be four different sets of cultural values and instructions encoded and decoded from the same verbal construct, in which culture and climate may be as important determining factors as personalities…The world is thus the court and its players are princes, an aspect of Durrell's thought which becomes even more evident in the novels which followed the *Quartet*. (244)

Durrell's skepticism about the possibility of clear communication in private and public matters acquires political significance in the *Quartet*. Written in light of insights into postwar diplomacy, *Mountolive* takes a cynical approach to international relations.

As Harold Nicolson notes, diplomatic language is a "conventional form of communication," that makes it possible to speak in easily understood understatements and codes that soften daily language (*Diplomacy* 221). One of the problems of diplomacy, historically, has been to find a common language of communication among envoys. In seventeenth-century Europe, Latin was the preferred language of emissaries. In the early nineteenth century Latin was replaced by French, which Nicolson acknowledges as one of the most precise languages for negotiation. For Durrell, who was familiar with Nicolson's book about diplomacy, language does not always clarify

situations—it can obscure them as well. *Mountolive* explores its implications for both personal relationships and international relations, since the diplomat fails to read his friends' motives correctly. Mountolive believes that he and Nessim share common ground because both of their lives are governed by protocol. He does not take into account that the codes by which they live have opposite political ends. In the 1963 revision of *Diplomacy*, informed by the post-Suez international situation, Nicolson acknowledges that diplomacy has changed, and advises that the diplomat's language reflect the new climate of mistrust:

> The old diplomacy was based upon the creation of confidence, the acquisition of credit. The modern diplomatist must realize that he can no longer rely on the old system of trust; he must accept the fact that his antagonist will not hesitate to falsify facts and that that they feel no shame if their duplicity be exposed. (Nicolson 245)

Despite diplomatic training, David Mountolive is not a skilled decoder and reader of signs. He fails to see Leila's purpose in writing him love-letters; he does not pick up on the significance of seeing Nessim with people from Krupps. He manages to rise through the ranks of the Foreign Office through a scrupulous adherence to protocol, rather than because he is an effective listener and negotiator. Leila's influence causes him to become conversant in culture, but blinds him to the Hosnani's political machinations. As though in protest of his misuse of his sense of hearing, he suffers from an "unaccountable affliction…a crushing earache which rapidly reduced him to a shivering pain-racked ghost of himself. It was a mystery, for no doctor had so far managed to allay—or even satisfactorily diagnose—this onslaught of the *petit mal*" (469). For all of his ability to

control his words and actions in public, the fact that Mountolive is plagued by uncontrollable bodily symptoms reveals the costs of his learned reticence.

In *Mountolive*, Durrell satirizes the diplomat's inability to read signs, while also showing sympathy for the monotony of diplomatic life. Bored "diplomatic types" who cannot seem to control their bodies abound in *Mountolive.* British diplomats' boredom is symptomatic of Britain's lack of ideas for creating new ties with postwar Egypt. While Errol and Maskelyne battle one another for power in Egypt, and Kenilworth is only interested in his own advancement, Sir Louis, Mountolive's mentor, anxiously awaits his retirement. Pombal and Pursewarden look forward to their daily shave and gossip at Mnemijian's barbershop and pass the time over arak at Café al-Aktar. Even an Ambassador such as Sir Louis, who is serving in Russia, has, after a lifetime of service, developed strange habits:

> Within the last year, and on the eve of retirement, the Ambassador had begun to drink rather too heavily…in the same period a new and somewhat surprising tic had developed. Enlivened by one cocktail too many he had formed the habit of uttering a low continuous humming noise at receptions which had earned him a rather questionable notoriety…He found to his surprise that he was in the habit of humming, over and over again, in *basso profundo,* a passage from the Dead March in Saul. It summed up, appropriately enough, a lifetime of acute boredom spent in the company of friendless officials and empty dignitaries. (71)

Sir Louis's humming indicates not only fatigue at the diplomat's work of communicating, but a deliberate thwarting of language. He does not repeat a word, but simply makes a

sound, as though he had renounced language altogether. Cynical about the power available to diplomats, Sir Louis gives Mountolive advice to temper his excitement at finally being posted to Egypt:

> 'I bet your first reaction to the news was: now I'm free to act, eh?' He chuckled like a fowl and returned to his dressing-table in a good humour…The final delusion. Have to go through it like the rest of us…It's a tricky moment. You find yourself throwing your weight about…' (69)

According to the seasoned and fatigued ambassador, the diplomat, as a mere envoy, has no political power: "In diplomacy one can only propose, never dispose" (79). Protocol annihilates personality. Unlike Sir Louis and Mountolive, Gaston Pombal, "a minor consular official," is realistic about the diplomat's obligations. "For him the tiresome treadmill of protocol and entertainment—so like a surrealist nightmare—is full of exotic charm…He indulges himself with it but never allows it to engulf what remains of his intellect" (23). Pombal maintains a distance relative to his work and dreams of returning to Normandy.

Mountolive's dilemma is rooted in having to choose between his professional and personal loyalties. He recognizes that he is both liberated and constrained by having to follow protocol. In discovering that Nessim is plotting against the British,

> Mountolive…had been submerged suddenly by a wave of hate for Nessim so unfamiliar that it surprised him. Once again, of course, he recognized the root of his anger—that he should be forced into such a position by his friend's indiscretion: forced to proceed against him (220).

As a result of his disappointment with the Hosnanis, Mountolive sees that he has been following codes, without grasping their meaning, for most of his life and his career:

> In time his annoyance gave place to resignation. His profession which valued only judgment, coolness, and reserve, taught him the hardest lesson of all and the most crippling—never to utter the pejorative thought aloud. It offered him too something like a long Jesuitical training in self-deception which enabled him to present an ever more highly polished surface to the world without deepening his human experience. …he lived surrounded by his ambitious and sycophantic fellows who taught him only how to excel in forms of address, and the elaborate kindnesses, which, in pleasing pave the way to advancement. (50)

For the sake of neutrality, the diplomat sacrifices his personality to his profession. As Harold Nicolson remarks, the diplomat "often becomes denationalised, internationalised, and therefore dehydrated, an elegant empty husk" (*Evolution of Diplomatic Method* 79).

As David Mountolive rises through the ranks of the diplomatic service, he loses access to his private opinions. The danger for the ambassador, who must change his words according to his country's policy—he cannot voice his own will—is the loss of identity. As Mountolive's lover, Grishkin, tells him, "you are only a diplomat. You have no politics and no religion!" (49). His ability to follow protocol, which made him successful in the Foreign Service, finally impedes his ability to act in a time of crisis. In the debacle following the revelation of Nessim's plot to transport armament to Palestine, Mountolive feels

> a disenchanting sense of his own professional inadequacy, his powerlessness to act now save as an instrument (no longer a factor) so strongly did he feel himself gripped by the gravitational field of politics…he thought back bitterly and often to the casually spoken words of Sir Louis as he was combing his hair in the mirror. 'The illusion that you are free to act!' (242).

He confuses his use of a machinery of empire with his own private identity. In his dealings with the Hosnanis he uses diplomatic protocol and neutrality in order to avoid acting. While the usefulness of the diplomat lies is his ability to have an extra-territorial understanding and objectivity of more than one place, the danger is that he will lose the ability to arbitrate as a private person in the process**.**

Diplomats are granted immunity that enables them to cross boundaries and carry messages. Diplomats belong to a class unto themselves: they are an international society of emissary-arbitrators who have special privileges. While Mountolive uses his special status as an emissary in order to avoid acting, in Harold Nicolson's analysis, diplomatic immunity confers upon envoys an added responsibility to act (*Diplomacy* 18). Nicolson maintains, despite his cynicism about the possibility of clear communication, that the diplomat can affect foreign relations. He points out that historically, the diplomat

> was the man counted on to influence the policies, or perhaps simply the attitudes, of the government to which he was sent in a sense favorable to his own; to minimize frictions, to win concessions, to achieve co-operation (or, what was sometimes just as valuable, the appearance of co-operation), and if the worst came to the worst, to sound the first warning that the

> situation was getting out of hand, and that other pressures were required. …The resident ambassadors who succeeded at it were more than mere pieces on the diplomatic chessboard. They were players; not just the executants, but to some extent the shapers of high policy (219).

In *Quartet* as a whole and in *Mountolive* in particular, diplomats forfeit their ability to change the eventual course of events by misusing protocol. Detachment, when it supports neutrality and objectivity, can contribute to the diplomat's freedom to communicate unpopular facts about his country of residence to his home government. David Mountolive uses his diplomatic immunity in order to avoid acting; he relies on protocol to justify his inertia. He thus contributes to the failure of Britain to build lasting diplomatic relations in the Mediterranean in the aftermath of the war.

Narratively, the inefficacy of diplomats is signified in the *Quartet* by their status as minor characters. Bored and ineffective diplomats stall the plot, or switch it into lesser channels, by focusing on the proliferation of documents and sources of information, the novel dramatizes the diplomats' strategy of deferral. Rather than drive British foreign policy in Egypt, David Mountolive and the other British envoys in Alexandria avoid responding to the mounting tensions in the country. Egyptian characters—the Hosnani family in particular—precipitate the narrative of the *Quartet* forward. As Nessim says to Justine: "The British and French help us, they see no harm. I am sorry for them. Their condition is pitiable because they have no longer the will to fight or even to think" (553). The British merely respond to events, but fail to foresee them. Minor characters, diplomats fail to influence foreign policy and therefore do nothing to change the role of Britain in international relations. Moreover, British characters show little initiative or

interest in effecting change and in revising their colonial beliefs about Egypt. Ultimately, European diplomats disappear from the novel: Mountolive returns to England and Gaston Pombal is killed in the bombing of the Alexandria harbor. In the final estimation, British and European diplomats who fail to recognize the value of Egypt as a non-European country are written out of the country's future.

Just as Egyptian, rather than British, characters propel the plot of the *Quartet*, Durrell situates his postwar novel in a tradition of cosmopolitan rather than Anglo-American modernism. As one of "modernism's first readers" (MacKay 5), Durrell was influenced by the high modernists. T.S. Eliot was for several years his editor at Faber and Faber. By invoking the Greek-Alexandrian poet Constantine Cavafy rather than T.S. Eliot as a main influence in the *Quartet,* Durrell acknowledges that Alexandria, also, is a modernist center. While Eliot thinks of himself as a critic and an arbitrator of past and present, Constantine Cavafy performs arbitration in his poems. Eliot, as a self-conscious poet-critic, uses allusions in a critical apparatus. Cavafy, however, "was not using historical material to be pedantic or arcane. The poet-historian…inhabited his various pasts so fully that they are all equally present to him" (Mendelssohn xxxv). Durrell's understanding of history and his method of writing it are informed by that of Cavafy: Durrell does not conceptualize the past as an allusion. His use of minor characters to narrate the end of empire in the *Quartet* is also indebted to Cavafy, who re-imagines historical moments through minor characters. Durrell, like Cavafy, chooses to represent the fading of British influence rather than the empire at the height of its power and focalizes the end of empire through peripheral witnesses. Durrell's powerless

Alexandrians— diplomats, minor officials, dancers, writers, and painters— struggle to understand the past from their positions as observers and witnesses.

While Durrell's choice of Cavafy as a modernist influence on the postwar novel reverses a center-margin duality and celebrates Alexandrian cosmopolitanism, it nevertheless defines Alexandria as a European city: "Alexandria was still Europe—the capital of Asiatic Europe, if such a think could exist. It could never be like Cairo…here French, Italian and Greek dominated the scene. The ambience, the social manner, everything was different, was cast in a European mold" (509). Durrell not only ignores, but denigrates aspects of Alexandria that are of Arabic origin. His "poet of the city" is a Greek rather than an Arab Egyptian. His notion of cosmopolitanism denies the presence and influence of Arab culture on the city and on the region.

Forster's *Alexandria A History and a Guide*, published in 1922, served as a source for Durrell's understanding of Alexandria in the *Quartet.* Like Durrell's novels, Forster's *History and Guide* refuses to include the contributions of Arab culture in his cosmopolitan vision of Alexandria. Forster considers that the glories of the Ptolemaic, Greco-Egyptian, and Christian past of Alexandria were "lost" "when the patriarch Cyrus betrays Alexandria to the Arabs" (i). In his two hundred-page book, only two pages offer descriptions of the Arab and Turkish towns, even though the Arab period lasted one thousand years. He considers that Arab civilization "was out of touch with the Mediterranean civilization that has evolved Alexandria" (81). The *History and Guide* are intended to help the reader "to link the present with the past" (i), but, like the *Quartet*, it casts the Arab Egyptian as the Other to the cosmopolitan city. Despite his criticism of

orientalist ideology, Durrell, Cavafy and Forster refuse to imagine cultural and political ties to an Arab cosmopolitan Egypt.

Much like Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* and the *Saga of the Century*, Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* and *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus* consider the clarifying effects of time on events. Informed by their experiences as envoys, both West and Durrell reflect on the constructions of Britishness that inform notions of responsibility and agency in the postwar period. Both West and Durrell consider the globalized postwar recognition that English culture is not central, but increasingly marginal. A focus on the intricacies of diplomatic work allows Durrell to demonstrate the means by which Britain negotiated the end of its colonial empire. His texts represent communication and interpretation as complicated by the vestiges of colonial rule and by general mistrust. While Harold Nicolson's assessment of the role and power of the diplomat is optimistic, Durrell's postwar travelogue and his fiction cast the British as ineffective in negotiating a contribution to international relations in the aftermath of the Second World War. Thus Durrell situates the novel within the larger spectrum of discourses and practices that organize postwar culture.

"A Sort of Victory": Nationalism and the British Council in Olivia Manning's *Balkan Trilogy*

Olivia Manning's *Balkan Trilogy* (1960-1965) offers a retrospective account of the years immediately preceding the Second World War. Set in Bucharest and Athens, the novel describes the workings of the British Council and critiques the goals and methods of cultural diplomacy. Written at a time when Britain became an actor among many on the international stage, the retrospective account refuses to privilege a British point of view. Manning uses the multi-volume novel to trace some of the political and economic causes of the Second World War. Her formal choices respond to the waning of British political power in the postwar period. She represents British citizens as characters in a much larger world. As Marina MacKay and Lyndsey Stonebridge have noted, "Manning understood that representing war needed a larger canvas than the British home front: like others of her generation she also understood that its prolongation into the bitter international contexts of the 1950s made new demands on the geographical imagination of the novel" (13). By documenting the plight of civilian victims of war, the novel takes on the responsibility of witnessing. Deeply preoccupied with questions of statelessness and international responsibility for refugees, the *Balkan Trilogy* upsets notions of British national identity.

Manning's postwar novel sequence insists on the global reaches of modern warfare. The *Balkan Trilogy* reflects on the Second World War from the perspective of the Balkans and the Middle East, in other words, from liminal spaces where the British reconfigure their national identity. Like Rebecca West, who documents Yugoslavia

before the Nazi invasion, Lawrence Durrell, who represents the contested Anglo-Egyptian colonized space in Cairo and Alexandria, and John Le Carré, who makes a divided Berlin the center of postwar politics, Manning insists on an ex-centric perspective in her novels. Focusing on the experience of British journalists, diplomats, and British Council workers in Bucharest, Manning explores and critiques the workings of the imagined community that identifies its Britishness with England and English culture. As Marina Mackay notes, "globalism, fostered by the experience of war, explains narrative's creation of geopolitical relationality" (5) between Britain and the rest of Europe. Manning's postwar novels re-imagine a role for Britain from contested spaces outside England.

In the mid-century novel, heroics yield to the activities of minor characters: "We were like two unimportant characters in the first act of a play, put there to make conversation until it is time for the chief actor to appear," remarks William Bradshaw, the narrator of Christopher Isherwood's *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* (169). Bradshaw, a neutral witness, observes and reports on events in Berlin in the early 1930s and on the unusual and criminal activities of his acquaintance, Arthur Norris. Bradshaw's status as a minor character—a camera reporting what he sees without judgment— allows for an unobtrusive narrator who conveys a series of events without judgment. In Isherwood's novel, a minor, quiet narrative presence replaces the heroic actor who actively shapes his story.

The *Balkan Trilogy* alludes to *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* and adapts many of its fictional techniques. Written some thirty years later than Isherwood's account of prewar Berlin, Olivia Manning's *Balkan Trilogy* similarly problematizes the point of view of the

narrator on major historical events. Like Isherwood, Manning tries out various kinds of involvement with political events through her characters. These characters, minor because they are displaced British citizens, women, and refugees, each exhibit a different form of engagement with the events in which they are involved. Manning employs minor characters and a politically neutral narrator to chart the progress of catastrophic events in continental Europe. An important difference characterizes Manning's account in comparison to Isherwood's: *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* was written as aggression in Germany was beginning. Manning composed her trilogy in the 1960s, just as information about the full horror of the Second World War, especially those horrors that were the result of ideological convictions, were becoming known. Her choice to make point of view problematic reflects her interest in the engagement of the novel with political events, especially in terms of British involvement in the war. In Isherwood's novel, the narrator is removed from the action and looks on dispassionately. Harriet, on the other hand, is not a reliable focalizer of events. Her reactions are personal and Manning's novel insists on its highly meditated telling of events. It does not pretend to omniscience. Like Isherwood's *Mr. Norris,* the *Balkan Trilogy* narrates troubling political times from the perspective of a minor character and sets up the novel alongside other kinds of discourse.

The *Balkan Trilogy* engages with a personal and public experience of wartime Bucharest to reflect on the nature of personal and national responsibility. The documentation of the war is represented through its repercussions on private lives. Harriet Pringle has arrived in Bucharest with her husband Guy, who teaches English literature at the University in Bucharest. Their lives are upset by the rise of the Iron Guard and by the Nazi occupation of Romania. The novel documents the effects of

violence on refugees, Jews, migrants, and other marginalized characters in Bucharest. Emmanuel Drucker, a prominent Jewish banker, is wrongfully accused in a show trial; his family is forced to leave Bucharest, and his son Sasha becomes a conscript in the Romanian army. Refugees from Czechoslovakia and Poland, fleeing Nazi invasion, flood into the hotels of Bucharest. Manning's decision to examine the impact of war on the lives of individuals calls attention to the human face of international conflict.

Manning's reflections on the war and private life are also complicated by gender. Harriet Pringle offers a critique of men's participation in war even as she is represented as powerless. As Phyllis Lassner has argued, Harriet is both "oppressor and oppressed" (Lassner 232) because she critiques and participates in imperialist and social structures that create her own victimization as well as that of minority groups in Europe. Harriet is a detached observer who offers little commentary on the preparations for the war; her concerns are with daily life and material comfort. "Harriet Pringle, no longer fearing that she and her husband would have to flee at any moment, began to look for a flat, buy clothes, and take an interest in the invitations that were arriving" (*Balkan Trilogy* 91). Nonetheless, she has greater awareness of the general European crisis and of the plight of war refugees than does her husband. Guy, whose short-sightedness prevents him from taking part in active combat, is instead preoccupied with his teaching duties and with staging a production of *Troilus and Cressida* with his students. Rather than represent scenes of battle, Manning chooses to narrate the war through the personal experiences of characters who escape to Romania from zones of conflict.

The *Balkan Trilogy* critiques the ideology of imperialism while bridging personal and political life in order to emphasize British complicity in the disputes that lead to war.

Robert Caserio has argued that Manning's novel emphasizes the importance of the personal lives of the Pringles over and above the political situation which they witness, and that this emphasis places undue value on personal life: "It is as if the vicissitudes of one marriage were as important as the public fate of millions" (Caserio 177). This choice helps Manning to make a wider point about the personal implications of ideologies that cause wars. She narrates the war through the lives of the Pringles in order to work out a wartime ethics of political responsibility that is continuous with a personal ethics of responsibility; the novel tries to explain personal motivation and its connection to ideology.

Manning contrasts Guy's gregariousness and Harriet's ambivalence in order to compare their ways of explaining the events which they witness. Whereas Guy is a vocal socialist who welcomes the presence of Russia in Romania, Harriet's politics are unclear: she is critical of British imperialism while enjoying the privileges of being a British citizen. While Guy works for the British Council, Harriet observes discussions in which information and opinions are shared. She chronicles events and roams the streets of Bucharest to record reactions of Romanians to the Nazi invasion of Norway, Belgium, Holland, and France. In such a situation, political innocence is impossible—either personal or national. British privilege cannot be disentangled from British interference in Continental Europe. As one hard-line leftist says about laissez-faire British foreign policy that sustains conservative interests, "we're doing the fascists' job for them" (236). Like Rebecca West in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, Manning is critical of Chamberlain's policy of appeasement. She underlines the connections between this policy and British complicity in allowing the power vacuum to be filled by extremists in Europe.

Harriet understands that women are not safe from the ravages of war. She also realizes that England is within reach of modern weaponry and that the war will not be limited to a front; it will be global in its scope. When a British official tells her in Bucharest that war has been declared and that "the ladies must return to England," Harriet responds: "You imagine they'll be safer in England? I can only say, you don't know much about modern warfare" (Manning 28-29). In contrast to Harriet's recognition of the new danger posed by twentieth-century weaponry, the Romanians are represented as ignorant of Nazi military strength. A propaganda film about the invasion of France showcases Nazi military power: "The tanks, made monstrous by the camera's tilt, passed in thousands—or, so it seemed. The audience—an audience that still thought in terms of cavalry—sat watching, motionless, in silence. The might of armour was a new thing; a fearful and merciless thing" (256). The Romanians' idea of war dates back to the nineteenth century: While they think of war in terms of cavalry, Nazis invade with tanks. The audience is shocked by the new war technologies. Through far-reaching weaponry, the Second World War becomes global. Whereas the cavalry fights one soldier at a time, tanks and airplanes can overwhelm whole countries in a few days.

Refugees

The *Balkan Trilogy* is particularly attentive to the plight of war refugees. As Eve Patten has noted, "[t]hroughout Manning's fiction the figure of the refugee is a recurrent focus from several perspectives" (91-92). Manning's critique of British imperialism dovetails with her observation of the effects of territorial ambition on displaced persons. Representing the Pringles as victims of war alongside other victims underlines their lack

of privilege, even though they are British subjects. Indeed, British citizenship does not confer protection against aggressive, global warfare. The Pringles live in Bucharest with Romanians and refugees from territories that have been invaded by the Nazis. Yakimov, a cosmopolitan Russian who speaks whimsical English, claims "'I'm a refugee like yourself'" (17), without specifying where he comes from. A person becomes a refugee when their origins are obliterated.

Manning describes Romania and everyday life in Bucharest in detail to emphasize place. Harry Mooney notes that "place is paramount in the novels of the *Balkan Trilogy*…we understand the experience of the characters to be altogether inseparable from the two cities in which they find themselves" (40). Manning's insistence on place emphasizes the refugees' displacement. Responding to the postwar refugee crisis, Manning's novel is structured as a series of arrivals and departures. Homelessness thus becomes a formal device in Manning's postwar novel. The presence of refugees disturbs nationalist ideals by transforming countries into an imagined humanitarian zone beyond persecution. Manning's postwar fiction takes pains to represent the plight of people who are stateless or who are forced into the position of refugees by the territorial ambitions of other nations.

The novel begins by calling attention to territory, with a scene in a train, as Harriet and Guy travel between Yugoslavia and Romania. This opening scene—in which strangers meet in trains that shunt across Europe—evokes William Bradshaw's meeting Mr. Norris in Isherwood's novel. The Pringles sit in the same compartment as a man, "a refugee from Germany on his way to Trieste" (9), who has lost his documentation, his visa, and his wallet. The man leaves the train and no one knows what will happen to him.

The train, a miniature cosmopolitan nation in which characters from different countries share a space, moves through different locations. Identity papers and passports confer mobility and insure that every person can be defined as belonging to a territory with the question of national identity. The other passengers in the train look at the German refugee with "detached interest" (10). The detached interest of passengers contrasts with the narrative focalization that takes notice of the passenger who is caught without his papers.

Bucharest becomes a holding place where different groups whose homelands no longer exist seek a way out. British officials and British exiles are represented as being responsible for refugees in Bucharest. In the early days of the war, Clarence, a British Council member who was once stationed in Warsaw, decides to get involved with the Polish refugees who flood Bucharest: "Clarence spent some time explaining to Steffaneski how he was arranging with a junior minister for the Poles to be shipped over the frontier into Yugoslavia, whence they could travel to join the Allied armies in France" (137). War is not represented directly in the *Balkan Trilogy*; it is signified through refugees whose displacements are the effect of mass violence. People seek information that will help them to make decisions about where to flee.

The Pringles also become involved with refugees in Bucharest. When Sasha Drucker returns from his military service in Bessarabia, the Pringles take him in and hide him in a room on their roof. As a member of a prominent Jewish family, he flees from all nations where he is persecuted. The Druckers, who left Anti-Semitic Germany for the comparative safety of Romania, find themselves persecuted once again, this time by the Iron Guard. When Sasha Drucker comes back from Bessarabia after having been a

conscript, starving and emaciated, "tall, skeletal, narrow-shouldered and stooped like a consumptive," Harriet is "repelled by such misery. She wanted to go out of sight of it. She shook her head" (319). Although the Pringles help Sasha, Harriet almost forgets his presence at times. She cannot integrate Sasha's presence into her daily concerns. On occasion she brings him the newspaper to inform him of developments in his father's trial. Ultimately, Harriet fails to help Sasha, and her attempts at securing a visa for his escape do not succeed. Eventually, Sasha manages to escape, and when Harriet meets him again in Athens, when she is also a refugee, he greets her coldly. Harriet's charity and humanitarian impulse cannot protect Sasha against the organized hate of the Iron Guard and the Nazis.

While Harriet, however ineffectively, tries to help Sasha, other characters in the look upon his situation with detachment. Conversing with a group of expatriates about what has happened to Sasha's probable fate, Klein, an economist, answers, with his usual ironical detachment:

> 'Who can say! He is not in prison. If he were, I think I would discover it. A prisoner cannot be totally hidden'.
>
> 'Perhaps he is dead,' said Harriet.
>
> 'A body must be disposed of. Here secrecy is not so easy.' (213)

Neither a prisoner nor a cadaver, Sasha Drucker becomes a deserter and a refugee. The detached economist considers the question of Sasha's missing body as though he were looking at numerical figures. National boundaries can be redrawn on paper or in schemes like those of the propaganda maps, but the human bodies and lives that inhabit those places must also be accounted for. The episode of the novel speaks to Manning's postwar

project of retrospective thinking about what the British and European responsibility—and lack thereof—during the Second World War.

The Pringles are also represented as being displaced by war. Harriet regrets being denied the pleasures of setting up an English home. She longs to buy many household items, the symbols of settled life, but does not. The Pringles are eventually forced to abandon their flat when it is raided by the Iron Guard and flee Romania for the comparative safety of Greece. In *Friends and Heroes*, the last volume of the *Balkan Trilogy*, Harriet and Guy in turn become refugees. Later on they are forced to leave Greece for Alexandria, which is the story Manning tells in the *Levant Trilogy.* The Pringles experience first-hand the plight of refugees, but as British citizens, they have a passport and can disclose their identities. Although Harriet's experience is paired with the experience of Jews in Europe, she eventually returns to England—her homeland. Displaced Jews have, by comparison, nowhere to go.

Like the Pringles, Olivia Manning was also displaced during the Second World War. She reported on this experience in her journalism. In "Last Civilian Ship," an article written for *The Windmill* in 1945, she recounts her experience of fleeing Greece for Egypt just ahead of the Nazi advance. Her reportage conveys the wartime chaos represented in her novels: "Refugees were still crowding down on every train, rumours and scandals with them" (117). Information comes in slowly and reports are uncertain and inconclusive:

> Days passed before we were allowed to know that the Australian line had broken and the Germans, with their great weight of armour, were advancing rapidly. They were already at Thermopylae. People shouted

> rumours across cafes at one another. There was no getting at the truth. The stop on news set everyone on edge. (117)

As Phyllis Lassner has also noted, British imperial power cannot intervene against the Nazi army in this case. Manning does not feel protected by her British citizenship. People tell her "'You're English. You don't have to stay here'"(117), but she has no way of escaping, as there are no ships for refugees. Manning describes the Englishman who runs the only boat out of Greece as a coward who takes advantage of the misery of others. Refusing to turn him into a hero, she represents him as an ordinary opportunist who happens to have access to a boat.

The cruelty of those who can shelter refugees is also the subject of Manning's short novel *School for Love*, set in Jerusalem in 1943. Miss Bohun, who houses lodgers in a pension she rents from an Imam, takes advantage of her lodgers financially. The Lesznos, Polish Jews who flee to Jerusalem, have lost their home and work as servants for Miss Bohun. Felix Lattimer, a young English boy whose parents were both killed in Iraq, lodges with Miss Bohun, a distant relative, because he has nowhere else to go. All the ships returning to England are reserved to carry troops, not passengers. Jane Ellis, also a refugee whose husband was killed in the war, is pregnant and seeks a home in Miss Bohun's house. Felix Lattimer comes to understand Miss Bohun's hypocrisy, which is couched in religious fanaticism. When he first arrives in Jerusalem, he does not understand the territorial disputes in Palestine nor the British involvement in them. In 1943, Palestine was a British Protectorate. When at the end of the novel Felix manages to secure passage on a ship heading back to England, he leaves behind a situation that will become the stage for further conflicts. By refusing to use the territory of Palestine as the

setting for a *Bildungsroman*, Manning re-configures the travel novel to represent global political consciousness: Felix sees the impact of Miss Bohun's profiting from the misery of others, as well as the British profiting from the misery of nations. Miss Bohun's extortion of her guests masquerades as hospitality but betrays its ethics. She pretends to generosity but she is ultimately self-interested. In *School for Love*, the British avoid responsibility, and ultimately leave the scene. The novel suggests that international legal solutions offer a more just and reliable means to solve the problems of statelessness, since human intention is often flawed.

Thirty years after the end of the war, when the problem of refugees was better understood, Manning was tormented by the fate of the refugees of the *Struma.* A Romanian ship carrying seven hundred Jewish refugees, the *Struma* was refused entry in Palestine and later in Turkey in 1942. The passengers, having paid tickets to board the ship, thought that they were escaping the persecution of Jews in Romania. In Palestine, the refugees were refused entry, although they had been told that they could live there in safety. The British governor of Palestine, Harold MacMichael, refused to allow the refugees safe heaven. The ship went on to Istanbul, where the passengers were not allowed to disembark while authorities decided the course of action to follow. Eventually, Turkish authorities towed the ship into the Black Sea, where it was sunk by a Russian torpedo.

Manning's preoccupation with the *Struma* case offers an interesting counterpoint to her method in the *Balkan Trilogy*. In both texts she re-reads past events from the perspective of the information that was becoming available in the 1960s and 1970s about

the Second World War and the Holocaust. In 1970, Manning wrote a piece on the *Struma* victims for the *Observer*:

> On Christmas night, [1941] the officers of a Royal Navy cruiser, on a goodwill mission to the Bosphorus, invited their British and Turkish friends on board. There was music and dancing. A searchlight, switched on for the fun of it, played over the city and the harbour; and, at one moment, as the ray swung round, it came to rest on a ship crowded with human faces. The ship looked derelict; the faces, row upon row of them, stared white and unsmiling at the cruiser. Shocked by the sight, the guests asked one another 'Who are they? What are they doing there?' Someone said it might be a prison-ship; and so, in a way, it was. The light shifted and the party forgot its grim audience hidden in the dark. (8)

Her description is reminiscent of a condition that the soldiers in the trenches during the First World War recounted: the sense of being in proximity to normal life in Paris or London, but of being sentenced to a space where war continues. Although the *Struma* found its way to two ports, the international community failed to find a solution that would have saved the lives of the passengers. Decisions were both bureaucratic and strategic. The refugees literally floated between a country that persecuted them, Romania, and possible asylums that refused them entry.

Refugees, such as the victims of the *Struma* or the Druckers in the *Balkan Trilogy*, upset notions of national belonging. Refugees find temporary shelter in a foreign location willing to protect them, but they are caught in a double bind. When Harriet has dinner with the Druckers, they explain that they fled to Romania when they were forced to leave

Germany. Now that they are settled in Bucharest, they face hatred once more. Hannah Arendt, in her 1943 essay "We Refugees," relates the sense of being seen by every country in relation to the country from which one has fled. Refugees, when they are welcome, inhabit the subject position of "'prospective citizens' and of 'enemy aliens'" (Arendt 266). The entrapment of nationality weighs on the refugee:

> The less we are free to decide who we are or to live as we like, the more we try to put up a front, to hide facts, and to play roles. We were expelled from Germany because we were Jews. But having hardly crossed the French borderline, we were changed into *boches*. We were even told that we had to accept this designation if we were really against Hitler's racial theories. During seven years we played the ridiculous role of trying to be Frenchmen—at least, prospective citizens; but at the beginning of the war we were interned as boches all the same. In the meantime, however, most of us had indeed become such loyal Frenchmen that we could not even criticize a French governmental order; thus we declared it was all right to be interned. (Arendt 270)

Refugees perform the roles of the loyal citizens in the countries that welcome them, Arendt explains, but their belonging is still found wanting and is suspect. The social codes that govern national sentiment and loyalties have not evolved to include the possibility of loyalty to a country of refuge. "The natives, confronted with such strange beings as we are, become suspicious; from their point of view, as a rule, only a loyalty to our old countries is understandable" (272). In contrast to notions of community defined according to national belonging, Arendt imagines loyalty as a supra-national category.

The same narrow nationalism that refuses to imagine that non-nationals could be loyal to their new country also denies the possibility of extending concern beyond national boundaries. Arendt's essay questions the organization of responsibility along national lines.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the international community re-considered the problem of refugees. The United Nations Convention and Protocol on the Status of Refugees was drafted in 1951, in response to the mass displacements of the Second World War. Critics have pointed out that the events of the twentieth century demand that the care for the other also be extended to the national other. As Ravit Reichman argues, Hannah Arendt considers responsibility an "ethics of care" that transcends national boundaries (11). In both her postwar journalism and in her fiction, Olivia Manning documents the experience of the refugee as an emblematic figure of displacement and statelessness.

Information

The *Balkan Trilogy* looks for novelistic means of dealing with the postwar problem of statelessness. The opening scene on the train, with its focus on passports, indicates that the Pringles are located in a modern world of nations and nationalities: "In the modern world everyone has a nationality much as everyone has a gender—universality of nationality as a socio-historical concept and the particularity of its manifestations" (Anderson 5). The *Balkan Trilogy* considers the problem of statelessness in part by comparing the novel to the epic. Guy Pringle's production of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* sets up an intertextual reference to Homer's *Illiad*, and thus engages

with the differences between the epic and the novel. The *Illiad* represents warriors and heroes, while the *Balkan Trilogy* considers minor characters, none of whom are heroic. Wars, which are sanctioned by the gods in the epic, are shown to be politically motivated in Manning's novel. The novel allows for an engagement with history. In his discussion of the epic and novel forms, Mikhail Bakhtin writes that "the epic world is constructed in the zone of an absolute distanced image, beyond the sphere of possible contact with the developing, incomplete and therefore re-thinking and re-evaluating present" (17). Novelistic characters from the *Balkan Trilogy* perform in the production of the play but Harriet, who is the focalizer of the novel, does not. As the Nazis march into Paris, Guy Pringle stages his production:

> Rehearsals were becoming intensive. Guy had announced that the theatre was booked for the night of June 14th. That gave the players a month in which to perfect themselves. They had no time to brood on present anxieties. They lived now to pursue a war of the past…it was a relief to them all to turn their attention to the fall of Troy. (253)

While the actors escape from the present into the past of the epic, Harriet, a novelistic character, resists the closure of historical events that the epic entails. She thinks about the heroes of the Trojan War in contrast with the ordinary British people performing in the play. As Bakhtin explains, "The novel is the sole genre that continues to develop, that is as yet uncompleted…the birth and development of the novel as genre takes place in the full light of the historical day" (3). Harriet, attached to the incomplete present, requires novelistic expression.

The dialogue between the novel and the epic in the *Balkan Trilogy* reinforces

the novelistic self-consciousness, at least on Manning's part, about representing a conflict of global proportions. While the epic has often told the story of the founding of a nation, in the *Balkan Trilogy* this genre is shown to be unhelpful in the context of the twentieth century. As against the epic, the novel emerges as a genre more appropriate to documenting dissent. Manning also balances the epic against the novel because she documents the failures of Britain and empire, not its founding. If the novel allows for a preponderance of the present in thinking back on past events, then it is fitting that Manning would have chosen this genre in the 1960s to look back on the Second World War. Manning's response to the Second World War, to write a novel of epic proportions, ultimately shows that the epic is another form of discourse, like political speeches and folk music. It does not capture the whole truth of events. While epics are often involved with a clear sense of national identity, the rejection of epic form sets up an attempt at greater national openness.

Concerned with the impact of history on the present, the *Balkan Trilogy* sets up journalism against a novelistic understanding of events. While journalism tells the daily details of a story, the novel considers the meaning of events in a longer history. In "Notes on the Future of the Novel," Manning makes a case for the historical purpose of the novel and distinguishes between information and the novel: "In that the novel is the true chronicle of an age and the age that dispenses with it will exist in history only as a collection of bald facts without mind or soul, I believe the novel must survive" (iv). While a chronicle refers to "a register of events in order of time, often composed contemporaneously with the events they record" (Cuddon 144), Manning argues that the novel should provide something more than a catalogue of events. Among the strengths of

the novel, compared to poetry, she cites its "slower effect," a feature which she uses in the *Balkan Trilogy*. She considers that "Flaubert produced a reality more true than truth" but that "the biographer…is hampered by fact" (vi). The novelist's primary materials are facts, but these are transformed into fiction, which she considers closer to truth. Indeed, she considers that a "true chronicle" provides more than a factual and chronological account of events.

Novels have long engaged with history as open-ended. Manning, condemning the modernist fixation on the present, prefers nineteenth-century novels about history as a sequence. Clarence, one of the British expatriates in Bucharest, announces his dislike for Virginia Woolf's fiction. "'I think *Orlando* almost the worst book of the century'" (187). He reads nothing but detective novels and classics. In his view, the works of Stendhal, Flaubert, and Tolstoy are the apex of cultural production. Manning may have been reacting to the pacifism of many of the modernist writers who had been alive to witness the atrocities of the First World War. In Stendhal, Flaubert, and Tolstoy, she finds precedents for novels which deal with history using a realist technique. In Tolstoy, in particular, she locates a model for writing a novel in which the historical and epic material is represented alongside personal life. Harry Mooney notes that, like Stendhal, Manning traces the effects of political events on several characters. She seems to feel, Mooney argues, "that large, public forces and even the events that embody them are best recorded through the chaos they impose on private life" (Mooney 50).

When Manning returned to England in the late 1940s and was working on *Artist Among the Missing*, *School for Love* and later the *Balkan Trilogy*, she began to serialize nineteenth-century novels for various BBC programs. She was therefore thinking about

the use of Victorian novels in the latter half of the twentieth century—not just as entertainment, but as a heritage and an ongoing engagement with history. Among its reasons for continuing to broadcast adaptations of novels without adding to their dramatic flair, the BBC cited its some of its listeners' interest in the quietude of the novelistic approach. Manning adapted *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Wives and Daughters*, *Middlemarch*, and *Evelina*. She also worked on more contemporary novels such as Arnold Bennett's *Anna of the Five Towns* and Ada Leverson's *The Little Otteleys*. A BBC reviewer who commented on Manning's adaptation of *Middlemarch* noticed her propensity for keeping only to the facts of the novel and excluding interesting details: "I think this installment suffers from too great a desire to establish facts and repeat them so the life is squeezed out of the dialogue and the narrative" (BBC Archives 3). Manning's emphasis on facts in her own novels, especially in the *Balkan Trilogy* may have led her to emphasize events at the expense of plot in the novels she was adapting.

Manning's postwar trilogy sets up a conversation between the novel and history. Characters in the *Balkan Trilogy* who have a longer view of Romanian history understand the effects of the past on events in 1939. David Boyd, a friend of Guy Pringle, works for the Foreign Office and speaks several languages. Unlike the other British characters, he chooses to live in the Minerva, a German hotel in Bucharest, because "'one picks useful odds and ends of information. In the bar…the German journalists congregate, you get the same stringmen that take the news to the English Bar. One version goes to the Athénée Palace another to the Minerva. In that way our Rumanian allies keep in with both sides at once'" (173). Access to diplomatic circles at the Foreign Office allows Boyd to trace the political uses of information. David Boyd is informed about the state of international

relations. He explains that German diplomacy has changed with the arrival of the Nazis and that the new German government will oust King Carol: "They're not taken in by his conversion to totalitarianism. They know it's mere expediency. The new men in Germany are, in their way, idealists. They're not like the old-fashioned diplomats who don't care how dishonest a man is so long as he's playing their game. They're dedicated men" (374-375). Boyd also has a historical understanding of political events. He is familiar with Romania's long history and understands that nations are not permanent, but constituted through territorial ambition. He breaks down the myth of the nation into its history and narrates for those present at his table the "sixteen hundred years of oppression" that Romanian peasants have endured (174). Much like Rebecca West in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, Boyd excavates, almost archaeologically, the past layers of Romanian history to demonstrate the consequences of the past for the present. He criticizes Britain for its lack of intervention in the Balkans that he considers an explanation for the present state of events.

Even though the *Balkan Trilogy* is journalistic in its focus on events, the novel is concerned with questions of British responsibility for victims of war. Harriet's understanding of events is contrasted with that of journalists for whom history is merely a series of facts. The novelistic perspective extends beyond the journalists' narrowness to include a view of the events with an eye to their other possible significance. Journalists are represented as seeing political situations and conflict not as they affect civilians, but as fodder for news. When a famished Yakimov arrives in Bucharest, he stumbles upon McCann, an old acquaintance and a journalist who has been wounded. McCann uses Yakimov to send information out of Romania:

> McCann's left hand dug out clumsily about in the jacket that lay behind him. 'Here!' – he produced some sheets torn from a notebook – 'Get this out for me. It's the whole story.'
>
> 'Really, dear boy! What story?'
>
> 'Why, the break-up of Poland; surrender of Gdynia; flight of the Government; the German advance on Warsaw; the refugees streaming out, me with them. Cars machine-gunned from the air; men, women and children wounded and killed; the dead buried by the roadside. Magnificent stuff; first hand; must get it out while it's hot…Ring our agency in Geneva, dictate it over the line…' (21)

For journalists like McCann, events represent news to be disseminated. He is unconcerned with the effect of history on individual people. Although he gets his information "first hand," his sentences lack verbs and first-person pronouns; he effaces himself as an eyewitness and presents the event without perspective. In contrast to McCann, Harriet's perspective is highly personal. She says to Guy: "'You're interested in ideas; I in people'" (Manning 63). Her sense of being an outsider in Bucharest connects her with the plight of other marginalized people and to consider the ramifications of events on individual human lives.

The events leading up to the Nazi takeover of Romania structure Manning's novel sequence: "Each volume of the trilogy is divided into four sections, and all sections are headed by a concrete noun that sets the central event, the background against which the characters act out their reactions to change" (Morris 32-33). Through this novelistic structure, Manning works out the difference between a journalistic and a novelistic

approach to historical events. The significance of events cannot be grasped as they occur; characters are confused by the reports they hear. They do not yet know the extent of the catastrophe that will take place in Europe. Whereas newspapers report events, novels can offer a retrospective reflection on their long-term consequences.

While Manning is faithful to the chronological order of events and to their effects on the political climate, she records the reactions of characters with different political affiliations. Manning's own experience as a journalist is reflected in her use of the novel to record the effects of events on several characters simultaneously. She represents events as they affect more than one group of people at one time and traces the impact of events on different ideological positions. This novelistic method recalls a feature of newspapers that Benedict Anderson has discussed. Anderson identifies simultaneity, or "temporal coincidence" (Anderson 24), as one of the features of a modern understanding of time, one that the newspaper and the novel, in particular, have created:

> the birth of the imagined community of the nation can best be seen if we consider the basic structure of the two forms of imagining which first flowered in Europe in the eighteenth century: the novel and the newspaper. For these forms provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation. (24-25)

Anderson's conception of the novel as enacting the features of the nation as an imagined community, in which several actors play at the same time, bears close relation to Manning's use of the novel to create a global community. Anderson also points out that the only element connecting news items on a page of the newspaper is the date of their occurrence. The novel allows Manning to consider connections between events that go

beyond calendrical coincidence. In this regard, the novel allows for an exploration of the connections between characters that are part of a network of events. By charting the effects of political events on several characters from different nations and social groups in Bucharest, the *Balkan Trilogy* bridges different political interests. At the time of the assassination of Prime Minister Calinescu, for example, Manning allows the reader to inhabit a position of omniscience mediated by a narrator and by focalization in Harriet. The reader, understanding that newspapers distort information, sees the miscommunications created by newspapers. In this way, the novel takes a step outward from the narrowness of newspaper reporting and looks critically at the ways in which news creates political climates. In Manning's novel, the journalists are storytellers, but the novelist is the meta-storyteller: she collates the stories of all the newspapers and considers a broader temporal and spatial range.

The *Balkan Trilogy* also contrasts different approaches to schematizing events and information. Different groups in Bucharest manipulate the events of the war for an audience of civilians. For example, on the main street of the city, the British and German propaganda bureaus post maps that announce their advances. The British display their successes:

> a week after the German invasion of Denmark and Norway, Inchcape displayed…a map of the Scandinavian countries with the loss of the German destroyers at Narvik restrainedly marked in blue. In time came the landings of the British troops at Namsos and Andalsnes…In the window opposite, the red arrows of Germany thrust the Norwegians back and back. One day the Allies announced an advance, another the Germans

> announced an Allied retreat. Merely a strategic retreat, said the British News Service…Every morning the passers-by, lured by these first remote moves of the war, crossed the road to compare window with window; but it was the blatant menace of the giant red arrows that held the crowd. (244)

The events of the war, represented as "spectacular entertainment" (244), are played out on the maps. The passers-by relate to the faraway battles in the theatre of war through a two-dimensional overview. The maps reduce the war to a theatrically played-out board game where one party gains and another loses territory. The maps, as schematizations, provide no account of the human implications of the war; they focus on territorial gain. News of the war is mediated by each side's interpretation of events. Harriet learns of the invasion of Luxembourg, Holland, and Belgium from maps.

As an aerial representation, a map is also a form of omniscience and prediction. The maps displayed by the Nazis represent the situation as they wish it to be rather than as it is. Germans predict the fall of Paris by showing it on a map. In this regard, the Nazi maps in the *Balkan Trilogy* are not mimetic, but prophetic. The omniscience of maps extends to the future, just as the *Balkan Trilogy* is a map of the past. They misrepresent the present state of the war, but are truthful in representing their intentions and their future territorial gains. The Nazi maps shown in the propaganda bureau represent the fall of France: what begins as misinformation turns out to be true, and the maps of France is eventually taken down and replaced with the map of England. The Nazi maps misinform insofar as viewers are unwilling to take the threat of invasion seriously. Through the semiotic system of the maps, then, the Nazis try to prophesy their victories.

As Nicholas Dunlop writes, “maps articulate, structure, and transmit knowledge in a manner that projects (and actively propagates) a detached, unbiased, and scientific way of working” (Dunlop 33). The display of maps has the appearance of omniscience that goes unchallenged; they are considered a truth. Michel Foucault has connected maps and literary text in that both constitute an “‘administration of knowledge’” (Dunlop 33). The propaganda maps create an omniscient point of view on the war and its battles but that omniscience is achieved at the cost of local detail: “Maps embody exactly the kind of knowledge that may be, and often is, manipulated for political, military, or economic ends” (Dunlop 33). By presenting information in a condensed fashion, by omitting any debate, the facts give the illusion of standing above truth.

While the maps give a sense of inevitability to events, the myriad debates and conversations in the *Balkan Trilogy* insist on the political nature of war. In Bucharest, characters judge and interpret information: there is an abundance of opinion and speculation in the early days of the war about possibilities and future events. During the approach to the outbreak of war, various characters in Bucharest—British, Romanian, Jewish—speculate on the probable events to come. On her first evening in Bucharest, Harriet witnesses a debate between Sophie Orseanu, the British Council representatives, German economists, and Romanians, each of whom speculates on the likelihood of a Nazi invasion. Manning is anxious to locate the behaviours which lend themselves to different political affiliations. Thus Manning’s historical novel can be seen as a project for reviewing past events and connecting character traits to political types, personalities to ideologies. Newspapers present opinions as facts, and characters debate the veracity of their claims. Reports from the Romanian government, however, reflect changing

alliances and the fear of Russian invasion. Harriet observes the ways in which newspaper reports shape the attitude of Romanians. At Christmas time in the bar of the Athénée Palace, she notices that Romanians "exude confidence and self-sufficiency" (145) and attributes this news to "the new atmosphere had found expression in the Bucharest papers, which drew attention to the loss by Germany of the battle of the River Plate; and the fact that the Finns were making fools of the Russian invaders. Perhaps the threatening powers were not, after all, so powerful!" (145). While the British are proud of their access to unbiased information, in wartime Romania they become consumers of unreliable reports.

Locations such as the English Bar and the Athénée Palace function as centers where journalists and civilians meet. As a friend of the Pringles says in the last volume of the *Trilogy*, "[I]t is not a question of truth. This war, like other wars, is collecting its legends" (719). Manning, while representing the political motivations for war, offers an alternate courses of events. The novel looks back on the beginnings of the Second World War without giving events the weight of inevitability. During the months of the Phoney War, Harriet and the other characters are bored as they hang around waiting to hear news and information: "The hotel was as dull as the papers. It was an inert period between seasons: a time of no news when the journalists were elsewhere. Nothing was happening in Bucharest. Nothing, it seemed, was happening anywhere in the world" (236). Manning's enormous cast of characters reflects the fact that in wartime information is circulated through various sources whose experience gives them their authority—or not. Steffaneski, who fled through Poland, questions Yakimov's story based not on information received from newspapers, but from Steffaneski's own experience of taking

routes and knowing which frontiers were closed at a given time. The British are represented as judging and interpreting the information that they find. But the British in Bucharest are also the victims of information. While McCann sends information out early in the war, the British in Bucharest quickly establish an equal footing with the Romanians in their lack of access to verifiable accounts.

Manning's novel is also concerned with information and also with misinformation during wartime. For example, various characters offer different explanations of the assassination of the Romanian Prime Minister. The Romanian press claims that the assassination was a British ploy. A British journalist, Galpin, tries to stop the misinformation: "My stringman reports: German Embassy claims to have proof the murder was organised by the British Prime Minister in order to undermine Rumania's neutrality. That gets a laugh" (71). During the press conference given by the Minister of Information, Galpin and other British journalists object to the lies told by Ionesco, the Romanian governmental representative. Ionesco accuses the journalists of inventing a story: "am I perhaps mistaken? Did no one invent here the story that the assassins were Guardists in German pay? That the Germans had planned an invasion? That a certain foreign diplomat was under house arrest, having been found in possession of a cheque with which to reward the assassins?" (78-79). The government maintains that the Prime Minister was assassinated by a group of students who failed their final exams. The Romanian government wants to mask the takeover by the Iron Guard in order to benefit from British protection against a possible German invasion. Manning's novel offers a different perspective on information than that handed out by the Romanian government, which keeps information secret in order to control the reactions of the population.

Manning, like an editor who receives several reports at once, uses the genre of the novel to arbitrate different interpretations of the same event.

The British Council and British Nationalism

Concerned with the wartime role of the British Council, Manning reflects in particular upon the value of British culture. By representing the appearance of Britishness in the Balkans, Manning investigates the ways in which British culture is perceived abroad. Her novel is critical of the Council's project of advocating British culture in a global world. The role of the British Council, to promote British culture and literature abroad, acquired, during war, a role of cultural propaganda. The British Council and the literature teachers at the University in Bucharest mistakenly believe that they are contributing to the war effort, but the *Balkan Trilogy* is critical of the Council's wartime activities. Harriet is skeptical about Guy's belief that putting on an amateur production of *Troilus and Cressida* at the national theater is a suitable contribution to the war effort. As the Iron Guard becomes a presence in Bucharest, Guy is "determined not to let outside things distract him" (237). Guy's instinct is to see the possible German invasion of Britain as an attack upon English culture, which can be re-created wherever there are British citizens. When Harriet hears the news of the rescue of the British army at Dunkirk, she weighs that action and its implicit heroism against that of producing a play. The narrative thus asks what is at stake in defending Britain from invasion. In this way, Manning's depiction of Guy Pringle registers the parochialism and irrelevance of British culture. Ultimately, the British flee Bucharest just ahead of the Nazi advance. In the *Balkan Trilogy*, culture proves an ineffective strategy against modern aggressive warfare.

Part of the comedy of the *Balkan Trilogy* arises from the disagreements between the "Organization," as Manning calls the British Council, and the Legation, which does not believe in the political effectiveness of cultural propaganda. When the Iron Guard, the Romanian Fascist party, takes over in Romania, Guy tells Harriet that they will have to flee to neighboring Greece: "The Legation. They're trying to thin out the British colony. They want us to get rid of what they call the 'culture boys'" (397). The leader of the Council in Romania, Inchcape, has to justify his presence in the city. The Romanians waiver in their allegiances. Even though the Romanian government's loyalties are shifting towards Russia and Germany, the British offer to protect Romanian interests. In Bucharest, Inchcape, Clarence, and Guy are the ambassadors of England abroad—"purveyors of British culture" (87)—who try to maintain the Romanians' interest in the English language and therefore their political alliance with Britain. Inchcape sets up the new British Information Office opposite the German Information Office in the main street of Bucharest. To counter German propaganda, he displays posters that read, "'Britain Beautiful'" (84). Manning mocks Inchcape's decision to invite a stuffy Cambridge don, Professor Pinkrose, to deliver a lecture for the British Council in Bucharest. He explains, "'The lecture usually deals with some aspect of English literature. It will remind the Rumanians that we have one of the finest literatures in the world'" (339). Some Romanians, like Sophie Orseanu, are in search of a British passport, but many are learning English. Interest in the English language sustains the British Council. Although Britain may be losing political power, its culture still possesses some allure.

Britishness is identified with the institutions that propagate it abroad, like the

British Council and the Foreign Office, but it is also defined along class lines that are formed in the British public school system. Inchcape and Clarence locate their work for the British Council in a strongly felt nationalism which they connect to school clubs. For the funeral of Calinescu, the Prime Minister,

> Clarence was wearing a tie decorated with the small insignia of his college and a blazer with the badge of his old school. Before they left the flat, he wrapped himself up in a long scarf knitted in the colours of a famous rowing club. Harriet could not refrain from laughing at him. 'Are you afraid,' she asked, 'that people will think you do not belong anywhere? (87)

By wearing the emblems of a public school boyhood, Inchcape proclaims his Britishness. School badges stand in for other forms of British ceremonial gear. Harriet's critique of their activities exposes the aims of the British Council as a continuation of imperial bureaucracy under the guise of culture. Ultimately, Manning represents the British in Bucharest as a group at the mercy of foreign policy. Harriet and Guy enjoy the privileges of Britishness in the early days of the war, but as Romania sides with the Nazis, they are forced to leave the country like other refugees. Their British passports are of no help to them in the face of the Nazi invasion of Bucharest. Manning's and Harriet's dislocated perspectives as exiled British women enable them to criticize the vestiges of colonialism in the aims of the British Council. Manning ultimately sees globalism as an alternative to the narrow limits of British culture.

Manning's novel demonstrates that, in Bucharest, the British council workers do not seek to create connections with Romanians. Rather, they form an island of

Britishness. At the English Bar, "the centre of information" (69), Britishness advertises itself as a well-informed, liberal position from which the world is visible: "In the middle of the room, beneath the largest chandelier, were laid out on a table copies of every English newspaper of repute" (52). Even the barman attempts to perform Britishness: Albu is "a despondent, sober fellow regarded in Bucharest as a perfect imitation of an English barman" (69). As Linda Colley explains, "This is how it was with the British after 1707. They came to define themselves as a single people not because of any political or cultural consensus at home, but rather in reaction to the Other beyond their shores" (qtd. in Baucom 7). Manning comments on the Romanian's desire to copy the British, which re-inscribes a colonial divide into a text which is critical of British colonialism. The British define their identity abroad in contrast to the Romanian Other.

While the parochialism of organizations like the British Council insulates British culture from the influence of other literary traditions, Manning's postwar writing was enriched by her travels. From 1942 to 1945, Manning spent time in Cairo, where she came into contact with British writers such as Lawrence Durrell, who celebrated their positions as outsiders. Durrell, Robert Liddell, and others had set up a wartime magazine entitled *Personal Landscape*. Their goal was, like Manning's in *Balkan Trilogy*, to write about the war from the perspective of personal experience rather than by giving more salience to politics with no personal face. Olivia Manning wrote about *Personal Landscape* for Cyril Connolly's *Horizon* magazine during the war: "The British Council has given a number of young men the chance—for which Spender asked in *Horizon*—to experience events as vividly as war correspondents without the obligation to write to order" (271). Manning describes the gulf that forms between writers who experience the

war from abroad and those who stay in England. To the charge of writing as if they "'have lost touch,'" she answers:

> It would be a mistake to suppose that these isolated poets and prose-writers have not developed at all because they have not developed in the same way as their contemporaries at home. Whether willingly or not, they have become cosmopolitan; they have met and been influenced by refugee writers of other countries; they have learnt foreign languages not commonly learnt by English people and so absorbed new literatures. The character of poetry written out here may suffer from being outbred as that written in England during the same period may suffer from being inbred. (271)

Instead of insisting on the preservation of a static Britishness, Manning defends the writers' freedom to be influenced by travel and by proximity with different languages and cultures. Manning's postwar novel uses its dislocation to revitalize novelistic form. It revises the novel as a response to the changes in the political climate. As Simon Gikandi argues,

> we have become so accustomed to reading the modernist text as an attempt to keep out the contaminants of the world outside the aesthetic sphere that we have forgotten how often modernist art forms derive their energy from their diagnosis of the failure of the imperial enterprise, and how modernism produces its narrative authority by becoming enmeshed —against its overt intentions, perhaps—in the politics of empire and in the conflict between colonial culture and a changing economic and cultural

> system (161)

Eve Patten also argues that Manning's own work reflects an openness to being "outbred". Manning's postwar writing is "a product not of exile or expatriation but of an informed literary refugee-ship, which moved beyond the binary of home and elsewhere" (97). While critics like Tyrus Miller conceive of late modernism as the "aging and decline of modernism" (6), Manning's idea of postwar literature is an example of the development of a new aesthetic in the novel as a response to postwar political and social conditions.

The *Balkan Trilogy* uses dislocation to critique narrow conceptions of British culture. Like her protagonist Harriet Pringle, Olivia Manning was an outsider in relation to the British community in Bucharest as well as in relation to Romanian culture. Phyllis Lassner argues that "the scope and passion of her epic construction of this war are narrated from the perspective of a writer who is an outsider, not only to the indigenous cultures around her, but to the British mission from which she chose to remain aloof" (18). Even though she is critical of the colonialist aims of the British Council, Manning idealizes Romania and approaches the country through an orientalist lens. As Vesna Goldsworthy has pointed out, historically, many British writers who have written accounts or narratives set in the Balkans have contrasted the region with Britain to construct Britishness:

> While volumes of Orientalist and subaltern studies explore representations of areas of Western domination over the Eastern world, the Balkan peninsula provides a unique instance in modern times of Eastern colonization of an area of Europe. Instead of descriptions of an 'exotic'

> Other, we encounter perceptions of Balkan identity in an ambivalent oscillation between 'Europeanness' and 'Oriental difference'. (2)

Harriet has read accounts by other travelers to Romania. Like Durrell's David Mountolive, her impressions are created by the experiences and the prejudices of others: "before she left England, she had read books written by travelers in Rumania who had given a picture of a rollicking, openhearted, happy, healthy peasantry, full of music and generous hospitality" (123). Travel books do not constitute a preparation for meeting another culture. Instead of being familiar with Romania, Harriet becomes an outsider and a foreigner.

The different types of discourse she encounters puzzle her: on the train to Romania, "loud-speakers gave out the numbers of reservists being called to their regiments. The monotony of the announcer's voice had the quality of silence" (11). She hears "the shrill squeak of a gypsy violin" (31) and does not process its sounds as intelligible music. She considers the gypsy singer Florica's voice to be a "howl" (37). She does not know the name of the tune an old man plays on a barrel-organ. In Bucharest, from the Pringle's apartment "Harriet could hear babble in the square before she was out of bed" (453). She cannot interpret the meaning of the crowd's cheers in Bucharest. Although Manning occasionally allows Romanian characters, like Bella Niculescu or the Drucker family, to speak for themselves, Harriet largely sees the Romanians in Bucharest as members of an undifferentiated crowd. The narrative pits her against those crowds, which she observes from her balcony.

Manning's representation of the Romanians as moving in packs sets up a division between Harriet, whose individualism is preserved through her status as an onlooker and

observer, and the groups of undifferentiated Romanians. From the moment of her arrival in Bucharest, Harriet's individual voice is threatened by the crowd, with which she is "absorbed in warfare" (27). Harriet's individuality keeps her aloof from Romanian culture. The crowds who watch the processions of the Iron Guard seem to have no will of their own: "As they lined up in the hundreds before the palace, the crowd surged about them" (453). Elias Canetti remarks that "the crowd needs a direction…Its constant fear of disintegration means that it will accept *any* goal" (29). The crowd is also a leitmotif in orientalist literature: "the East has been imagined in the figure of the crowd by Western observers whose own difference literally singles them out" (Kerr 53). By avoiding the Romanians, who are usually described in crowds in the streets or at rallies, Harriet remains aloof. This removal and separation emphasizes her Britishness as disconnected from other nationalities. Like the other members of the small enclave of British expatriates, Harriet travels, but she does not participate in Romanian life. In Manning's fiction Britishness is motivated by internationalist theories that are not supported by internationalist actions on an individual level.

Manning's narrative presents Romanians in Bucharest as both exceedingly urbane and also as "oriental" in their more negative traits. In this she joins many other writers who have categorized that Balkans in this fashion. She represents very few Romanian characters, and when she does, they are often caricatures drawing on Orientalist tropes. Emmanuel Drucker's wife walks around her apartment with "Oriental languor" (99) while gypsy women have "long, wild hair, and shameless laughter" (62). Prince Yakimov's landlady

> spent much of her day lying on her bed dressed in her kimono. Yakimov was delighted to observe that she did everything a woman of oriental character was reputed to do. She ate Turkish delight; she drank Turkish coffee; she smoked Turkish cigarettes; and she was for ever laying out a pack of frowsy, odd-faced cards, by which she predicted events from hour to hour. (202)

Manning uses the figure of this landlady as one of her less flattering illustrations of Romanians, but it remains one of the only portraits of an individual Romanian person in the novel. Harriet does not befriend any Romanians. She fantasizes a connection to strangers, but only observes Romanians from the safe distance of her balcony:

> Two women, like little sturdy bears in their fur coats and fur-trimmed snow-boots, descended. As they entered the church, they drew veils over their heads. This incident, occurring there at their feet, beneath the balcony of their home, touched Harriet oddly. For the first time she felt her life becoming involved with the permanent life of the place...With so much time, one ceased to be a visitor. People took on the aspect of neighbours (115).

Harriet enjoys her status as an outsider. She does not want to understand Romanian culture and defines her British identity in opposition to Romania.

In contrast to the British, who participate in relief organizations, the Romanians are represented as lazy and selfish. Romanian laziness and opportunism are reflected in shifting alliances. Manning's novel presents different attitudes towards Romania: Guy Pringle's friend Klein, a Jew and an economist, predicts that Romania will starve because

the only way it can keep the Germans from invading would be through providing them with food. Echoing the novel's title, *The Great Fortune*, he says that Romania is a country like "a foolish person who has inherited a great fortune" (178). Harriet feels both compassion and aversion toward Romanians. At the Christmas dinner, the diplomat Dugdale along with Inchcape and Clarence, mock the rampant corruption in Romania, because, as they condescendingly assess, "this is, after all, Ruthenia" (156). They define their Britishness against the way of doing things in Romania, but also assume that there is an unchangeable nature of Romanians. Manning both exposes and propagates orientalist ideas about the Balkans.

Manning does not represent Romania as a location where British travelers can indulge in a European Grand Tour. Instead, Harriet and Guy are victimized by the war in Bucharest. As Phyllis Lassner points out about Manning's novels, Europe is not a place for vacations, but for political change: "Europe is no longer an exotic site of romantic adventure, but one in which to recognize a new world order" (Lassner 16). As seen from Bucharest, Europe is far from the agglomeration of monuments that tourists visit. The Pringles arrive in Romania expecting to see the charm of the city. Instead, they find that it is crumbling about their feet:

> The Pringles settled into a small hotel in the square, on the side opposite the Athénée Palace. Their window looked out on to ruins. That day, the day after their arrival, they had been awakened at sunrise by the fall of masonry…Where he had been a moment before, a wall came down. Its fall revealed the interior of a vast white room, fretted with baroque scrolls and set with a mirror that glimmered like a lake. Nearby could be seen the red

> wallpaper of a café—the famous Café Napoleon that had been the meeting-place of artists, musicians, poets and other natural non-conformists. (23-4)

The demolished buildings signify the brutal end of traditions from previous centuries. The café, that eighteenth-century institution which in Britain was a center of political conversation, is torn down. Its destruction foreshadows the coming of the Iron Guard and the end of free speech.

By expanding the geographical scope of the novel, Manning's trilogy also traces the ways in which Britain is also implicated in creating the circumstances for global violence. Klein points out that the British position in Romania is precarious because British foreign policy has for many years supported injustices in Romania and in Central Europe:

> We snub the peasant leaders. We condone the suppression of the extreme Left and the imprisonment of its leaders. We support some of the most ruthless exploitation of human beings to be found in Europe. We support the suppression of minorities—a suppression that must, inevitably, lead to a break-up of Greater Rumanian as soon as opportunity arises (215).

The British, like the Russians, have imperial interests in Romania; they control the oil wells at Ploesti, which ensures a supply of fuel. While the Nazis use aggressive warfare to gain territory and arable land, the British apply foreign policy in covert ways to exploit natural resources in Romania. British exiles and Romanians alike consume elaborate cakes in cafes and enjoy plentiful food, about which they have many conversations. Harriet, who seems unconcerned with money, enjoys shopping in the markets of

Bucharest but is repelled by the street urchins she encounters. She shows little sympathy for the peasants who are victimized by modernization:

> She was watched by some peasants standing near, whose eyes were shy and distrustful of the life about them. Newly arrived in the city, the men were still in tight frieze trousers, short jackets and pointed caps—a style of dress that dated back to Roman times. The women wore embroidered blouses and fan-pleated skirts of colours that were richer and more subtle than those worn by the gypsies. As soon as they could afford it, they would throw off these tokens of their simplicity and rig themselves out in city drab. (64)

The Romanian peasants are not members the new world-order; they are Others in the urban landscape. After the Second World War, their rural way of life will be transformed by the Soviet takeover of the country. Although Harriet is an outsider, she does not consider the street urchins and the peasants as members of her community. Class is a marker of her national identity. Harriet enjoys the privileges of being British within Romania's feudal structure; she is not innocent of the perpetuation of the system that grants her advantages. Concerned with re-drawing the boundaries of the British and international community, Manning's novel considers the global economic networks that bind countries territories together and that create competition for scare resources.

While at the beginning of the Second World War the British enjoy the privileges of their national belonging, as the war goes on and the military power at home is challenged, the prestige of British national identity begins to fade. The *Balkan Trilogy* therefore focuses on the experience of minor characters in Romania and refuses to

represent them as heroes. As news of the evacuation of British troops at Dunkirk reaches the performers in *Troilus and Cressida*, they are relieved; Harriet reports that the newspapers "'say it was wonderful…Wonderful'. Her voice broke" (254). But the British diplomat Clarence sees more clearly the significance of the event. He rightly considers the evacuation of the troops as "a sort of victory"..."We've saved our army" (254). The British do not take Nazi prisoners or make territorial advances, but succeed only in retreating "to their own island" (254). The British retreat back to the safety of the island forces the characters to acknowledge that defending Britain against the Nazis will be more difficult than they had anticipated.

Writing in the aftermath of the Second World War, Manning knew the extent to which the war created a crisis of refugees. Her novel, concerned with questions of British responsibility for those who are stateless, can be interpreted as a belated consideration of the role of British foreign policy in worsening the refugee crisis in the 1940s. As Adam Piette notes in *The Imagination at War*, there is "some obscure guilt within British culture about its own isolation from the real horrors of the war between 1939 and 1945" (1). Manning's postwar novel insists on documenting British implication in global systems of exploitation and imperialism. While Rebecca West used her authority as a well-known journalist to comment on the postwar international situation, Manning writes from the point of view of the witness who has experienced displacement. Responding to the postwar refugee crisis, the *Balkan Trilogy* engages with the effects of private and public violence and with the reconfiguration of Britishness that resulted from the dissolution of the British Empire.

Secret Soldiers: John Le Carré's Spies and the Politics of Stability

In postwar novels, where the exigencies of maintaining security replace hopes of lasting peace, spies are figures of uncertain commitments. John Le Carré's spy fiction investigates the makings of Britishness in the aftermath of the Second World War. Like Lawrence Durrell's diplomats, Rebecca West's journalists, and Olivia Manning's refugees, Le Carré's spies function as Hermes figures who re-contextualize information. Despite their manipulation of information, secret agents are never perfectly informed. In Le Carré's two earliest espionage novels, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963) and *The Looking Glass War* (1965), Cold War spies recall the Second World War. Le Carré's novelistic landscapes are reminders of the recent end of that conflict and of its role in shaping new conflicts. Alec Leamas and his handler, George Smiley, find and collect information in a new and more secretive war but also question its necessity and efficacy against the threat of more violence. In the postwar politics of brinksmanship, peace is maintained at the expense of individual freedom.

The plots of both *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold* and *The Looking Glass War* feature multiple betrayals. In the first novel, Control, the head of MI6, concocts a scheme to dispatch Alec Leamas, an aging spy whose networks have been decimated, to East Germany to pose as a defector and kill Hans Dieter Mundt. A former Nazi and leader of the German spy network, called the Abteilung, Mundt has systematically unmsked and killed Leamas's agents. Control betrays Leamas into giving evidence that in fact incriminates another Abteilung member and Communist, Jens Fiedler, and allows Mundt, who is revealed to be a double agent, to continue working with the British. In *The*

Looking Glass War, another department head, Leclerc, plans a mission to send agents to investigate a possible rocket-building site in East Germany. With only scant evidence that the site exists, he nonetheless sends another wartime hero, Fred Leiser, into the field, even though he knows that the operation is likely to fail. In both novels, spies are sacrificed to the schemes of their controllers and to the necessities of bureaucratic effectiveness. Leamas and Leiser believe that their actions further the causes of justice and patriotism. In reality, their affiliations are exploited by superiors whose priorities lie in saving their departments, even if their methods include collaborating with ex-Nazis. In both novels intelligence agencies privilege expediency over ethical considerations in their pursuit of the appearance of stability.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Allies, having defeated the Nazis, turned their attention to rebuilding Europe. Within months of the victory, however, the Soviet Union supplanted Germany as the enemy of Western democracy. The fear of another war dominated foreign relations in Europe and around the world. That Le Carré chooses to begin *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold* in Berlin reflects the importance of that city in postwar disputes and settlements aimed at creating stability. After the Second World War, Berlin is claimed and reclaimed by various factions and nations—Russia, Britain, France, the United States. Written in response to the building of the Berlin wall in 1961, the novel suggests that British standing in international affairs depends on the ability of British agents and diplomats to exert influence in Berlin, not in London. In the postwar context, Britain as a member of NATO has responsibilities to its partners. Its presence in Berlin is required not for domination, as it was during the colonial period, but to participate in a new "politics of stability" (Judt 241). In the 1960s,

the strategic importance of the city also made it a centre of espionage activity:

> Thanks to the defeat of the blockade in 1948-49, the former capital of Germany remained something of an open city; East and West Berlin were linked by phone lines and transport networks criss-crossing the various zones of occupation…the city had become the primary listening post and spy center of the Cold War; some 70 different agencies were operating there by 1961. (Judt 249-250)

As a result of the building of the wall, Berlin became the physical and metaphorical border between Eastern and Western Europe. The center of global relations and the place where a third world war might begin, Berlin bears the mark of the ideological divide characteristic of the Cold War. The Berlin Wall separates the city according to political beliefs. As Allan Hepburn notes, in Le Carré's fiction the Berlin Wall acts as a barrier to the transmission of information from one side to the other and "contains information that the West cannot assimilate" (180). Berlin is a city neither at war nor at peace, but characterized by mistrust. Tony Judt finds that while "[o]fficially the West was horrified" at the building of the Wall…"[b]ehind the scenes, many Western leaders were secretly relieved at [its] appearance…For three years Berlin had threatened to be the flashpoint for an international confrontation" and the building of the wall established a temporary "settlement" of disputes (252-253).

Le Carré tailors the espionage narrative to the conditions of Britain's involvement in the aftermath of the war. Considered in the tradition of spy fiction, Le Carré's novels reject the generic preference for heroism; instead, they represent British espionage missions as failures. They move away from nineteenth-century British spy fiction, which

emerged from the colonial adventure story and focused its narratives on accidental but patriotic spies who saved the empire against a clearly defined enemy. The geographical movements and escapes of colonial spies are characterized by a sense of ownership. In novels such as Rudyard Kipling's *The Great Game*, spies travel the globe as its masters; they are certain of their power. Le Carré both acknowledges that his fiction works within the generic parameters of this lineage and departs from them. The epigraph to *The Looking Glass War*, for example, cites Kipling to warn the reader that "A fool lies here who tried to hustle the East." The quotation mocks British participation in the Cold War as a replication of the colonial past; the British never learned any lessons from imperialism. Like Olivia Manning, Le Carré makes reference to nineteenth-century imperial ambitions to emphasize the differences between the colonial approach to foreign relations and the postwar approach of the 1960s. While Manning critiques imperialism in her *Balkan Trilogy,* she also published an account of Henry Morton Stanley's rescue of the nineteenth-century explorer Emin Pasha. The invocation of nineteenth-century British imperialism at the beginning of *The Looking Glass War* asks the reader to consider the role of the spy in the context of twentieth-century international relations.

Le Carré's novels pointedly respond to Ian Fleming's representation of James Bond. The Bond narratives, beginning with *Casino Royale* in 1953, perpetuate a "heroic spy fantasy" (Cawelti and Rosenberg 52). They are ideologically close to earlier colonial adventure novels. *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold* and *The Looking Glass War* operate within a realist mode rather than the fantasy mode of Fleming's novels. Le Carré's novels register ambivalence about British political aims. Reflecting on the negative critical reception of *The Looking Glass War*, Le Carré writes that the book

"being much nearer to the reality and pain I had experienced, was dismissed by British critics as boring and unreal" ("Introduction" x). For an audience expecting spies to possess the derring-do of James Bond, Le Carré's spies, by contrast, seemed dull indeed. As Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott point out, "Bond…functioned first and foremost, although not exclusively, as a Cold War hero, an exemplary representative of the virtues of Western capitalism triumphing over the evils of Eastern communism" (25). At another point on the ideological spectrum, Le Carré's spies discover troubling similarities in the methods employed by East and West. Against Fleming's conception of Britain as morally superior to the East, Le Carré's narratives reveal the ideological emptiness at the core of Western and British ideologies. Lacking political ideals, the postwar British spy organizations are represented in Le Carré's fiction as bureaucracies that send out agents into the field without considering that they have individual power.

Fleming's and Le Carré's versions of spies imply different imaginings of postwar Britishness and British power in world affairs. In Fleming's novels, "Bond embodied the imaginary possibility that England might once again be placed at the centre of world affairs during a period when its world-power status was visibly and rapidly declining" (Bennett and Woollacott 36). Agencies and authorities deceive the spy for their own gain. Umberto Eco notes that Bond "does not meditate upon truth and justice, upon life and death, except in rare moments of boredom" and he avoids "the salutary recognition of universal ambiguity" (Eco 145). Le Carré's plots are structured to reveal the effects of this ambiguity. He represents spies as collaborating with American agencies while, nevertheless, being ill at ease with the ascendancy of American power. On the other hand, Bond "can be read as a hero of the NATO alliance. Acting in unison with either the

American CIA or the French Deuxième Bureau, Bond represents not just Britain—and again, especially England—but the West in general" (99). In Fleming's fiction it is Bond standing in for England, rather than one of his allies, who "engages in the decisive contest with the villain" (100). Le Carré's spy fiction responds to the wane of British power by representing spies as failing to engage with an enemy who deems Britain a worthwhile opponent.

Character

Working with a very different concept of the enemy, Ian Fleming imagines the enemy as absolutely other and evil. Umberto Eco notes that, in the Bond novels, evil animates the spy's motivation and creates his sense of identity:

> The Villain is born in an ethnic area that stretches from Central Europe to the Slav countries and to the Mediterranean basin: usually he is of mixed blood and his origins are complex and obscure…Bond knows he must prevent the plan of the Villain at the risk of his life, and in those cases the patriotic ideal (Great Britain and the Free World) takes the upper hand. (Eco 151, 153)

For Fleming, the enemy is the racial and ethnic other. By contrast, corruption in *The Looking Glass War* is caused by strife among intelligence departments, not by the outsider Fred Leiser. In *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold*, Le Carré's thwarts readerly expectations of who the enemy is: he leads the reader to believe that Mundt is the enemy, only to reveal, much later, that he is in fact a British agent. Mundt, a former Nazi, works for British Intelligence. In the Smiley trilogy, the enemy is none other than a British double agent. Both in his early novels and in the Smiley trilogy, Le Carré

proposes that evil is found within Britain.

Against Ian Fleming's conception of the spy as hero, Le Carré proposes a version of the disillusioned agent who is deceived by the agencies who run him. Revising the heroic espionage identities created by colonialism, Le Carré's spies have an ambivalent relationship to state power. *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold* begins with the admission of Alec Leamas's unheroic status. He "was not a reflective man and not a particularly philosophical one. He knew he was written off—it was a fact of life which he would henceforth live with as a man must live with cancer or imprisonment" (13). When he recognizes that he has been betrayed by Control, Leamas reveals to Liz the lack of heroism in the work of spying: "What do you think spies are: priests, saints and martyrs? They're a squalid profession of vain fools, traitors too, yes; pansies, sadists and drunkards, people who play cowboys and Indians to brighten their rotten lives" (213). In *The Looking Glass War*, Fred Leiser also goes to East Germany without understanding the role that his mission plays in Leclerc's plot. The seemingly heroic actions of spies are revealed to have an altogether different significance in the larger plan envisaged by their controllers and departments. While James Bond's lone adventures uphold his heroism and redeem his departures from the guidelines he is supposed to follow, Le Carré's spies are alone because they have been victimized by their agencies.

The spy's inauthenticity complicates interpretations of his motives, which can only be read through his actions. In his study of espionage fiction, Allan Hepburn connects the spy's shifting identities to his ability to act in different schemes:

> The spy embodies ambiguous allegiances, some declared, some concealed. The spy therefore stands as a cipher for conflict waged among national,

> international, familial, human, humanitarian, ethical, and romantic identities. A marionette in the theater of competing interests, the spy improvises roles by drawing on one or more of these identities at any given time. Acting a part, the twentieth-century fictional spy tells us that authenticity may be irrelevant to commitment or character. (xiv)

Leamas' and Leiser's motivations are unclear because they are multiple. The novels reveal the betrayal and deception of both characters and set them against their organizations, but the novels deny any access to the spy's interiority. The spy, like the diplomat, does not act out of his own accord. He performs according to plots elaborated for him. He has a function, not a character. Some, but not all, diplomats double as spies. Both trade in secrets, but diplomats have political legitimacy and power, while spies have dubious authority. Diplomats are public, recognizable figures who openly collect information that can influence foreign policy. Spies, on the other hand, work on secret missions and come across information surreptitiously.

Le Carré's narratives represent character negatively, by revealing where the spy withholds his allegiance. While journalists and diplomats articulate their relation to the state in written words, the professional spy is trained to leave no paper trail. Spies do not customarily write accounts of their work the way that diplomats send missives bearing their impressions of foreign countries. In *The Looking Glass War*, Avery is sent to Finland to cover up the specifics of Taylor's disappearance. Carrying Taylor's documents, he "was suddenly frightened of the letters: they were evidence. They could compromise him. He determined to burn them all" (87). Case files on individual missions establish a record for future consultation, but the spy does not necessarily submit reports

of everything he does in the course of a mission. Moreover, in *The Looking Glass War,* files can only be consulted by approved members of the Department according to strict protocol. While on a mission, the only documentation that the spy carries consists of his false identity papers, which allow him an invisible mobility from one state to another. Because the falseness of the spy's identities only multiplies his motivations, documents do not clarify but further obscure the reader's access to the spy's true loyalties.

Although Alec Leamas does not write reports, his ability to improvise plots from information allows him to mask his true identity. After his staged defection from England, Leamas's memory serves him in the initial debriefing with Peters in Holland. He recalls the details of his recruitment, of his service in Berlin, and of the operations in which he participated. All these details contribute to Control's plan to frame Mundt (or so Leamas believes). In order to retain the malleability of this information, Leamas does not write it down; rather, he re-circulates it for different uses. Although he is trained as a coder and decoder of intelligence, Leamas does not, like Le Carré's character George Smiley, read for pleasure or with academic intent. Instead, he looks to texts for factual information: "Leamas, who normally read nothing, read newspapers slowly and with concentration. He remembered details, like the names and addresses of people who were the subject of small news items" (94). During his debriefing with Peters, Leamas increases the credibility of his account by revealing the details—figures, dates, codes—of the operations in Banking Section and of his information exchanges with Riemeck, later "Mayfair," in a desolate park in Berlin. Leamas uses narrative precision in order to deceive Peters. The well-trained spy can remember seemingly trivial facts in order to call them up for future use. Spies do not owe allegiance to one interpretation of facts as do

diplomats. The spy can use information to construct multiple narratives, depending on his function in a particular mission.

Le Carré details the ways in which Alec Leamas's and Fred Leiser's identities as spies are constructed. They do not serve their country out of patriotism. In *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold*, Alec Leamas pretends to be down-and-out, attacks a grocer, and goes to jail as part of Control's elaborate scheme to trap Mundt. While giving information to Peters in Holland, Leamas remembers to act as a man too proud to suspect that he is being double-crossed. He reminds himself of Control's guidelines: "This was the point he would stick to through thick and thin; it made them feel they knew better, gave credence to the rest of his information. 'They will want to deduce in spite of you,' Control had said. 'We must give them the material and remain sceptical to their conclusions" (91). In a game where gestures, facts, and actions are re-arranged for different contexts and onlookers, performance rather than sincerity ensures the spy's survival and the mission's success.

In *The Looking Glass War*, Fred Leiser is similarly revealed to be working for a bureaucracy where he is nothing more than a created character. A Second World War veteran, Leclerc assumes that Leiser shares the loyalties of the Department because the two men fought alongside each other twenty years earlier. A photograph of Leiser as a younger man confirms Leclerc's belief in Leiser's viability for the mission:

> '[f]orty, something over. That's a good age. A Danzig Pole. They speak German, you know. Not as mad as the pure Slav. After the war he drifted for a couple of years, pulled himself together and bought a garage…I thought we'd call him Mayfly. Leiser, I mean. We'll call him Mayfly.' (38-39)

Leclerc's does not intend Leiser to survive his mission. Just as mayflies belong to the category ephemeroptera, known for their short life spans, Leiser's chances of survival are slim. As Mayfly, he cannot live long.

Leiser's character is created by Haldane, Johnson, and Avery, who themselves pose as a team of academics:

> Stage by stage, Avery and Haldane constructed in tireless detail the background of the man Hartbeck, establishing him in his work, his tastes and recreations, in his love life and choice of friends. Together, they entered the most obscure corners of the man's conjectured existence, gave him skills and attributes which Leiser himself barely possessed. (153)

Haldane convinces Leiser to take part in the operation by playing on his foreignness. He promises Leiser inclusion in the old wartime group while also emphasizing his status as an outsider. Although Leiser nearly fits as a Londoner, his misuse of English idioms betrays his Polishness. Leiser's language is "borrowed from the English…His accent was good but exclusively foreign, lacking the slur and the elision which escapes even gifted imitators; a voice familiar with its environment, but not at home there" (105, 109). The group of controllers who prepare him for his mission in Rostock both value and prey upon his differences: "There was a particularly absurd scene one breakfast. Leiser raised the lid of a jam pot, peered inside, and turning to Avery asked, 'Is this bee honey?' Johnson leaned across the table, knife in one hand, bread and butter in the other. 'We don't say that, Fred. We just call it honey…In England we just call it honey'" (150). The Department's use of Leiser for an operation that they know is likely to fail suggests that postwar British agencies retain a prewar idea about what constitutes true

Englishness. Le Carré's choice to represent the betrayal of a Pole also echoes the British postwar handover of Poland to the Soviet Union.

In *The Looking Glass War*, Leiser is trained to use encoded communication in the form of Morse code to hide his identity: "The spy…is invisible in the sense that his commission as a spy frees him from responsibility and gives him license to do things he could not ordinarily do without serious consequences" (Cawelti and Rosenberg 13). As soon as he crosses over to East Germany, Leiser transforms his communication into a mechanical language by re-coding English into a Morse code. The coded communications that Leiser produces from Germany and sends to Johnson are a mechanized signal mediated through Morse, which translates the English alphabet so that "every letter of the alphabet corresponds to a short series of dots and dashes" (Petzold 4). Through his communications, he also becomes voiceless: his transmissions come in through Morse rather than through his handwriting or voice. The epigraph to the novel, taken from Tait's *Complete Morse Instructor,* suggests how Leiser can resist this erasure of his individuality: "The carrying of a very heavy weight such as a large suitcase or trunk, immediately before sending practice, renders the muscles of the forearm, wrist, and fingers too insensitive to produce good Morse" (epigraph to *The Looking Glass War*). Even confined within a well-crafted identity, the body can betray a truth about the coder's physical state. The training that Leiser receives from Johnson forces his body to conform to the specifications of the coding machine, but it cannot get rid of Leiser's body. While the use of coding is a common attribute of the mechanics of spy fiction, in Leiser' case, the dissimulation of identity is multiplied, as Leiser is already "playing" at being English to mask his Polish nationality. Once in East Germany, his only available

language is produced through the outdated machine used by the bureaucratic Department. Because proficiency in Morse aims at erasing the personality of the writer, any one of the operatives in *The Looking Glass War* could send Morse; there is no individual style to the code sent by Avery, or Taylor, or Leiser. In this context, only error can reveal personality. As with the use of the Enigma machine, anomaly creates identity. On the Morse machine, crystals that alter the frequency of the message being sent must be changed to avoid interception by the enemy. By forgetting to change the Morse crystals, Leiser marks his communication as strictly his own. As a result, his message is intercepted by the East German intelligence and his true identity is revealed. By committing an error, Leiser puts his foreign body back into his message.

The question of the spy's motivation is again taken up once Leiser has gone over the East German frontier. Haldane asks the new young recruit, "Why did he go, Avery? Jane Austen said money or love, those were the only two things in the world…We never knew him. If he dies tonight, what will he be thinking?"(185). Le Carré's invocation of Austen suggests a surprising continuity between the eighteenth-century novel of manners and espionage fiction. Although they are set in small English villages, Austen's novels resemble Le Carré's representation of the spy network in several respects. Like Le Carré's spies, Jane Austen's heroines are confronted with social mores that threaten their individuality. Because Austen is concerned with the role of individual as readers in a community, her novels can offer a way to read Le Carré's puzzling spies. In her study of character in eighteenth-century novels, Deirdre Lynch notes that Austen's novels responded to a tradition of

> 'typographical culture': an interest in the material ground of meaning and

> a fascination with the puns that could link the person "in" a text to the printed letters (alphabetical symbols, or 'characters' in another sense) that elaborated the text's surface. In this context, most talk was not about individualities or inner lives. It was talk about the systems of semiotic and fiduciary exchange—the machinery of interconnectedness—that made a commercial society go. (6)

Austen's novels, Lynch argues, usher in a new genre of novel which resists thinking of characters as "reading matter" but looks instead for ways of representing their interiority. While English novels of manners "regularly send out heroines into marriage markets where they are misrecognized and objectified" (6), characters' interiority constitutes a resistance to the commodification of the marriage market. Similarly, in Le Carré's novels, the insistence on the spy's individuality and inner life offers a resistance to the workings of bureaucracies. While Haldane dismissively concludes that Leiser is "an agent. He's a man to be handled, not known" (117), the narrative offers a paradoxical alternative. By refusing to reveal Leiser's motives, these remain secret and therefore outside the totalizing mission of the agency. Le Carré and Austen both use the undisclosed interiority of their spies and heroines to save them from the humiliations of the spy agency and the marriage market.

Le Carré's representation of spies as both participating in espionage activity and resisting their function as agents recalls his opinion on the position of the writer. In "What Every Writer Wants," he draws an analogy between the writer and the spy: "Time and time again we witness in the lives of creative people a series of attempts at integration, each followed by rejection or escape…Writers are two-home men: they want

a place outside, and a place within…This is the ambivalence of the writer" (142-143). Spies like Leamas or Leiser register the writer's ambivalence: they belong to espionage networks while insisting on their individuality and interiority. They are both insiders to the bureaucracies that use them and outsiders who resist their claims that these organizations make on their subjectivity.

The gap between the spy's personal motives and his work for the service suggests that postwar political stability is concerned with ends rather than means. James Buzard has remarked that "the foregrounded question of motive remains unresolved, remains present in Le Carré's narrative as a daunting challenge to interpreters both inside and outside the text" (154). Buzard goes on to connect the question of motive in Le Carré's novels to his insistence on representing the workings of bureaucracies. Buzard points out that "the constant questions raised, but never fully answered, about Smiley's personal motives become questions about the condition of a postimperial England whose degraded marginality in the international alignment grows ever more apparent to its secret servants" (154-155). Smiley, Leamas, or Leiser could have any number of motives—revenge, for instance, or nostalgia for the war—for continuing the spy game. The roles that they are assigned in the field are not connected to their personal convictions. It is fitting, then, that the bureaucratic department for which they work denies the importance of the individual worker and his convictions. In *The Looking Glass War*, the unnamed division is simply known as "The Department," and its envoys, corresponding to three sections of the novel (Taylor, Avery, Leiser), are more or less interchangeable.

Unable to compass the agencies who run them, spies in Le Carré's novels defy legibility. As the secret envoys of state power, Alec Leamas and Fred Leiser undertake

their missions but do not return to England. Leamas dies at the Berlin Wall while trying to save Liz; Leiser is found by East German officials after failing to encode his Morse transmissions correctly. In both cases, human error allows for a negative resistance to the totalizing power of the agency.

Spy Networks

Secrecy, as a refined Cold War weapon, animates the spy networks in both *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold* and *The Looking Glass War*. Networks are connected through means of sending coded messages, which keep spies' identities undisclosed. Whereas journalists craft their reputations through their authorship in the public sphere and diplomats inscribe their perspective into the reports they send to their embassy, the spy's works remain hidden from the public gaze. Le Carré shifts novelistic attention to the ways in which spies skirt democratic processes and opt for creating international relationships through secret means.

Undertaken and accomplished away from the public sphere, the spy's work eludes public scrutiny. Although the work of the spy is as central to the conduct of foreign relations as that of the diplomat, in the second half of the twentieth-century this role acquires renewed significance: "While the impact of historical espionage is highly controversial, clandestinity has always been an important part of war, politics, and commerce" (11). Spies perform a function in international relations within a network of secret subjects whose work is unreported to the public, rendering spying problematic in the conduct of presumably open, democratic societies. In the postwar period, when fears of Soviet nuclear attack loomed large, the spy is invested with more power, and public

consultation is sacrificed for the preservation of a fragile peace.

Although British spy networks represented in Le Carré's fiction pride themselves on being defensive rather than aggressive, the novels suggests that British espionage tactics in fact closely resemble those of the enemy. The British network in *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold* is not only confined to using British agents. In espionage networks efficiency and common goals supersede national distinctions. Although Hans Dieter Mundt's background marks him an enemy of British interests, he is recruited by the Circus:

> Until 1959, Mundt had been a minor functionary of the Abteilung, operating in London under the cover of the East German Steel Mission…At the end of that year came the big struggle for power...The number and influence of Soviet liaison officers were drastically reduced, several of the old guard were dismissed on ideological grounds…and Mundt himself got the plum—deputy director of operations—at the age of forty-one. Then the new style began. (14)

Intelligence does not depend on national allegiance. Rather, intelligence networks are international insofar as they are animated by secret, unreported alliances that operate outside the reach of the law.

The network of agents in *The Looking Glass War* is held together, in ethos and aims, by the memory of the Second World War. In operation Mayfly, Pine, Leclerc, Johnson, and Leiser re-use the methods they learned to fight the Nazis fifteen years earlier: "Avery was suddenly aware of three pictures around the room, of the boys who had fought in the war. They hung in two rows of six, either side of the model of a

Wellington bomber, rather a dusty one, painted black with no insignia" (32). In the same vein, Leamas is haunted by his memories of refugees in Holland, which he associates with an image of "a car smashed between great lorries, and…children waving cheerfully through the window" (222). For the younger agents like John Avery, the war is evoked by the memories and documents, but it animates loyalty nonetheless: "He showed Pine his pass. Perhaps both were reminded of the war: for Avery a vicarious pleasure, while Pine could look back on experience" (60). The department, whose style is "antique and understated" (31), is connected not only in its rivalry with the American CIA, but also with the Circus. Spy networks constituted during the Second World War do not adapt easily to postwar cooperation.

In *The Looking Glass War* and *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold*, secrecy is an exclusionary practice. Women—Liz Gold, Sarah Avery, and Betty Leiser—are not privy to the secrets that connect spies to each other. After Taylor's death, the Department arranges his wife and child to receive compensation, but they are never offered an explanation for Taylor's disappearance. While secrecy excludes women, it cements the bonds between agents. In *The Looking Glass War*, the Alias Club provides a space where Avery and the other members of the Department can be secretive while also being known by their peers. Secrecy re-draws the parameters of communities and establishes protocols for belonging.

Although women contributed in unprecedented numbers in the Second World War effort in Britain and in Europe, in *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold* and *The Looking Glass War*, they are excluded from intelligence work. In *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold,* Liz is a member of the Communist party, but she does not consider the

consequences of her beliefs in the context of Cold War stability. Her ignorance of the workings of power is contrasted with Leamas's knowledge and cynicism. Although Liz seems to know less than Leamas does about the workings of power, ultimately both are fooled by Control's plan to protect Mundt. Liz's devotion to Leamas is mocked when her testimony endangers his mission: "If Leamas had only told her what he had to do—even now it wasn't clear to her—she would have lied and cheated for him, anything, if he had only told her! …but how could she have known, if she was not told, how to answer those veiled, insidious questions?" (204). In *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold*, women have partial knowledge of events and facts. Even the comical Miss Crail, who directs the library where Leamas works, presides over an incomplete collection of books, with volumes missing from series and an inefficient classification system.

In *The Looking Glass War* women are ignorant of their husbands' work. John Avery regrets telling his wife Sarah any details about his mission. When the police call her, she tells them about his work, not understanding that spy networks operate above the law. The world of spying in *The Looking Glass War* is inhabited by men only; women are represented as though they existed in a world devoid of secrecy. In the British postwar landscapes of these two novels, women are once more relegated to the home front. Even though they may be a modern couple, Sarah Avery is cast in the role of housewife and caretaker. John and Sarah "had met at Oxford; she had taken a better degree than Avery. But somehow marriage had made her childish" (28). Avery looks to the espionage network as an escape from domestic entrapment: for Avery the dilapidated department is "not the place where he worked, but where he lived" (29). In *The Looking Glass War*, a female character, Carol, keeps the Department files, and controls the list of members who

access their contents. Although women can be keepers of information, their work takes place in confined spaces in England. Modern bureaucracies, at least in Le Carré's novels provide employment for women, but deny them agency. Given the choice of staying safely in England, or going back into active service, Leamas chooses "operational life" of the spy over retirement, dreading one of the "desk jobs in that anonymous government building in Cambridge Circus which Leamas could have taken and kept till he was God knows how old" (13). Unlike men, women have no control over the wider global policies that information creates. They cannot trade their desk jobs for work in the field.

In Le Carré's fiction, spy networks are animated by exclusionary practices. In the postwar context, veterans too feel their purpose has been lost. Secret military missions such as operation Mayfly revive their sense of identity and purpose, if only temporarily. D.A. Miller's work on secrecy in Dickens' novels can offer us a way to explain the dynamics of secrecy in the spy network. Miller points out that secrecy provides the subject with a belief in the exceptionality of its members:

> In a world where the explicit exposure of the subject would manifest how thoroughly he has been inscribed within a socially given totality, secrecy would be the spiritual exercise by which the subject is allowed to conceive of himself as a resistance: a friction in the smooth functioning of the social order, a margin to which its far-reaching discourse does not reach. Secrecy would thus be the subjective practice in which the oppositions of private/public, inside/outside, subject/object are established, and the sanctity of the first term kept inviolate. (207)

In *The Looking Glass War*, the spy network provides cover for men's antiquated notions

of what constitutes valuable espionage work. Unlike nineteenth-century secrecy, the Cold War secrecy of the spy network allows spies to resist modernity and change. In turn, characters like Leamas and Leiser are victimized by the bureaucratic methods of the organizations, and their secrecy about their true motives constitutes another form of resistance against the network.

Information and Intelligence

Capturing, verifying, and classifying information are activities central to espionage work. Leclerc, who launches the fatal Mayfly operation, is confident that his intelligence system is beyond reproach: "nothing can touch our Research Section, for example. Nothing." (35). Despite a "Research index" that one character describes as "unique," Woodford finds that the files are in a state of disarray (44). "'John, Registry's all to the devil; we both know that Papers aren't being entered, files aren't brought up on the right dates…We've been missing a policy file on marine freight since mid-October. Just vanished into thin air'" (44). In *The Looking Glass War*, despite the appearance of cooperation, different sections withhold information about their operations from one another. The Department keeps its misinformation on the rocket-building site in Rostock secret from the Circus and from the Foreign Office in order to ensure that the operation will proceed. Leclerc uses a poor-quality photograph as evidence of a Soviet rocket-building site in Rostock. As James Buzard notes, "The photographic image emerges from a history but cannot supply that history; instead its present users appropriate it and overlay it with a new meaning arising from their own 'desolate mentalities,' from their own needs and exigencies" (161). In *The Looking Glass War*, misinformation comes

from within. It is not planted by moles or enemy agents, but results from British agents' own nostalgia for military operations reminiscent of wartime.

Le Carré's novels involve the reader in the process of collecting and considering information and misinformation. While detective and spy fiction entice the reader's desire to know, *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold* and *The Looking Glass War* frustrate this desire. The narrative structure of *The Looking Glass War* prepares the reader for Leiser's run by detailing the preparations for his mission. Where spy fiction would generally use these "narrative preparations" to configure readerly expectations, Le Carré's novel reveals instead the uncertainty on which operation Mayfly rests. Le Carré has commented on his choice of narrative structure: "It's a principle of mine to come into the story as late as possible, and to tell it as fast as you can. The later you join the story, the more quickly you draw the audience into the middle. But beginning late requires a lot of retrospective stuff" (*Paris Review*). The place in which a narrative begins creates speed and deceleration: the narrator moves the plot along quickly while filling in background, which becomes incidental. Lateness creates hurry in the pace of Le Carré's novels. This narrative structure privileges the creation of character over the detailing of spy activity. In Le Carré's early novels, plot itself seems to be deferred. Unlike Ian Fleming's novels, which describe Bond's antics and heroic escapades, Le Carré's plots set up the stakes of an operation only to shatter hopes of success. Umberto Eco reads Fleming's plots as productive of readerly laziness, a state that Le Carré's narratives defy:

> In every detective story and in every hard-boiled novel, there is basically no variation, but rather the repetition of a habitual scheme in which the reader can recognize something he has already seen and of which he has

> grown fond. Under the guise of a machine that produces information, the criminal novel produces redundancy; pretending to rouse the reader, it in fact reconfirms him in a sort of imaginative laziness and creates escape by narrating, not the Unknown, but the Already Known. (Eco 161)

In *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold* and *The Looking Glass War,* Le Carré provides the reader with retrospective material rather than the dénouement of a case. Giving readers the "file" on an operation prepares them to interpret the significance of the details that ensue and involves them in the work of decoding. Le Carré's emphasis on beginning late in the story suggests that the reader is catching up with a situation that has already begun. As such, the narrative sets itself up temporally in relation to the past rather than the future.

Le Carré's narratives reveal the extent to which his characters are the victims of misinformation. The plot of *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold* produces knowledge insofar as it reveals the intricacies of Leamas's deception: "suddenly, with the terrible clarity of a man too long deceived…[he] understood the whole ghastly trick" (200). As an agent in a larger network and a larger plot, Leamas accepts that his contribution to intelligence-gathering does not allow him to see the whole picture. He convinces Liz that "it's part of our work only to know pieces of the whole set-up. You know that. If you're curious, God help you" (90). The trial in *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold* thwarts readerly expectations, since it reveals the extent to which the plot has deceived Leamas and the reader. Although Le Carré locates the similarity between the novelist and the spy in their search for a part to play, that similarity resides in the work of the novelist and the spymaster in producing narratives. Control creates two narratives in order to send Leamas

on his mission, but does inform Leamas that he is an actor in a plot to save Mundt. In *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold* and *The Looking Glass War* the spy is an actor in narratives that his superiors have imagined. Leamas realizes that the hierarchy of the spy network grants access to the whole plot only to the person at the top: "Ashe, Kiever, Peters; that was a progression in quality, in authority, which to Leamas was axiomatic of the hierarchy of an intelligence network. Ashe, the mercenary, Kiever the fellow traveller, and now Peters for whom the end and the means were identical" (75). In the structure of the Circus, the mercenary agent gives up knowledge of the whole story which Control has written.

Le Carré's early novels feature spies as figures of postwar uncertainty. Despite their insistence on the spy's lack of knowledge, Le Carré's novels remain clarifying, linear structures: they point out deceptions and ask readers to adjust their own methods of decoding. Savvy readers of spy fiction become "double agents" themselves, as Allan Hepburn has suggested; they can envisage several narratives simultaneously. Narrative doubleness in Le Carré ultimately reveals an underlying coherent structure that can be accessed with sharpened readerly acumen.

Postwar Europe and the Trial

The Looking Glass War and *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold* both begin with scenes set in airports, where characters recall their service in the war. "The airport reminded Leamas of the war: machines, half hidden in the fog, waiting patiently for their masters" (66). Airfields imply the movement of bodies and of cargo. A modern means of transportation, the airplane also supplies the spy and his information with a new mobility.

While on a plane returning from Germany to England, Leamas looks down on the "grey-green fields of Kent" (15). Height does not provide him with omniscience; rather, it reminds him of the reason for his work. In Control's office, he remembers a scene from the war in Holland where the airplane is a weapon:

> Leamas saw. He saw the long road outside Rotterdam, the long straight road beside the dunes, and the stream of refugees moving along it; saw the little aeroplane miles away, the procession stop and look towards it; and the plane coming in, neatly over the dunes; saw the chaos, the meaningless hell, as the bombs hit the road. (19)

The destructiveness of warfare provides Leamas with some justification for spying and for wanting to kill Mundt. Even after he learns of Control's betrayal, Leamas convinces Liz that while the Cold War is "'graphic and unpleasant because it's fought on a tiny scale, at close range; fought with a wastage of innocent life, sometimes... it's nothing, nothing at all beside other wars—the last or the next'" (214). Le Carré's Cold War spies understand their actions in the context of the last European war, even as they anticipate another global conflict.

The spy network represented in *The Looking Glass War* is a relic of World War Two. The location of the "Department" is associated with the prewar period and with decay:

> The Department was housed in a crabbed, sooty villa of a place with a fire extinguisher on the balcony. It was like a house eternally for sale… for those who worked in it, its mystery was like the mystery of motherhood, its survival like the mystery of England. It shrouded and contained them,

> cradled them, and with sweet anachronism, gave them the illusion of nourishment. (29)

In this unnamed department, the old warriors, Leclerc, Haldane, and Johnson, mount operation Mayfly with little evidence and resources. In competition with the American CIA and the Circus, another department within British Intelligence, Leclerc explains to John Avery that operation Mayfly, "is within our competence. A military target. I would be shirking our responsibility if I gave it to the Circus. Their charter is political, exclusively political" (32). As a veteran of the Second World War, Leclerc seeks a military intervention as a way of continuing an antiquated style. Leclerc's reliance on dubious photographic evidence does not clearly establish the existence of enemy military installations in Rostock.

In both *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold* and *The Looking Glass War*, Le Carré suggests that British intelligence is unclear about who constitutes the enemy. In "To Russia, with Greetings" he reflects that, "In *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, I have equated, in hypothetical terms, the conduct of the East and West in the espionage war. I have suggested that they use the same weapons—deceit—and even the same spies…[t]he functionaries in opposing intelligence services feel closer to one another than to their own controllers" (5). In *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold*, Control insists on delineating for Leamas the differences between the Soviet and British styles of espionage, and on convincing him of the superiority of British aims and methods:

> 'The ethic of our work, as I understand it, is based on a single assumption. That is, we are never going to be the aggressors…Thus we do disagreeable things, but we are defensive. That, I think, is still fair. We do disagreeable

> things so that ordinary people here and elsewhere can sleep safely in their beds at night. Is that too romantic? Of course, we occasionally do very wicked things'; he grinned like a schoolboy. 'And in weighing up the moralities, we rather go in for dishonest comparisons; after all, you can't compare the ideals of one side with the methods of the other, can you, now?' (19)

Control defends the often brutal and violent work of espionage by establishing continuity with British foreign policy of the Second World War. For the spies of Control's generation, Britain is still the defender of liberal values against Nazis and the Soviet Union. Despite the moral certainties of the West, NATO's methods resemble those of the Soviet spy agencies. In fact, Le Carré's novels narrow the distance between East and West. The repercussions of the Second World War result in a changing British national identity: while Britain believes in its defensive role, it must collaborate within the procedures and restrictions set by international alliances. While Le Carré's novels refuse to glorify the methods of espionage agencies, he nonetheless suggests that the long tradition of British liberalism, however flawed, can be of use in postwar configurations of international power.

While in the postwar period trials, such as those at Nuremberg in 1945, attempt the task of restoring a sense of justice and to delineate clearly between perpetrator and victim, the trial in Le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold* upsets the directionality of information and power, so that even Leamas becomes unsure of its outcome. Leamas, Mundt, and Fiedler all in turn occupy the position of victim and of perpetrator. During the trial, Le Carré specifically emphasizes the rapprochement

between East Germany and Britain. Not knowing which facts could condemn or save Leamas, Liz testifies. The information that Liz gives could benefit the English or the East Germans; neither Liz nor the reader knows how the information will be construed, nor who is interpreting it. As Liz answers questions, she does not know which of her statements will save Leamas and which might condemn him, because she is not told what the charges are. In the end, however, her answers help to condemn Fiedler, which after all, was the point of the mission set up by the Circus.

The trial scene contrasts the methods of the spies with those of the public. While public trials like at Nuremberg created the sense of an international community through the common enemy of the Nazis, the administrative trial in the novel strengthens the ties of the spy network that operates covertly. Whereas the Nuremberg trials convinced the public that the Nazis would have to answer for their wartime actions and crimes against humanity, in *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold* the outcome of the trial is unconnected to the guilt of the accused. Control's plan ignores public conceptions of security; spies operate as though they existed in their own private sphere. British political identity is revealed to be interested in ends and not in a transparent process. That Le Carré chooses to stage a trial in a postwar novel is a remark on the discrepancy between the spirit of postwar cooperation and the methods of espionage. The trial, which clears Mundt of suspicion, jeopardizes the British claim to liberal leadership in the West. Whereas the public trials at Nuremberg, presided over by the British and the Americans, convey a public image of chastisement, spies, who work covertly, have other aims that do not necessarily conform to the public image of justice and the political good. Allan Hepburn notes that "spies do not work only within the parameters of liberal democracy.

Nor does espionage function according to reasonableness founded in public debate. Spies work alone and outside the law. Spying therefore appears to position the putative good of the public ahead of justice" (8). Leamas explains the peculiar justice that the trial achieved: "'Fiedler lost and Mundt won. London won—that's the point. It was a foul, foul operation. But it's paid off, and that's the only rule…Mundt is their man; he gives them what they need'" (212-213).

As Ravit Reichman and Lyndsey Stonebridge argue, the postwar period saw an unprecedented rise in the pressure placed on trials to deal with evil. There international trials attempted to re-establish a sense of order after the Second World War. Le Carré's representation of the trial in *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold* emphasizes the limitations of juridical procedure in creating justice, however. In the postwar period, "literary representations respond to the understanding of the trial itself as an instrument of punishment, not justice, in which ideological stances and perceived treacheries are judged. In such instances, innocence or guilt is beside the point" (Hepburn, "Trials and Errors" 133).

Although Le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from The Cold* and *The Looking Glass War* are not historical novels, they nonetheless engage with the task of looking back on the changes that resulted from the Second World War. By taking the very work of the spy as a subject for detection, Le Carré's fiction considers the spy's motives. Through the figure of the spy, the narratives register continuities and discontinuities between postwar political motivations and the Second World War. While Britain purports to be participating in global effort to maintain peace, "all of the West's espionage activities appear in Le Carré's novels as specific responses to suspected Eastern bloc initiatives, as

makeshift schemes hatched purely in order to safeguard Western interests" (Buzard 173). Despite working within a network of global alliances in the aftermath of the Second World War to maintain stability, British intelligence agencies place their own interests ahead of international considerations.

Emerging from an acceptance of a world settlement that was reached in the postwar period, Le Carré traces the peculiar relationship between spies and state power. Conducted in secrecy away from forums for public debate, the work of the spy can undermine the democratic process, and its ends can be unknown even to an agent. According to Le Carré, intelligence is a crucial component of the work of international relations. He draws a distinction between intelligence and provocation:

> It's necessary to understand what real intelligence work is. It will never cease. It's absolutely essential that we have it. At its best, it is simply the left arm of healthy governmental curiosity. It brings to a strong government what it needs to know. It's the collection of information, a journalistic job, if you will, but done in secret. All the rest of it—intervention, destabilization, assassination, all that junk—is in my view not only anti-constitutional but unproductive and silly. You can never foresee the consequences. But it's a good job as long as intelligence services collect sensible information and report it to their governments, and as long as that intelligence is properly used, thought about and evaluated. (*Paris Review Interview)*

Unlike soldiers, diplomats, and journalists, spies work quietly in undeclared, undisclosed wars. Whereas Rebecca West's radical prewar politics animate her belief that journalism

can “emphasize consensus and reasonableness as necessary elements in the definition of democracy” (Hepburn 7), Le Carré’s focus on secret channels of power suggests that espionage can be an anti-democratic and reactionary component of power.

Conclusion: Foreign Relations and British National Identity

By focusing on postwar and mid-century novels, this project participates in a re-valuation of modernism that has been undertaken by scholars working in literary and cultural studies. While recent studies of the postwar period have looked at cultural production closely, this dissertation is the first to consider the significance of foreign relations and diplomacy.

The postwar novels that I consider in this project adapt the novelistic genre to the political conditions of the aftermath of the Second World War. These novels document changes in British influence on international events. Critics have located the emergence of the novel during the period that also saw the rise of nationalism:

> The rise of the modern nation-state in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is inseparable from the forms and subjects of imaginative literature… literature participated in the formation of nations through the creation of 'national print media'—the newspaper and the novel…it was especially the novel as a composite but clearly bordered work of art that was crucial in defining the nation as an 'imagined community'. (Brennan 48)

International cooperation, however, contributed to a mistrust of nationalism, and the novel reflects this change. The plot of *Mountolive* is driven by Egyptian characters who have a vision of the future; the novel traces the failures of British diplomacy in the region. Although *Saga of the Century* is set in Edwardian London, West refuses to represent that period nostalgically. The Aubrey family is subjected to a myriad of

disasters. In a sense, their story remains unfinished. In Manning's *Balkan Trilogy*, British characters are homeless victims of war; British citizenship confers no protection from violence. These characters do not dominate geography; rather, they escape from the Nazis to Greece and to Egypt. In John Le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* and *The Looking Glass War*, spies who believe in heroism are shown to be merely controlled by intelligence agencies. West, Manning, Durrell, and Le Carré set their postwar novels in liminal locations that de-stabilize clear national boundaries and offer non-centric perspectives on British national identity.

The mid-century novel articulates the changing relationship between Britain and international politics. As the process of decolonization reduced the British Empire—through the independence of India, Kenya, Malta, Sudan, Jamaica, and other countries—organizations such as the British Council maintained an active advocacy of British culture abroad. The novels of West, Durrell, Manning, and Le Carré imagine British national identity as increasingly collaborative in response to the greater participation of Britain in international organizations. Their fiction is preoccupied with questions of responsibility toward the international community and especially toward refugees.

Despite this humanitarian focus, postwar novels are concerned with questions of detachment, including narrative detachment. All the novels considered in this project insist on private experiences of the Second World War while also featuring a diplomatic or journalistic detachment in the narration or sequencing. Furthermore, just as modernism was primarily an urban and metropolitan movement, these postwar novels are set in cities outside Britain—Bucharest, Alexandria, Berlin—in configurations that overturn colonial ideas of center and periphery. Postwar novels attempt to produce narratives that account

for the catastrophe of the Second World War, with attention to the truly global reach of that catastrophe and its impact on individuals. These novels consider history alongside the details of daily life, but reject the modernist preoccupation with totalizing narratives; in a manner of speaking, the serial arrangement of novels emphasizes what is left unfinished or inconclusive in the aftermath of war.

Novelists responded to the aftermath of the Second World War from locations outside Britain. They developed a new aesthetic in the serial novel as a response to changing political and social conditions. Rebecca West, Lawrence Durrell, Olivia Manning, and John Le Carré consider points of contact between the novel and diplomatic practice, whether official or covert. These novelists demonstrate that while journalists interpret information for the public and diplomats send knowledge about foreign locations to their home governments, spies use information for secret purposes hidden from public access. Thus, the postwar novel is re-configured as a diplomatic bag that contains various types of information and documents that can be opened and read at different times. In this sense, the novel invites readers to think about state secrecy and intervention in international affairs.

Theories of diplomacy and foreign relations provide a useful lens through which to read postwar fiction because "[a]ll diplomatic systems are in flux. Indeed, as they register shifts in power, interest and policy, their task is to understand and respond to flux" (Black 216). Foreign relations have protocols that determine cross-cultural relations; novels register the points of contact and friction between cultures that are mediated by diplomacy. Whereas the nineteenth-century image of the diplomat was characterized as elegant and aloof, in the postwar period, British novels about envoys

represent them as plain-spoken, middle-class characters whose simple language attempts to bridge nations rather than to trick opponents through obfuscatory language. Diplomacy privileges knowledge of history in order to serve the needs of the present. Postwar novels, representing information and documents as vestiges of the past, become archives that accumulate details of centuries of imperial exploitation.

Journalistic work influences the novel. Rebecca West's postwar reportage represents unexplainable evil by focusing on issues of state violence. She reports on the Nuremberg trials and treason. She is interested in the ways in which violence is sanctioned by the state. Her postwar tetralogy, preoccupied with emerging international law and the arbitration of crimes against humanity, was influenced by her reportage on postwar trials. Fictional narrative allows her to consider more closely the impact of an unnamed evil on individual characters. While the Nuremberg trials offered a public conclusion to the question of Nazi guilt, or at least a surcease in the question of blame and guilt, West's *Saga of the Century* remained unfinished, as if such questions never could have a satisfactory conclusion. The novels articulate West's sense that the trials had not dealt with the larger question of evil.

Olivia Manning's *Balkan Trilogy* is structured according to events that propel arrivals and departures, whether of citizens or refugees. Its novelistic form responds to displacements and statelessness caused by war. In a certain sense, the novel arbitrates responsibility for such displacements. In her journalism about the sinking of the *Struma*, Manning is preoccupied with the suffering of those on board the ship. She tries to hold herself, in fiction and in journalistic reportage, to a standard of objectivity that allows degrees of compassion. Like West, Manning makes information public through

journalism. Her novels focus on the structures through which information, misinformation, and gossip circulate. The *Balkan Trilogy* uses the point of view of a detached witness in Romania to register the effects of displacement.

Looking back on the political situation in Egypt in the 1930s, Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* examines failures in British diplomacy through the figure of a minor diplomat. The novel, in dialogue with E.M. Forster's and Constantine Cavafy's accounts of Alexandria, mocks orientalist tropes in order to critique British foreign policy. Responding to the use of the Foreign Office minuted sheet, each volume of the *Alexandria Quartet* revises previous tomes and the narrative remains inconclusive. John Le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* and *The Looking Glass War* trace the emergence of Cold War espionage. In his novels, the Cold War grows out of the Second World War. His narratives, by dwelling on the preparations for spies' missions, slow down the plot. Rather than creating spies as heroes, his protagonists are misinformed by their controllers. Le Carré represents the rivalry among antiquated departments in the Secret Service. Postwar serial novels dwell on history and ruins, but they are interested in gauging the relative value of these things for the present and the future. While the practice of foreign relations relies on easily accessible files that establish precedents and protocols, espionage operates in secrecy, away from public scrutiny.

Postwar novels look back on the Second World War to assess its upheavals and aftermath. Novelists remain interested in the enduring consequences and effects of the war within larger historical frameworks. For instance, West's *Saga of the Century* invokes the Icelandic Sagas, which tell of the exploits of heroes and families. At the same time, West's saga returns to the Edwardian period to trace the motivations for the

two world wars. Mikhail Bakhtin argues that, while the epic describes events that are closed and completed, the novel can re-evaluate events. The *Balkan Trilogy*, for instance, contains references to both *Troilus and Cressida* and *The Illiad*—a drama and an epic respectively. Manning's novel considers the present in light of the past and its cultural productions. The *Balkan Trilogy* expresses unease about whether culture offers any antidote to war or whether culture is merely ancillary to history. It may be that culture, as in the staging of *Troilus and Cressida* in Romania, accomplishes nothing.

In the 1950s, Angry Young Men novels documented working-class life in London in the early years of the British Welfare State. Meanwhile, Le Carré like Rebecca West, Lawrence Durrell, and Olivia Manning, shifts novelistic attention toward the role of Britain in international affairs. Whereas West's fiction refuses nostalgia for the Edwardian period and worries about the effectiveness of international tribunals in closing the violence brought about by the war, Lawrence Durrell expose the politics of decolonization in Egypt and Cyprus. Olivia Manning, through the use of characters who are refugees, re-draws a map of Europe as a place to escape from and investigates British complicity in global imperialisms. Le Carré, using the figure of the spy, sets up narratives in which knowledge is missing, and closure is characterized by the spy's failure, his inability to return to England, and his death. All four writers concentrate on the details of everyday management of organizations which participate in creating wartime and postwar climates of stability.

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