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"No-Men in This No-Man's Land": British State, Nation and Political Enemy in John le Carré's 1960s and 1970s Cold-War Novels

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British State, Nation and Political Enemy in John

le Carré's 1960s and 1970s Cold-War Novels

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Abstract

This thesis examines John le Carré's 1960s and 1970s Cold-War novels in their historical context, and devotes a chapter each to: *Call for the Dead* (1961), *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963), *The Looking Glass War* (1965), *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1974), *The Honourable Schoolboy* (1977) and *Smiley's People* (1979). The thesis argues, *contra* the critical and popular consensus, that far from being 'neutral' representations of Cold War politics, these novels give expression to a powerful liberal-national ideology.

The thesis breaks down into three themes. First, le Carré's representation of the British state is scrutinised via the intelligence services. Although le Carré's novels have been interpreted as anti-establishment, close historicist analysis discloses a contradictory affirmation of the British establishment. The state is decried and disavowed by the novels' protagonists for its bureaucracy, inefficiency and expedient morality, but this is a distraction from these protagonists' actions' defence and reassertion of the state.

Second, le Carré's representation of the British nation is examined wherein the discursive field of 'nation' provides insight into who and what was being fought for in the Cold War. These projections of British nationality, of a neutral 'way of life', also expose anxieties about British post-war social reconstruction, British Empire and British decline. The books constitute a reassertion of a conservative British nationalism, probing but ultimately reaffirming traditional class hierarchies and British 'decency' both at home and abroad.

Thirdly, le Carré's representation of Communism, the West's political enemy, is analysed, offering insight into the tactical and ideological British anti-Communist effort during the Cold War. Communism is presented as an existential threat to the British society but without any clear ideological motive being revealed. In these novels a trenchant anti-Communism disproves critical claims that le Carré's work proposes moral equivalence between East and West.

Contents

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all my 'secret sharers': my PhD supervisors, David Johnson and Suman Gupta, most of all, for steady but stimulating steering throughout.

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Thanks to the Open University for funding this work.

Thanks, not least, to John le Carré for decades of pleasure: a pleasure expanded rather than diminished by researching this thesis.

Love and gratitude, as ever, to Mary, Paddy and Gus.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my late parents: to my mother, Noreen Bamber, who gave me a love of fiction and the literal gift of le Carré's books (Christmas, 1979), and to my father, Brian Manning, who gave me a belief in history and the lateral gift – or curse – of questioning almost everything. Given my parents' own Cold War – almost precisely congruent with these novels (1962-1979) – this thesis probably represents the closest they ever came to détente.

Declaration

This thesis is entirely my own work and no part of it has previously been submitted for any other degree or to any other university.

Introduction

1. Le Carré's Cold War

Beyond news media, spy fiction was, for many in the West, the primary experience of a Cold War that, unlike previous wars, did not involve citizens directly. John le Carré's hugely successful 1960s and 1970s novels provided a portal into the politics and culture of the Cold War, whilst also shaping perceptions of that politics and culture. Le Carré called spies "the poor bloody infantry of the Cold War",[1] and "the infantry of our ideology".[2] Contrary to the critical consensus that le Carré's novels' depict a moral equivalence between the Cold Warring sides,[3] the books' ideology is actually a trenchant condemnation of Eastern-bloc Communism. Despite critical and popular claims that le Carré's novels are anti-establishment,[4] his Cold-War books are ultimately an assertion of the British social and political status quo against that perceived Communist threat.

These books reflect, represent and shape Cold-War history – the Eastern front – but also the cultural and political concerns of the home front in a changing post-war Britain. So *Call for the Dead* (1961) invokes early 1960s British spy scandals of Communist infiltration, alongside British post-war reorganisation.[5] *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963) responds to the Berlin Wall, the Cuban Missile Crisis and British social 'classlessness'. *The Looking Glass War* (1965) reflects the U2 spy-plane incident, the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Swinging Sixties and British economic decline. *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1974) is a meditation upon the Cambridge Spies and British political decline. *The Honourable Schoolboy* (1977) taps the Vietnam War, British decolonisation and the

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[1] John le Carré, 'Letter to his Publisher', in review copies of *The Looking Glass War* (1965), p. 7. After the first citation all future references will be to the same edition and included in parentheses in the text.
[2] Melvyn Bragg, 'The Things a Spy Can Do', *Listener*, 22 January 1976, p. 90.
[3] E.g. "The agents for liberal humanism and Communism are interchangeable". Alan Bold, 'Introduction', *The Quest for le Carré,* edited by Alan Bold (London: Vision, 1988), p. 17.
[4] That nexus of ruling class institutions and personnel that Hugh Thomas called the "institutional museum of Britain's past greatness", Hugh Thomas (ed.), *The Establishment* [1959] (London: Ace, 1962), p. 13.
[5] Nuclear spies Nunn-May (1946), Fuchs (1947) and Pontecorvo (1950); defection of Maclean and Burgess (1951); trial of George Blake (1961); Lonsdale and Portland Spies (1961).

Special Relationship with America. Finally, *Smiley's People* (1979)[6] explores détente, the resurgent Second Cold War and burgeoning Thatcherism.

Spy fiction filled a Cold War information void. MI5 and MI6 were not officially acknowledged until 1989 and 1994 respectively, while in the 1960s the government attempted to suppress news of one Cambridge spy, Kim Philby's defection, and successfully covered up the role of another, Antony Blunt. Information only leaked out via a sequence of spy scandals contemporaneous with le Carré's work. That le Carré, as David Cornwell, was rumoured to have been a British spy[7] only added to the sense that he offered insight into the secret world and its elusive, abstract war.[8] That his work was widely hailed by reviewers as "realism" is integral to his books' bestselling, international, popularity. In a war of information and disinformation, of intelligence and counter-intelligence, of propaganda and counter-propaganda, fiction had a particularly large role to play. We need only cite the enduring influence of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) to demonstrate this. Like Orwell, le Carré's language and ideas became part of the culture. So le Carré's public dissemination – enhanced by television and film adaptations – meant his work did not just depict but helped to *define* the Cold War in the popular imagination. Le Carré helped define the Cold War's iconography (Berlin Wall, borders, safe houses, government buildings); Cold-War action (covert, bureaucratic, elite, duplicitous); Britain's role within Cold War geopolitics (both insecure *and* magnified); the reason for the conflict (moderate Western 'way of life' threatened by expansionist, 'ideological' Soviet Communism)[9] and the mechanics of that conflict (Communist infiltration of British

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[6] *Smiley's People* was published in 1979 in the US and 1980 in the UK.
[7] Le Carré worked for MI5 from 1958-60, and MI6 from summer 1960- spring 1964 (Adam Sisman, *John le Carré: The Biography* (forthcoming, 2015), NP.
[8] E.g., John Gardner in H.R.F. Keating (ed.), *Whodunit? A Guide to Crime, Suspense and Spy Fiction* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1982) p. 77. Also: "As an experienced member of the service, he unveils the real face of the system" Fırat Yildiz, Erdinç Durmus, 'Democracy or Hypocrisy in John Le Carre's [sic] The Spy Who Came in from the Cold', *Journal of Social Sciences*, Eskisehir Osmangazi University, 2013, 14; 2, 51-57 (p. 56).
[9] George Kennan's Cold-War defining 'Long Telegram' was more explicit than future propagandists about the conflict's political nature: "battle between these two centers for command of world economy will decide fate of capitalism and Communism in entire world". http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm accessed 9/3/14.

institutions). Perhaps most of all, le Carré's novels defined the *mood* of the Cold War: unease, distrust, even paranoia, and not just about enemies, but friends, neighbours, even the very nation, state or system that was being defended – an unease underlined by the perennial threat of nuclear war. Not for le Carré the Bond villains' threat of world destruction,[10] the Communist threat was always less dramatic, more domestic, but, as such, more insidious. Yet nuclear war is ultimately what justifies spies' activities, as le Carré's Leamas says: "'They're the poor sods who try to keep the preachers from blowing each other sky high'".[11] This makes espionage analogous to nuclear deterrence: a high-risk strategy that could as easily shatter as preserve the peace, as the shooting down of a US U2 spy-plane and the capture of its pilot in May 1960 suggested. As much as le Carré's novels were uneasy reading for an uneasy age however, they were also, crucially, comforting – for Western, particularly British, readers. Because, despite the standard critical contrasts to Ian Fleming – the dominant spy writer of the early Cold War – the most cursory comparison of le Carré to history suggests something closer to fantasy than 'realism'.[12] Le Carré's breakthrough 1963 novel, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* asserted British state competence in defiance of the defection Kim Philby and of the Profumo affair in the same year. 1974's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* reimagined the farcical investigation of Philby as British intelligence *success*. 1977's *The Honourable Schoolboy* envisaged a key geopolitical role for Britain. 1979's *Smiley's People* fantasised the defection of the head of Soviet counterintelligence to the West. It is testament to le Carré's great skill that he could make such romantic fantasies resemble realism.

In all these respects, le Carré's novels are highly political. Yet commentators and critics often deny the political nature of le Carré's work, as if the Cold War were merely incidental background to the plot or the psychology. Indeed Sarah Martin advocates

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[10] Ian Fleming, *Moonraker* (1955).
[11] Le Carré, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* [1963] (London: Pan, 1964) p. 231.
[12] "[Le Carré's books] keep in circulation the ludicrous charade that Britain remains at the table of great powers and what's more, merits being there," Fred Inglis, *The Cruel Peace: Living Through the Cold War* [1991] (London: Aurum, 1992), p. 204.

studying le Carré "without the Cold War trappings".[13] Yet to create Cold War espionage fiction *during* the Cold War was to reflect, represent and shape history as it occurred. Moreover, if all books are marked by the times that produce them, then every novel is a 'state of the nation' novel, but perhaps particularly Cold-War spy novels, in which the protagonists literally 'represent' Britain.

It is true that there is often a lack of political specificity in le Carré: however, his texts contain *clues* to political events, figures and currents, and indeed their very silence on certain political issues can be significant. The elision of Communism in a book about a Soviet spy (*Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy,* 1974), the scarcity of reference to nuclear war, and the elusiveness of a receding but still operational Empire are all omissions it is the job of the historically minded critic to identify. Moreover, the defining facet of le Carré's *style,* the supra-generic, 'literary' focus on his protagonists' personal lives, does not depoliticise his novels but rather adheres to Raymond Williams' definition of the realist novel, where "neither the society nor the individual is there as a priority".[14] The personal does not oppose the political, it is enmeshed with it: that le Carré combines both is key to his appeal. Moreover, le Carré deals in the personal lives of *political* figures: George Smiley and Alec Leamas are servants of the *state,* the infantry of the Cold War. Le Carré's books' personal emphasis also has a political function: an individualist rebuttal of the collectivist 'dogma' of Communism that is far easier than defending capitalism.

The intention in this thesis is to get beneath the novels' surfaces that so mesmerise critics and commentators (the complex plots; the insider jargon), beyond the markers of genre that make it seemingly so difficult to judge le Carré as a 'novelist'; but also beyond a pervasive critical consensus that takes le Carré's novels at surface value. That consensus attests that le Carré's books are anti-establishment. Le Carré's *The Constant Gardener* (2001) and his post-9/11 pronouncements have enhanced that anti-establishment, even

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[13] Sarah Martin, 'The Silent Villain: The Minimalist Construction of Patriarchal Villainy in John le Carré's Karla Trilogy' in Anna Fahraeus & Dikmen Yakali Çamoglu (eds.), *Villains and Villainy: Embodiments of Evil in Literature, Popular Media and Culture* (New York: Rodopi, 2011), p. 48.
[14] Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* [1961] (Cardigan: Parthian, 2011), p. 322.

radical, reputation.[15] This is why this thesis focuses on the 'state' as a key theme. Le Carré

claims his novels ask, "For how long can we defend ourselves [...] by methods of this

kind, and still remain the kind of society that is worth defending?"[16] Certainly, in admitting

that British state *means* are either expedient or inept, le Carré represents an advance on the

jingoism of Fleming, though not a huge advance on Graham Greene or the early work of

Eric Ambler. When latterly branded a "leftie" by the Conservative government's Michael

Gove, le Carré objected.[17] Rightly so: while critical and probing, le Carré's anti-

establishment position is really a satirical skewering of establishment *manners* (by an

insider to that establishment),[18] alongside somewhat conservative complaints about

bureaucracy that leaves the establishment as a *structure* entirely unchallenged. Indeed,

quietly, and not always firmly, le Carré's Cold-War protagonists are restorers of the British

state and British status quo in every novel. Beyond the enlivening distractions of his

defining anti-bureaucratic broadsides, and the ambiguities of his books' frets about state

means, le Carré ultimately affirms British state *ends*: the defence of the British 'system' –

liberalism; capitalism – as against 'expansionist' Soviet Communism.

Le Carré counterbalances these anxieties about state expediency with a potent

assertion of British national 'decency': this decency is invested in the hugely attractive

character of George Smiley. Smiley appears in all six of the novels in this thesis: he is le

Carré's readers' guide and moral compass through the Cold War; a reassuring figure for

British national identity (and British national anxieties), a champion of British values.[19]

Thus the thesis's second theme: the 'nation': that which is being fought *for*; that which is

being defended in the Cold War. Smiley is quite as reassuring a British champion as Bond,

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[15] E.g. le Carré, 'The United States Has Gone Mad', *The Times*, 15 January 2003.

[16] Le Carré, 'To Russia, with Greetings: An Open Letter to the Moscow 'Literary Gazette'', *Encounter* (May 1966), 3-6 (p. 6). Smiley asks almost exactly the same question at Cold War's end. Le Carré, *The Secret Pilgrim* [1991] (London: Sceptre, 1999), p. 123.

[17] Le Carré, interview with Anne McElvoy, Proms, BBC2, 30 July 2013.

[18] As Sisman's biography makes clear (passim), Cornwell's class position is contradictory: the son of a lower middle-class convicted con-man, Ronnie Cornwell, with a range of shady acquaintance, above and below him in the social stratum. Groomed via prep, public school and Oxford, Cornwell was deemed sufficiently 'establishment' to teach at Eton and to be informally recruited for MI5 and MI6.

[19] Williams claimed the realist novel "creates and judges the quality of a whole way of life in terms of the qualities of persons" (*Long Revolution*, p. 321).

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to whom he is conventionally posited as a polar opposite. Moreover, Smiley's nationalism is fundamentally conservative: Smiley is a product and defender of the British class system and a nostalgic reminder of – and stand-in for – British imperial power.

If British state and national ends are validated in le Carré, then this rather refutes the other main tenet of the critical consensus:[20] that le Carré depicts East and West as morally equivalent. This persists despite such public pronouncements as, "the Western evil is far, far, far less evil than the Eastern one."[21] This is the thesis's third theme: the political enemy, wherein the thesis will demonstrate that le Carré depicts an expansionist Eastern bloc Communism that is almost as Manichaean as that of Fleming, to whom, again he is conventionally contrasted. Indeed, in le Carré, the Eastern bloc is presented as the ontological root of Cold-War expediency – the West only imitates, reacts, defends, while the Communist East is unscrupulous, conspiratorial, aggressive. Nearly all these novels feature an incursion by Communism into British institutions (*Call for the Dead, Tinker Tailor, Honourable Schoolboy*)[22] or British territory (*Looking Glass War, Smiley's People*), much as the original imperial spy novels did: rarely vice versa. If Britain is, as *The Spy*'s Control claims, "defensive" and the Soviet Union offensive, then they are hardly equivalent. In these ways le Carré's Cold War novels are saturated not just with political events but with political *judgements*. As such, these novels are key cultural interventions into the Cold War, documents of their era quite as valid as declassified government papers.

This introductory chapter will first conduct a review of the literature, broadly divided into espionage genre studies and work that specifically focuses on le Carré. Second, the chapter will establish the thesis's critical methodology. Third, this chapter will define the terms – the state, nation and political enemy – proposed in the thesis title. Finally, this Introduction will offer a brief summary of the contents of each ensuing chapter.

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[20] A recent, mainstream example is Tony Parsons, 'GQ Icon', *GQ*, 4 December 2013, which rote references 'authenticity,' 'moral equivalence' and 'ends vs. means' without sense of contradiction, whilst denying the novels are political.

[21] John le Carré, PBS interview, 16 August 1980.

[22] In *Honourable Schoolboy*, Hong Kong, where a Soviet mole's money is laundered, is a British colony,

2. Desk and Field: Literature Review

Le Carré, Popularity and Genre

As a writer of hugely popular 'genre' novels, le Carré is routinely associated with 'popular fiction'. Morag Shiach has noted that popular culture is often treated as "secondary and marginal",[23] so, via this association with popular fiction, the significance of le Carré's work is accordingly diminished. But perhaps the impact of Le Carré's novels on Britain's post-war political and literary landscape – as opposed to the impact of 'literary fiction' – can best be captured by contrasting the fates of 1963's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* and the same year's James Tait Black Prize-winner, Gerda Charles' *A Slanting Light.* Which was more influential? Which is now best remembered?

Raymond Williams traces the word "popular" as initially meaning emanating from or "belonging to the people".[24] The contemporary sense of "widely favoured" was not widespread until the nineteenth century, with the 'neutral' notion of the 'general public' eventually eclipsing "the people" (Shiach, p. 174). However "the people" slipped regularly into *common* people (Shiach, pp. 19-34), so that association of "popular" with commoners meant that "'low' or 'base'" (Williams, *Keywords*, p. 237) continued to be attached to popular forms. As we shall see, press commentators well into the 1970s regularly decried le Carré's perceived attempts to "transcend" his assigned 'thriller' genre,[25] sustaining Shiach's point that the popular is that 'other' which is excluded from "institutions of legitimation" – academia *and* the elite-dominated 'popular' press (Shiach, p. 33). Q. D. Leavis's 1930s attack on detective novelist Dorothy Sayers' work is thus crucial,[26] identifying it as 'debased' 'mass fiction', in opposition to the Leavises' codification of

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[23] Morag Shiach, *Discourse on Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989), p. 15.

[24] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* [1976] (London: Fontana, rev. edn. 1983), p. 236.

[25] E.g. Maurice Richardson, 'Le Carré tries too hard', Review of *Looking Glass War, Observer,* 20 June 1965, p. 27; Clive James, 'Go Back to the Cold!' Review of *Honourable Schoolboy, New York Review of Books,* 27 October 1977, p. 29.

[26] Q. D. Leavis, 'The Case of Miss Dorothy Sayers', *Scrutiny*, December 1937, 334-340.

'literary fiction' into a canon that is largely unchallenged to this day.[27] As John Sutherland suggests, this is a literary class-system, with popular fiction the expendable proles.[28]

Complicating this, despite le Carré's supposed anti-establishment credentials, his work has little to do with "the people"; no sense of what Stuart Hall calls "the popular forces versus the power bloc" beyond its oxymoronic mainstream marginality.[29] Le Carré's fiction emanates from – and, this thesis will argue, upholds and promotes – the dominant culture (public schooled; Oxbridge educated; ruling class) that is usually associated with 'literary fiction'. This is the problem with Hall's (and Shiach's) emphasis on popular culture as emanating *from*, rather than targeted *at*, 'the people'. Indeed this thesis will argue in Chapter 1 that, via the concept of the 'nation', le Carré's work merges the 'general public' with the elite dominant culture, thus using a 'popular' form and addressing a 'mass' audience to assert the values and primacy of the dominant.

Consequently the perceived 'debasement' of popular, genre fiction must be located not in le Carré's work's *production*, but in its *reception* (its 'mass' popularity in terms of sales). In *Fiction and the Reading Public*, Q. D. Leavis attempted to understand the 'popular novel' that, as Suman Gupta claims, "developed through a market rationale that was outside the control of the scholarly elites",[30] as opposed to the elite-endorsed 'literary' novel.[31] In doing so Leavis made the patronising distinction Pierre Bourdieu satirises: between "facile pleasure, pleasure reduced to a pleasure of the sense, and pure pleasure [...] a measure of the capacity for sublimation which defines the truly human man".[32] Literary fiction for the rational elite; pulp for the unthinking 'mass'.[33] As Bourdieu

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[27] "English students in England today are 'Leavisites' whether they know it or not, irremediably altered by that historic intervention", Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* [1983] (Malden: Blackwell; 1996), p. 27.

[28] John Sutherland, *Bestsellers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 2.

[29] Stuart Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular'', in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, edited by John Storey (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p. 465.

[30] Suman Gupta, 'On Mapping Genre: "Literary Fiction"/"Genre Fiction" and Globalization Processes' in *Globalizing Literary Genres: Literature, History, Modernity*, edited by Jernej Habjan, Fabienne Imlinger (London: Routledge, 2016), forthcoming, NP.

[31] Q. D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public* [1932] (London: Chatto and Windus, 1939), p. 5 (note).

[32] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. xxix.

attests, this endorses the *actual* class system: "Cultural consumption [is] predisposed [...] to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences" (Bourdieu, p. xxx).[34] Le Carré's works' popularity – its *reception* – is irrelevant to its 'quality', but it *is* proof of its wide ideological dissemination.

So does this critically perceived debasement lie in the generic *form* itself? If so, it is striking that 'literary' novelists have always deployed genre tropes, from the detective novel (e.g. Charles Dickens, Umberto Eco, Paul Auster), to the spy novel (Joseph Conrad, Graham Greene, Ian McEwan). It is a mistake to act, "as if genre-ness and literariness are fundamentally emanant qualities of fictional texts" (Gupta, NP): indeed the designation of 'genre' and 'literary' can appear as arbitrary as the placing of political borders: why is Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907) not considered genre fiction? Even were genre fiction always readily isolated, given that the 'popular' is simply the 'other' of the 'literary' (Shiach, p. 27) then not all 'popular fiction' is genre fiction.

Prefiguring structuralism, the work of Russian Mikhail Bakhtin and American Northrop Frye, in different ways, usefully suggested that *all* novels are generic: that 'popular' and literary fiction alike accord to pre-existing formulas.[35] Fredric Jameson also argues this.[36] Following this, the 1970s work of Raymond Williams, then Stuart Hall and the Birmingham Centre, this thesis title reflects its approach, deliberately referencing "novels" rather than "spy novels". Within this thesis's ideological critique, no presumption is made about how *successful* le Carré's ideological dissemination was. However, popular commentary and literary criticism *do* guide and even 'fix' readings, making it harder to comprehend le Carré's work beyond a critical discourse which proclaims his work as oppositional whilst affirming consensus ideology. One strong element of such critical

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[33] Scott McCracken, *Pulp: Reading Popular Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 8-9.

[34] In this discourse, the *economically* based hierarchy is avoided by emphasis on "taste" on one hand, and on a homogenised "general public" on the other (Shiach, p. 174).

[35] M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans/ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas, 1981), pp. 288-289.

[36] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* [1981] (Abingdon: Routledge, 1983).

guidance is the critical emphasis on le Carré's work as 'genre fiction', so the historical and

formal specifics of that genre are something we must now unpick.

The spy novel is a subgenre of the 'thriller', developing in tandem with the detective

story – all classified as 'crime fiction'. Jerry Palmer reflects a consensus that the detective

genre originates with Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin tales (from 1841);[37] was refined through

Wilkie Collins' *Moonstone* (1868); and codified in Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes

stories (from 1887). We see how the detective genre flits between the 'literary' and the

'popular' before becoming entrenched in the popular, via the "golden age" of the 1920s

and 30s, when Agatha Christie, Margery Allingham and the aforementioned Dorothy L.

Sayers were at a peak of popularity. According to Dennis Porter, the British Great

Detective (explicitly revisited in George Smiley) was always a gentleman (country houses

were a standard setting) and an *amateur* (gentleman hobbyists Dupin, Holmes and *Lord

Peter Wimsey*) and thus "embodied the heroic qualities of an ascendant middle class that

had learned to groom itself for an imperial role under the influence of a variety of

ideological state apparatuses, […] the public schools, the press and the middle-brow

literature".[38] As the detective genre rehearsed a physical threat to bourgeois life and then

'resolved it', via intellect, ridiculing the plodding, plebeian police, elite culture is again

asserted via 'popular' forms: Bennett and Woollacott claim this was reflected in an

aspirant, far from "common" readership.[39] Structuralist, Roland Barthes usefully defined

the "hermeneutic code" (solving a mystery) for the detective story and the "proairetic

code" ('what will happen next?') for the thriller:[40] spy stories tend to combine these codes,

uniting action (adventure, brawn, the field) with cogitation (bureaucracy; brain; the desk).

Although there are roots in the work of American, James Fennimore Cooper (*The

Spy*, 1821; *The Bravo*, 1831), the spy novel's origins are primarily British. The spy novel

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[37] Jerry Palmer, *Thrillers: Genesis and Structure of a Popular Genre* (London: Arnold, 1978), p. 107.
[38] Dennis Porter, *The Pursuit of Crime, Art and Ideology in Detective Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 157.
[39] Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott, *Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1987), p. 82.
[40] Barthes, Roland, *S/Z, An Essay* [1970] (New York: Hill & Wang, 1974), pp. 18-20.

was political from its inception, whether we place that inception with Rudyard Kipling's

Kim (1901, defending the British Empire against the Russians), or Erskine Childers' *The*

Riddle of the Sands (1903, defending the British homeland against the Germans) – which

spawned a spate of hugely popular invasion fiction copies in William Le Queux and E.

Phillips Oppenheim. Michael Denning rightly notes: "The spy became the figure for the

fortunes of Empire in Britain, providing explanations for its decline and betrayal".[41] This is

exactly the role of the police commissioner in Conrad's *The Secret Agent*. John Buchan's

Richard Hannay novels in the 1910s still focused on German threat to British dominance,

while Buchan later became himself an imperial administrator (from 1935). The spy novel

reached a socially broader audience than detective fiction (Denning, pp. 20-21), indicative

of the concept of 'the nation' (explored under 'Terms Defined', below) and the co-option

of the working class into the elite's imperial project via nationalism.[42]

Similar to le Carré's use of popular forms to assert dominant cultural ideals, Denning

asserts the crucial role of the gentleman 'amateur' within these imperial spy stories

(Denning, pp. 33-35) as within the detective story. Imperialistic spy fiction reached its

blunt apotheosis with Sapper's Bulldog Drummond stories, from 1920, pursuing an almost

fascistic, Mosley-ite populist nationalism. Thereafter, the late 1920s and 1930s saw a shift

from romance to realism (starting with Somerset Maugham's *Ashenden*, 1928), alongside a

leftwards political shift, with the novels of Eric Ambler and Graham Greene (although

even these authors still subtly asserted dominant orthodoxies). Again it is worth attesting

the arbitrariness here: Kipling, Conrad and Maugham tend to be canonised as 'literary',

while Childers and Ambler are 'genre'. Greene himself addressed this distinction between

"serious" and "trivial" culture (Shiach, p. 191) via his division of his work into "novels"

and "entertainments", a distinction he dropped for one 'spy' novel, *The Quiet American*

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[41] Michael Denning, *Cover Stories: Narrative and Ideology in the British Spy Thriller* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 5.
[42] John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 7.

(1955), revived for another, *Our Man in Havana* (1958), and abandoned altogether by the time of his Philby novel, *The Human Factor* (1978). Yet "institutions of legitimation" have largely co-opted Greene's "novels" and "entertainments" alike into the Leavises' 'literary' canon. From the 1950s, however, Ian Fleming's James Bond novels represented a revival of the imperial spy romance, before being 'met' by a revival of spy realism in the early 1960s, via John le Carré and Len Deighton, who both broadened the class basis of the spy hero and complicated the imperialist morality of spy fiction. This thesis argues that le Carré did *not* in fact, substantially depart from dominant ideologies (imperial, social, or anti-Communist) via his genre modifications. Indeed, to the idea that formal experimentation indicates resistance to dominant ideologies, the name Ezra Pound should be sufficient rebuttal (from a potentially long list of modernists).

So this thesis rejects the idea that dominant ideology resides in the *genre* of le Carré's fiction, genre being a matter of *form* not of *content* (Hall, pp. 455-466). Genre fiction is only as much a conduit of the dominant culture's ideology as literary fiction. Marxist critic, Jerry Palmer's emphasis on "the ideology of the thriller" effectively suggests thrillers are *more* reactionary than 'literary' fiction (Palmer, p. 149). Roger Bromley suggests capitalism only creates ideologically loaded "mass"/popular fiction, not the canon of *literary* fiction.[43] Again, this conflation of form and reception patronises the reader: "ultimately the notion of the people as a purely passive, outline force, is a deeply unsocialist perspective" (Hall, p. 459), again legitimating social differences.[44] Ideology infuses both popular *and* literary fiction. One can enjoy reading Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) *despite* its – contra Hall – unavoidably and unchangingly reactionary politics. Given the ideological critique of dominant political orthodoxies essayed in this thesis, one might say much the same of le Carré's work.

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[43] Roger Bromley, 'Natural Boundaries: the Social Function of Popular Fiction' *Red Letters* 7 (1978), 34-60.
[44] As Jon Thompson says (of the Frankfurt school's rejection of "mass literature"), this "wholesale privileging of canonical writers over noncanonical ones […] ratifies the values of the administrative society criticize[d] so effectively elsewhere". Jon Thompson *Fiction, Crime and Empire: Clues to Modernity and Postmodernism* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1993), p. 26.

So let us examine this issue of 'pleasure' in a 'reactionary' text. Just as female-targeted romantic novels interact with culturally encoded female fantasies, as described in Cora Kaplan's ground breaking *Thornbirds* essay,[45] thrillers interact with culturally encoded *masculine* fantasies. Spies save their country, sometimes the world, and, traditionally, also win the desirable female, or *females* in the case of Bond,[46] so spy novels indulge male fantasies of agency and empowerment. Portly, elderly, and unskilled with firearms, Smiley nevertheless saves Britain in every novel, quite as effectively and reliably as Bond. Smiley's "breathtakingly ordinary"[47] appearance is both a useful facet of his spycraft (invisibility), *and* a fantasy of male empowerment: you do not need James Bond's looks or skills to be potent as spy and man. Much is made in the texts and their critiques of the serial infidelity of Smiley's wife, Ann. But Smiley *did*, in romance terms, 'win' the desirable female, and keeps *re*-winning her after every straying: indeed in the romance's mythology, as cited by Frye, the hero is rewarded both by command of the kingdom (as Smiley is in *Tinker* and rejects in *Call*) and marriage (both events being followed by reunions with Ann). This also makes the key connection between the personal and the political: spy novels are not just fantasies of *individual* agency and empowerment, but *collective, national* fantasies of agency and empowerment.

If fantasy sounds far from utopian in this masculine context, Kaplan reasserts that readers are not empty vessels to be filled up by "reactionary" texts (Kaplan, in Burgin, p. 156) in the Leavisite presumption: "the untutored, 'primitive' psyche was easily excited and had no strategies of sublimation" (p. 147). Hall rightly claims that culture is a site of ideological struggle against the dominant (Hall in Storey, p. 462), citing Williams' concept of the "emergent".[48] Here we might cite Chris Mullin's *A Very British Coup* (1982) –

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[45] Cora Kaplan, '*The Thorn Birds*: fiction, fantasy, femininity' in *Formations of Fantasy*, ed. by Victor Burgin, James Donald and Cora Kaplan (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 142-166.

[46] The same is true of Deighton's nameless hero, or, Lionel Davidson's Johnny Porter (*Kolymsky Heights*, London: Faber 1994*)* or Charles Cumming's (*The Trinity Six* (London: Harper, 2011).

[47] John le Carré, *Call for the Dead* [1961] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p. 7. Future references are to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

[48] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* [1977] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 121.

popular literature that is left wing. However Kaplan again implies that popular fiction is *more likely* to be reactionary than "literary" fiction (Kaplan, p. 160), while both Hall and Kaplan underestimate the limited 'play' possible with a reactionary text (Kaplan struggles with *The Thornbirds*, p. 151), and the cultural power of commentary and criticism to 'fix' understandings of those texts.

The pleasure inherent in le Carré's texts *may* lie partially in the indulgence of far-from-utopian fantasy, but primarily, it lies in the Leavisite training readers receive via school, university and literary criticism and also via television, marketing and press commentary: a learned, taught "cultural competence" (Bourdieu, xxv), which applies to *all* forms of culture, high and low, and enables a reader to take pleasure in the narrative urgency of plot, the intricacies of characterisation, and in transhistorical 'humanist' themes. This aestheticisation crucially also elides ideological content, in the 'timeless' Great Tradition outside of history or politics.

A formal focus on genre is also, indirectly, a facet of this Leavisite aestheticism just described. Gupta rightly says, 'genre fiction' is a market designation of 'that which is not literature', while "genre theory" pertains to the whole of literary production. The concepts "exist at different registers" (Gupta, NP). In practice however, there is a constant slippage between the two, a slippage which originates in Northrop Frye's hugely influential work.

Deskmen: Le Carré and Genre Criticism

Le Carré distinguishes in his novels between bureaucratic 'deskmen' (Percy Alleline) and operational 'fieldmen' (Alec Leamas). Often studying le Carré as just one of multiple spy writers in their bulging case-files, genre-orientated critics can seem bureaucratic, collating and processing quantitative data: hence the designation 'deskmen'.

We see in Lars Sauerberg's book-length spy-study the first of the problems with Frye's work: that an emphasis on the mythic root of all fiction prioritises *story* over *history*. In Sauerberg British decline becomes merely manifestation of Frye's 'wasteland'

myth, without historical materiality.[49] John Cawelti & Bruce Rosenberg's quantitative spy genre study similarly occludes history.[50] Deploying structuralist approaches, Denning uses the daunting "semantic rectangle" (p. 128) and B. K. Martin the "semiotic square" to map le Carré's plots, but deep structure ends up curiously close to superficial surface here, with Denning claiming le Carré's novels are "a cover story about work", while for Martin, *The Spy* is "not a novel about spying" but "the bond of love which nature makes".[51] In both Denning and Martin, the Cold War recedes (Martin doesn't even mention the Berlin Wall), affirming consensus views like Masters' genre study's claim that le Carré "is not interested in the political aspects of espionage".[52]

Frye's location of fiction's source only in other *fiction* (rather than history) can lead to a kind of literary solipsism. We see this in Michael Hayes' claim that "le Carré's work addresses "the nature of fiction";[53] repeated in Glenn Most, who, exploring le Carré's links with the detective genre, concludes that *The Spy*'s meaning is, "whether the mystery story is still possible in our time" (in H. Bloom, p. 99). This reduces the historical reality of the Cold War to a 'text',[54] a solipsistic tendency even more pronounced in the 1990s, in *post*-structuralism. David Seed's formal investigations are astute but still prioritise the act of reading.[55] Peter Bennett's insightful thesis insists le Carré's novels are studies in the "divided subjectivity" of identity, unconnected to the *political* divisions of the Cold War, nor to divisions *inside* Western ideology.[56] After a lot of semantic fanfare, Bennett both dehistoricises le Carré *and* returns him to the genre 'formula' box. Allan Hepburn's

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[49] Lars Ole Sauerberg, *Secret Agents in Fiction: Ian Fleming, John le Carré and Len Deighton* (New York: St Martin's, 1984), p. 22.

[50] John G. Cawelti, Bruce A. Rosenberg, *The Spy Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1987) p. 174.

[51] B. K. Martin, 'Le Carré's *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold*: A Structuralist Reading', *Sydney Studies in English* (1988/89), 72-88, (p. 88).

[52] Anthony Masters, *Literary Agents: The Novelist as Spy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), p. 255.

[53] Michael J. Hayes, 'Are You Telling Me Lies, David? The Work of John le Carré' in *Spy Thrillers: From Buchan to le Carré,* edited by Clive Bloom (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 113-130.

[54] "History as little more than a discursive regime for the maintenance and transformation of the past in the present" Andrew Milner, *Re-Imagining Cultural Studies: The Promise of Cultural Materialism* (London: Sage, 2002), p. 124.

[55] David Seed, 'The Well-Wrought Structures of le Carré's Early Fiction' in C. Bloom, pp. 140-159. David Seed, 'Spy Fiction' in *Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction* edited by Martin Priestman (Cambridge: University Press, 2003) pp. 115-135.

[56] Peter Bennett, 'Wilderness of Mirrors: The Representation of Identity and Subjectivity in the Spy Novels of John le Carré' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Der Universitat Hannover, 1998).

fascinating study of espionage fiction keeps offering tantalising glimpses of "Western ideology" and "motifs of capitalism in the narrative" (p. 184), yet Hepburn never pursues these ideas, and ultimately again suggests that *The Spy* is "an allegory of reading" (p. 183), which is also "impossible to interpret" (p. 186).[57] Snyder follows Hepburn in this emphasis on 'reading',[58] but as Snyder's examples of "knowledge" are often factually inaccurate, this hardly testifies to reading's primacy. Fiction is about fiction: history disappears.

A second problem with genre-orientated analysis is that critics deploy Frye's genre of "romance" for the thriller, with romance representing an earlier stage in Frye's evolutionary "cycle" from realism (Frye, p. 147). The slippage from 'earlier' to 'more primitive' is inherent in both Frye's original theory *and* in critics' subsequent deployment of it, returning us again to that Leavisite slippage between 'popular' and 'inferior'. We see this in the work of early le Carré critic, Jacques Barzun, whereby "trashy literature" appeals to "primitive" urges and is part of a general death of "values" (patriotism; elite culture).[59] Similarly, for George Grella's fascinating study of the thriller, Frye's "archetypes [...] and conventions", reveal thrillers as "subliterary [...] inferior".[60] Lars Sauerberg's spy genre study provides useful insight but again bleeds Frye's mythic "archetypes" into "formula fiction" as readily distinct from 'literary fiction'.[61] Andrew Rutherford's creditable attempt to defend le Carré as 'literature' similarly remains trapped within assumptions about the "novel proper",[62] as does in the 1980s, LeRoy Panek's *Special Branch*.[63] Panek's is another quantitative genre study, hardly given credence by its

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[57] Allan Hepburn, *Intrigue: Espionage and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University, 2005).

[58] Robert Lance Snyder, *The Art of Indirection in British Espionage Fiction: A Critical Study of Six Novelists* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2011) pp. 9-11.

[59] Jacques Barzun, 'Meditations on the Literature of Spying', *American Scholar* 34 (1965), 167-178, (p. 169).

[60] George J. Grella, 'The Literature of the Thriller: A Critical Study' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Kansas, 1967), p. 2. See also: Robert Gillespie, 'The Recent Future: Secret Agents and the Cold World War' *Salmagundi* 13 (1970), 45-60 (p. 46).

[61] Lars Ole Sauerberg, 'The Novel of Espionage: An Attempt at Generic Criticism', *Pre-publications of the English institute at Odense University* 9 (1977), 1-15.

[62] Andrew Rutherford, 'The Spy as Hero: le Carré and the Cold War' [1978] in *John le Carré*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1987) p. 19.

[63] LeRoy Panek, *The Special Branch: The British Spy Novel 1890-1980* (Bowling Green: University Press, 1981). Panek claims le Carré possesses "the class of regular literature" (p. 237); Robert Giddings evokes "the espionage story in the form of a novel with 'class'" (Robert Giddings, 'The Writing on the Igloo Walls: Narrative Technique in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*', in Bold, p. 200). Note the telling terminology.

very title being a factual error (the Special Branch and MI5 are *not* synonymous). John Atkins' historically perceptive le Carré chapter again accepts distinction between spy novels and "novels proper",[64] while Laura Tracy's insights are undermined by her claim that le Carré's novels "do not transcend generic limits".[65]

Some critics combine both Frye-derived genre approaches: Bruce Merry's unique insight into le Carré's anti-Communism is undermined by his claim that this is *generically* rather than politically determined: romances must have their monsters.[66] Merry then criticises le Carré for being too complex for genre fiction (Merry, p. 51), reaffirming the literary class system. Stewart Crehan's claim for the "ideological" nature of le Carré's work is lost in an invisible Cold War, while Crehan's understanding of genre commends greater emphasis on plot than characterisation. "The emotional side of Smiley's relationship with Ann is not merely tiresome; it exposes the limitations of writing within the spy genre".[67] More positively, a recent study of spy fiction, by Samuel Goodman, has an exemplary sense of history, whilst making no obeisance to genre snobbery, unusually treating Greene, Fleming and le Carré as equals.[68]

So, to conclude, genre-focused critics aestheticise le Carré's work in two ways: first by an occlusion of history via an emphasis on genre as form; secondly, via folding value-judgements about 'genre fiction' into the supposedly 'neutral' analysis of unrelated 'genre theory'. This Leavisite emphasis on the aesthetic over the historical in literature is noticeably more overt in empirical literary criticism's citation of 'timeless' humanist themes. It is this vein of le Carré criticism that is discussed next.

As the literary class system's elite refuses entry to the upstarts, the pro-lobby pleads a case for admittance, leaving the original prejudice in place.

[64] John Atkins, *The British Spy Novel,* (London: Calder, 1984) p. 170.

[65] Laura Tracy, 'The Villain as Cultural Double in the British Espionage Novel', *Clues* 9:1 (1988), 11-37 (p. 26).

[66] Bruce Merry, *Anatomy of the Spy Thriller* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1977), p. 132.

[67] Stewart Crehan, 'Information, Power and the Reader: Textual Strategies in le Carré', (in Bold, p. 108).

[68] Samuel Geoffrey Goodman, 'Mapping New Jerusalem: National Identity and Power in British Espionage Fiction, 1945-1979' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 2012). Goodman has added Deighton for his forthcoming book.

Fieldmen: Empirical le Carré Criticism

Le Carré's 'fieldmen', Alec Leamas and Jerry Westerby, are empiricists, "common sense agents",[69] unreflective upholders of a status quo that is never acknowledged as political. Most critics of le Carré as a single author are fieldmen, Leavisite, proclaiming an inductive, common sense criticism into which no theory intrudes:[70] a neutrality. As Terry Eagleton notes, common sense "holds that things generally have only one meaning and that this meaning is usually obvious" (Eagleton, *Literary*, p. 94). So le Carré's critics are often preoccupied with surface, specifically plot (relayed at length) and jargon (defining Lamplighters, Babysitters).[71] However, critics' plethora of factual inaccuracies (names; dates) is a failure at their own empirical, evidence-based level – indicative of empirical authority's fragility.[72] What's more, for all its virtue of prioritising the text, Leavis's 'common sense' criticism is loaded with political assumptions, even as it rejects politics' relevance to literature (Hammond, p. 15).[73] This is empiricism as rhetoric: more correctly it is "pseudo empiricism".[74] Leavis's affable formulations ("This – doesn't it? – bears such a relation to that; this kind of thing – don't you find it so? – wears better than that")[75] coerce the reader into an affirmation of how things *are*: of the status quo.[76] Empiricism is a language of "naturally", "of course" and "obviously".

Empirical critics tend thus to find in le Carré's work confirmations of consensus Cold-War ideology. So LynnDianne (sic) Beene's claim, "the Berlin Wall [was] built to

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[69] Patrick J. Dobel, 'The Honourable Spymaster; John le Carré and the Character of Espionage', *Administration & Society* 20 (1988), 191-215, (p. 195).

[70] For "sceptical liberal intellectuals disoriented by the clashing dogmas of the Cold War," empiricism was "a recipe for political inertia, and [...] submission to the political status quo" Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p. 94.

[71] Linda T. Calendrillo's 'Role Playing and 'Atmosphere' in Four Modern British Spy Novels', *Clues* 3:1 (1982), 111-119 almost entirely trades analysis for exposition. Other notable plotters are: Helen S. Garson, 'Enter George Smiley' (in H. Bloom), Lewis, Noland, Dobler, Cawelti & Rosenberg, Panek, Rothberg, and Frederick P. Hitz, *The Great Game: The Myth and Reality of Espionage* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004).

[72] Ronald Paulson, *Sin and Evil, Moral Values in Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) refers to "Bill Hayden" throughout, p. 324. The spelling of "le Carré" meanwhile is variously "LeCarre" (Panek) or "LeCarré" (Tracy; Neuse). Critics' spellings are regularised henceforth.

[73] Andrew Hammond, *British Fiction and the Cold War* (London; Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 15.

[74] Perry Anderson, 'Socialism and Pseudo-Empiricism', *New Left Review* I/35 (January/February 1966), 2-42.

[75] F.R. Leavis, *The Common Pursuit*, [1952] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), p. 213.

[76] Gramsci regarded "common sense" as "orthodox convictions [...] conforming socially to the general interests of the ruling classes". Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), p. 340.

quarantine West Berlin and seal desperate East Germans from freedom,"[77] not only *affirms* rather than analyses le Carré's work's anti-Communist slant, it renders the West synonymous with "freedom", eliding the ideology (and hypocrisy) attendant on that "freedom". We see much the same strategy in critics' Manichaeism: on one hand, routinely referencing Communism as "evil",[78] and, on the other, claiming a Western innocence or neutrality: "liberal democratic life offers no utopian goals [or] absolute ideologies" (Dobel, p. 200). Western 'neutrality' and critical objectivity are thus strongly linked in such empiricism. Objective criticism however is a "mirage", as Jameson suggests: "even the most formalizing kinds of literary [...] analysis carry a theoretical charge whose denial unmasks it as ideological" (Jameson, *Political*, p. 43). Subjectivity will always intrude, whether that subjectivity upholds the Western status quo (most le Carré critics) or attempts to challenge it (this thesis). Criticism thus 'fixes' understandings of le Carré within a political consensus, making it hard to read against this consensus. These empirical critics will be considered broadly chronologically, from within four thematic clusters.

Firstly then, the enduring 'moral equivalence' trope in le Carré criticism claims that le Carré's Cold-War work declares of West and East alike, "a plague on both your houses".[79] Such a proclamation of le Carré's work as oppositional makes it harder to identify "emergent" ideologies within his texts. Julian Symons, in the first British study of le Carré, perceives an exposure of "false barriers between 'Us' and 'Them' [...] 'Our' men may be personally vicious and 'Their' men decent human beings".[80] We see this also in John Halperin: "democracy is seen by the novelist as having no edge on Communism, moral or otherwise",[81] and confirmed by Peter Wolfe: "The accepted political divisions in

[77] LynnDianne Beene, *John le Carré* (New York: Twayne, 1991) p. 49.

[78] E.g. Ambrosetti, p. 103; Rutherford, in H. Bloom, p. 14; or Cobbs invoking "the wretched quality of Communist life as well as Communist morals [and] Communist dishonesty," John L. Cobbs, *Understanding John le Carré* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1998), p. 26.

[79] Abraham Rothberg, 'The Decline and Fall of George Smiley: John le Carré and English Decency', *Southwest Review* 66; 4 (Autumn 1981), 377-393, also in H. Bloom, p. 62.

[80] Julian Symons, *Bloody Murder* [1972] (London: Pan, 1992), pp. 281-282.

[81] John Halperin, 'Between Two Worlds' [1980] *Jane Austen's Lovers* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 220.

Europe are a fiction concealing the fundamental congruencies of East and West".[82] Only

three critics challenge this moral equivalence claim: Geoffrey Hempstead ("hard to see in

le Carré's typologising of the 'enemy' [...] any sophisticated advance on Ian

Fleming's"),[83] Myron Aronoff,[84] and David Stafford: "Nowhere does [le Carré] suggest

anything other than a passionate commitment to liberal values, and [...] paints an utterly

dismal portrait of Soviet society".[85] The vast majority of critics however assert this

supposed moral equivalence,[86] whereby anti-Communism is essentially proclaimed as

'neutral' and the political is aestheticised.

A second common critical trope is of le Carré as 'anti-establishment', again

positioning le Carré as oppositional. This is relayed as the repression of the individual by

the (British) state. Rothberg invokes "the decent individual against the corrupt Leviathan

of the state" (in H. Bloom, p. 63). David Monaghan cites "an imbalance [...] between the

claims of the group and those of the individual",[87] while Beene sees "individualism"

affirmed "over institutional tyranny" (p. 51). Again, these citations barely skim the surface

of the individual vs. the state's trope popularity in le Carré criticism.[88] A facet of this anti-

establishment trope is the British state's use of foul means for anti-Communist ends: "the

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[82] Peter Wolfe, *Corridors of Deceit: The World of John le Carré* (Bowling Green, 1987), p. 82.

[83] Geoffrey Hempstead, 'George Smiley and Post-Imperial Nostalgia' in Raphael Samuel (ed.) *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity Volume III: National Fictions* (London: Routledge, 1989) p. 238.

[84] Myron J. Aronoff, *John le Carré, Balancing Ethics and Politics* (New York: St Martin's, 1999), p. 93.

[85] David Stafford, *The Silent Game: The Real World of Imaginary Spies* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1991) p. 209.

[86] On moral equivalence see also: Grella, p. 136; Ambrosetti, p. 111; Peter Lewis, *John le Carré* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1985) p. 77; Richard W. Noland, 'The Spy Fiction of John le Carré', *Clues* 1 (1980), 54-71 (p. 54); Rothberg (p. 81); Charles A. Brady, 'John Le Carré's Smiley Saga', *Thought* 60 (1985), 275-296 (p. 286); Eric Homberger, *John le Carré* (London: Methuen, 1986, p. 52; O'Neill (in Bold, pp. 169-188, p. 187; Richard Bradbury, 'Reading John le Carré' (in C. Bloom, pp. 130-140), p. 135; Beene, p. 1; Tod Hoffman, *Le Carré's Landscape* (Quebec: McGills-Queens University Press, 2001), pp. 75-76; Jost Hindersmann, '"The right side lost, but the wrong side won"': John le Carré's Spy Novels before and after the end of the Cold War,' *Clues* (Summer 2005), 25-37 (p. 27); Andrew Hammond, *British Fiction and the Cold War* (London; Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 94.

[87] David Monaghan, *The Novels of John le Carré: The Art of Survival* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985) p. 131.

[88] On the individual vs. the state, see: Joan Rockwell 'Normative Attitudes of Spies in Fiction' in Bernard Rosenberg (ed.) *Mass Culture Revisited* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1971) p. 336, who gives this conflict a rare class dimension; Steven M. Neuse, 'Bureaucratic Malaise In The Modern Spy Novel: Deighton, Greene And le Carré' *Public Administration* 60 (Autumn 1982), 293-206, (p. 301); Helen Garson (in H. Bloom, p. 74); Wolfe, p. 11; Cawelti & Rosenberg p. 181; Dobler, p. 52; Powell, p. 44; Ulrike Holtmann, 'Spying on le Carré: His Heroes of the Sixties and Seventies' (unpublished M. A. Thesis, Osnabrück 1991), p. 127; Beene, p. 51; Bennett, p. 44; Cobbs, p. 139; Hepburn, p. 167; Hindersmann p. 26.

totalitarian grounds of expediency" (Grella, p. 136). Sauerberg characterises the tensions as "individualism" vs. "totalitarian vices" (Sauerberg, p. 53). Wesley Britton cites "manipulative bureaucracies [...] whose means were more important than the ends".[89] The *origin* of this ends-over-means, individual-crushing state is often posited by critics as Communism.[90] This individual as victim of the state trope is oft repeated and again serves to neutralise the novels' actual political content.[91]

A third critical trope is British decline. Halperin's analysis is itself an imprecise, error-strewn account of "chaos" and "muddle" in le Carré (p. 220).[92] Noland perceives in le Carré a "political fable" about "the fate of England", without exploring British decline (p. 67). Steven Neuse perceives a national "loss of purpose" nowhere characterised as loss of Empire (p. 301). Celia Hughes perceives a lack of "ideals or sense of purpose in the West" and summons a past Arcadia: "once upon a time the world-order was reassuringly established and values were absolute".[93] A Christian, Hughes seems somewhat impervious to the earthly suffering created by British imperialism, while her suggestion that this lost Eden will be regained in Heaven recalls Frye's similarly conservative world-view. This trope finds its height in Monaghan's claim that feudalism was an Eden where "complete humanity" was realised (p. 24). Would feudal serfs have agreed? That Monaghan, in this first book-length study of le Carré, analyses the novels via le Carré's 'non-political' *The Naïve and Sentimental Lover* is indicative of how depoliticising strategies actually ratify political positions less naïve – or 'neutral' – than conservative. Brett F. Woods echoes Monaghan's imprecision: "the basic problem of modern society is the loss of touch with our full human nature [...] Western civilization is depicted as the residue of countless

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[89] Wesley Britton, *Beyond Bond: Spies in Fiction and Film* (Westport: Praeger, 2005) p. 128.
[90] Dobel (p. 197); Tracy (p. 25).
[91] On state expediency vs. the individual, see: Ambrosetti (p. 95): "the organization [...] emerges as the real source of evil in le Carré's closed world"; Gillespie, (p. 59); Lewis (p. 150; p. 161); Edwards (in Bold, pp. 62-63); Aronoff's entire book focuses on this ethical dilemma; Hammond, p. 87.
[92] Brady's inaccuracy-strewn piece mirrors the "nightmarish" flux he perceives in le Carré (Brady, p. 277). Giddings finds le Carré's "incomprehensibility [...] emblematic of the confusion and contradictions of modern life itself" (in Bold, p. 202). O'Neill takes this trope to its "unreadable" postmodern endpoint (in Bold p. 186).
[93] Celia Hughes, 'Serious Reflections on Light Reading: The World of John le Carré', *Theology* 84 (1981), 274-279, (p. 275).

betrayals and discarded ideals": presumably, it is the "ideal" of imperialism that is betrayed and discarded.[94] Hempstead uniquely dismisses this lost Eden of imperialism because "the old values that are being lost" are imperial "profit" (p. 240). There are many further examples of this British decline trope however,[95] most of which ratify the books' nostalgic account of British decline as 'neutral'.

Implicit in the above is a fourth critical trope: le Carré's work as neutral, or *non-political*. Eric Homberger declares, "It would be misleading to call [le Carré] a political novelist" (p. 14). Initially Tony Barley confronts politics:[96] le Carré's account of the state creates "conflicts between [...] the West's self-appointment as the 'Free World' and its coercive actions" (Barley, p. 10); le Carré pits an "elite matrix of power" versus a "mass" either "impotent" or threatening (pp. 12-13) and contrasts a "national" "way of life" in "an unequal antagonism" with the "elemental evil" (p. 6) of the *state*, Communist "system" (p. 14). Abruptly, Barley rejects this as "reductive" (p. 16) and dedicates the rest of his book to a denial of the books' political content. Many critics prioritise personal rather than political readings, as in Victor Lasseter's claim that le Carré's books demonstrate that "any hope for humanity comes not from [...] ideology but from the human capacity for love",[97] or Cheryl Powell's view that "redemptive love" is le Carré's dominant theme.[98] Wolfe similarly finds a "clash between individuals not ideologies" (p. 59).

A further facet of this approach is to separate politics from people via an abstract 'ideology'. We see this first in Ronald Ambrosetti's evocation of the "innocent middle [...] caught in a cross-fire of ideologies perpetuated by the political oligarchy".[99] Dobel takes

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[94] Brett F. Woods, *Neutral Ground: A Political History of Espionage Fiction* (New York: Algora, 2008) p. 129.

[95] See: Barzun, p. 172; Britain's "moral" decline (Grella, p. 143); "Britain's tragic loss of prestige and power in the postwar world", Andy East, *Cold War File* (Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1983), p. 174; the untroubled "faith" of Empire (Atkins, p. 176); Empire as "enlarging vision" (Homberger, p. 18); Garson (in Bold, p. 79); Lewis (p. 37); "'the good old English tradition'" (Holtmann, p. 94).

[96] Tony Barley, *Taking Sides: The Fiction Of John le Carré* (Milton Keynes: Open University, 1986), p. 8.

[97] Victor Lasseter, '*Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*: A Story of Modern Love', *Critique* 31 (1990) 101-111.

[98] Cheryl C. Powell, 'Redemption for the Protagonist in three Novels by John le Carré' (unpublished doctoral thesis: Florida State University, 1991), p. 4.

[99] Ronald J. Ambrosetti, 'A Study of the Spy Genre in Recent Popular Literature' (unpublished doctoral thesis: Bowling Green University, 1973), pp. 103-104.

this further: "Le Carré's novels indict an absolute loyalty to a cause as the most dangerous of all characteristics to the values of the West" (p. 198).[100] The implication here is that the West is 'above' ideology. Indeed, George Dobler claims his critique to be "neutral", where others' "agendas [...] distort" the texts,[101] but his depoliticisation of the novels is a pretty fair distortion itself, while his conservative Christian agenda reveals Christ as a liberal individualist and Communism as "the anti-Christ" (Dobler, p. 363). Similarly, Aronoff asserts liberalism – the West's 'system' – as neutrality: "a revulsion against doctrines and ideologies [that] reflects [le Carré's] underlying liberal temperament" (Aronoff, p. 4). Former intelligence officer Tod Hoffman declares that "ideology is artificial", while making a subjective case for the West (Hoffman, p. 11). This claim of le Carréan/Western 'neutrality' is repeated frequently,[102] refuted only by Richard Bradbury, who condemns, "that most ideological strategies, the denial of ideology" (in C. Bloom, p. 131), and James Buzard: "the Western ideology which proposes that the West has no ideology, that it has only its cherished "way of life".[103] This declaration of lack of ideology in le Carré, or in the West, is implicit in the 'neutrality' and aestheticisation of empirical criticism.

When, in analyses of work emerging from and focusing on a political struggle (the Cold War), politics are largely absent – true of both genre *and* empirical critics – then le Carré criticism occupies a no-man's land, as per this thesis's title. To quote Smiley, speaking to fieldman, Jerry Westerby: "'They think of themselves in the middle, whereas, of course, really they're nowhere'".[104] Critical neutrality, like liberal neutrality – or indeed, Swiss neutrality – is another mirage: there *is* no neutral no-man's land.

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[100] In post-war American criticism also, "'consensus' seemed to most anti-ideological, natural", Thomas Hill Schaub, *American Fiction in the Cold War* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1991), p. 26.

[101] George David Dobler, 'The Novels of John le Carré: Children, Women, Religion' (unpublished doctoral thesis: University of Iowa, 1989), p. 51.

[102] Beene sets Western "way of life" against Eastern "ideology" (p. 23); Woods' tellingly titled *Neutral Groun* declares, "philosophies are dangerous because they make people willing to destroy" (Woods, p. 124).

[103] James M. Buzard, 'Faces, Photos, Mirrors: Image and Ideology in the Novels of John le Carré', in *Image and Ideology in Modern/Postmodern Discourse*, edited by David B. Downing and Susan Bazargan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 157.

[104] Le Carré, *The Honourable Schoolboy* [1977] (London: Sceptre, 1999), p. 122. Future references are to this edition and are included in parentheses in the text.

3. Faultlines: a Critical Methodology

In an attempt to recover the texts from where they are 'fixed' by ostensibly aesthetic critical approaches, this thesis will perform an ideological critique of le Carré's Cold War novels. Taking the novels in chronological order, each chapter will begin with a survey of the novel's reviews. This tells us less about a work's reception[105] than about the elite cultural consensus. Elite reviewers are neither democratic nor representative, and their 'objectivity' masks both an economic dependence on the publishing industry and a subscription to the Leavisite agenda previously described. Reviewers do not create public tastes but, as discussed, they are influential upon them, as a portal of information (this novel exists!) and as opinion-formers. Thus reviews have been part of the political economy that made le Carré a bestselling author and have helped establish the terms of le Carré discourse by de-emphasising the political content and resonance of le Carré's work.

Thereafter, the thesis redeploys theory derived from Alan Sinfield's early modern study, *Faultlines* (1992), whereby the flaws in texts reveal contradictions in British ideology. This effectively politicises the 'aesthetic' approach of the Leavis school via Raymond Williams' "cultural materialism". An aesthetic contradiction is not necessarily a 'flaw': citing Marxian dialectic, Freudian duality or Romantic 'negative capability' this thesis suggests textual contradictions evince rewarding textual complexity: "Substantial texts are in principle likely to be written across ideological faultlines because that is the most interesting kind of writing [...]. Their cultural power was in their indeterminacy – they spoke to and facilitated debate."[106]

Sinfield's cultural materialism derives from Williams', a nuancing of Marxism that was a reaction to Stalinism and the abrupt transition from hot to Cold War. Unnerved

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[105] In all this focus on the 'popular', the political economy of popularity is rarely exlored. Sauerberg's rare reception study only really proves thrillers are popular, primarily with lower middle-class men, and that espionage thrillers peaked in the 1960s, with *The Spy* the first thriller to head the annual US 'Fiction' titles. Lars Ole Sauerberg, 'Literature in Figures: An Essay on the Popularity of Thrillers' *Orbis Literarum*, 38 (1983), 93-107.
[106] Alan Sinfield, *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Oxford: University Press, 1992), p. 235.

liberal and former leftist writers and critics responded to both with an essentially conservative 'realism' that also emphasised 'contradiction' and 'ambiguity' (Schaub, p. 35), this last strongly associated with le Carré.[107] This realism highlighted an unruly 'human nature' not susceptible to theory or planning. Thus a "cultural materialist" emphasis on 'contradictions' emerges from the same post-war British debates and cultural currents as le Carré's work and its criticism, however different their conclusions.

In a similar spirit then, Sinfield subtitling *Faultlines* as "the politics of dissident reading" utilises Cold-War consensus terminology to make an *anti*-consensus point. "Dissident" summons Soviet dissidence, the rebellious rejection of the propagandistic 'truth' proclaimed by the Soviet Communist system. The brainwashing propaganda of the West's enemies is familiar, and 'ideology' is in the Soviet case associated with Gulags, show-trials and a muzzled press. As we saw with Cold War critical discourse upon le Carré, 'ideology' is something Britain's *enemies* possess, not Britain itself. *British* ideas are 'common sense': moreover, if we specify this common sense as 'liberalism', this too is parlayed in conventional, empirical usage as 'neutral', non-ideological. But the centrist liberalism that dominated post-war Britain was certainly an ideology, a rationalisation of capitalism, whereby certain freedoms were offered as surety for capitalism's survival, but with 'freedom' effectively a euphemism for liberal capitalist democracy.[108] Moreover, as Communist ideology was anti-capitalist by definition, the West was fully prepared to assert its ideology, its 'system', aggressively through propaganda and through covert and overt attacks on the Communist 'threat' throughout the Cold War.

So this thesis offers a "dissident reading" of le Carré. Contrary to all the critical claims we have heard of moral equivalence, anti-establishment stance, the assertion of contemporary chaos, or that his work is simply non-ideological, le Carré conveys a

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[107] E.g. Giddings, in Bold p. 204.
[108] US President Kennedy declared of the Peace Corps, "our young men and women, dedicated to freedom, are fully capable of covercoming the efforts of Mr Khrushchev's misioinaries, who are dedicated to undermining that freedom." Quoted in Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p. 35.

consensus British ideology throughout his Cold War fiction. Structuralist Louis Althusser's

refinement of Karl Marx's concept of 'ideology' is helpful here. For Althusser,

Westerners' very subjecthood is formed by the capitalism upon which the liberal system is

founded:[109] so literature is rarely straight propaganda but instead an inadvertent expression

of the ideas that knit Western society together. Althusserian, Pierre Macherey's concept of

"the unconscious of the text" highlights this connection between Freudian unconscious and

Marxian ideology:[110] both lurk beneath surface meanings in a realm where contradictions

can coexist.[111] As such, ideology can be conveyed by its "not said", wherein the work

"reveals a determinate absence, resorts to an eloquent silence" (Macherey, p. 79): this is

not dissimilar to "the dog that didn't bark" in Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, who le

Carré often invokes. Critics in this understanding are detectives.[112] Ideology can also

reveal itself in inconsistencies of characterisation, a key facet of this thesis's approach.

"Character is a strategy – one that will be abandoned when it interferes with other

desiderata" (*Faultlines*, p. 78). Equally, ideology can be expressed through, paradoxically,

decrying the very thing it is actually defending, as Roland Barthes' "Operation Margarine"

will show regarding the state. Although, as Eagleton points out, texts may try to 'resolve'

these contradictions, this will result in further "internal conflict and disorder".[113] A

relatively straightforward version of this is when fiction tries to 'resolve' history, and the

critic can measure the gap between fiction and reality:[114] thus, say, the differences in the

fates of the real Kim Philby and the fictional Bill Haydon in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*.

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[109] "The imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence," Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy* [1968] (New York: Monthly Review, 2001), pp. 109. This is far closer to Williams' "structure of feeling" than is usually acknowledged. Williams's reinsertion of human experience into Althusser's social structures suggests "a thoroughgoing cultural materialism [...] which acknowledges the claims of agency *and* structure" (Milner, p. 127).
[110] Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production* [1966] (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 92.
[111] Jameson argues psychoanalysis itself emerged from capitalism's creation of "psychic fragmentation" (Jameson, *Political*, p. 49).
[112] Arthur Conan Doyle, *Silver Blaze*, in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* [1894].
[113] Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study In Marxist Literary Theory* (London: Verso, 1978), p. 86.
[114] "Literary text and historical context are productively compared [...] so as to test the extent to which texts misrepresent their contexts" (Milner, p. 157).

We need not pursue these French structuralist ideas towards Althusser's "entrapment model" (*Faultlines*, p. 39), wherein ideology is inescapable and contradiction thus becomes the endpoint of analysis.[115] This thesis, following Sinfield and Williams (and Gramsci),[116] prioritises a sub-clause in Marx's definition of ideology: "the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms *in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out*" (my emphasis).[117] Ideology in this understanding is dialectic, as much a field of contestation as a field of coercion. For Williams it is a flux of "dominant, residual and "emergent" currents (*Marxism*, p. 121).

Just as liberal society is ridden with political contradictions (one person's labour exchanged for another's profit; imperial barbarity claimed as 'civilisation'), so is its literature. Therefore, inside Western ideology – in society, in literary texts – is its own rebuttal. So dissident readings of consensus literature offer the potential for resisting accepted, empirical givens, and – however forlorn a hope in an era of unfettered global capitalism – for resistance. One might term the critical approach of this thesis 'dissident close reading'. In this spirit, the thesis will read contradictions in le Carré's work as they pertain to three telling thematic and ideological concepts: the state, the nation, and the political enemy. What follows is an initial outline of these concepts, which will continue to be nuanced in the course of the thesis.

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[115] As seen in Peter Bennett's thesis.

[116] Gramsci writes, "a given socio-historical moment is never homogenous; on the contrary it is rich with contradictions"; a prevailing current "presupposes a hierarchy, a contrast, a struggle", Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), p. 93.

[117] Karl Marx, 'Preface to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*' (1859) in *Early Writings* (London: Penguin Classics, 1992) p. 426.

4. State, Nation and Political Enemy: Terms Defined

The State

In contrast to Fleming, and most spy authors, the state – as both workplace and institution – is given particularly intensive focus in le Carré. The state is what all the protagonists in le Carré's novels are working *for*, directly or indirectly: and in every novel the state undergoes a cycle of being undermined, before being 'saved', secured and re-founded by Smiley (or another protagonist). This then is this thesis's "dissident reading" of what is critically recycled as 'anti-establishment' in le Carré. For, as we have seen, in le Carré, the state is simultaneously – and contradictorily – upheld and distanced, while being, as it is in British society, imprecisely defined. Ellen Wood claims that Britain possesses "a political culture [...] where the concept of the *state* is very weak".[118] Indicative of a queasiness regarding the state, Britain appends terms like "royal" or "national" to its state institutions, as opposed to 'State Mail' or 'State Opera House' (Wood, p. 33). 'The state' in British society is normatively negative. Yet Immanuel Wallerstein claims, "liberalism has always been in the end the ideology of the strong state in the sheep's clothing of individualism" and calls this "the great intellectual antinomy of modernity".[119] This instability of the concept of the state is thus a faultline, in le Carré's Cold-War novels, wherein anti-state rhetoric occludes affirmation of the state.

In sociologist Max Weber's definition, the state is: "A compulsory political organisation with continuous operations [central government] [whose] administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order."[120] The legal and judicial system enforces state order within the domestic population; the military fulfils this role in the international sphere; the intelligence services depicted by le Carré occupy a hazily mandated role between:

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[118] Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Pristine Culture of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991) p. 33.
[119] Immanuel Wallerstein, *Centrist Liberalism Triumphant, 1789-1914* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 2011), p. 10; 13.
[120] Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* [1928] (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

providing intelligence to police/army; pursuing investigations of their own, and sometimes even pursuing more active roles in destabilising or changing of regimes.

If this sanctioned violence were not sufficient explanation for liberal unease about the state, Weber's definition leaves three further uncomfortable facets unaccounted for.[121] Firstly, Weber leaves out imperialism: although Britain's role in the world was shrinking, it still possessed colonial territories during the Cold War, often brutally repressed (Malaya); still involved itself, via America, in imperial conflicts (Korea, 1950), and still pursued *commercial* imperialism (any former British colony). Secondly, Weber omits the Western state's management of capitalism. British queasiness regarding the state is as nothing compared to acknowledging capitalism as that state's 'system'. Yet the liberal state and the capitalist economy are synchronous,[122] as Ralph Miliband attests,[123] bolstered by social or professional ties between the two.[124] Indeed in deregulated late capitalism it often seems that capitalism 'manages' the state. Nevertheless, it is the state that does the deregulating, and state officials who are later rewarded with lucrative business appointments (not least Miliband's son, David).

Weber's third elision is the role of *ideology* in securing the state, overtly through propaganda, but also by a subtler empiricism that naturalises liberalism and capitalism as commonsensical.[125] Integral to this is the elision of those trickiest facets of the state just cited; or, in a double bluff, to reject or attack some facet of the state in order to uphold the deeper structure (Barthes' Operation Margarine again).[126] Consequently, left-wing critiques of the state focus on precisely these tricky issues – state violence in upholding

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[121] For Althussser, violence and propaganda were distributed, respectively, via the Repressive and Ideological State Apparatuses (Althusser, *Lenin*, pp. 85-126).

[122] Poulantzas shows the state can operate against *immediate* capitalist economic interests to secure capitalism long-term. Nicos Poulantzas, *State. Power. Socialism* [1978] (London: Verso, 1980).

[123] Colin Leys, *Politics in Britain: From Labourism to Thatcherism* [1983] (London: Verso, rev edn, 1989), p. 274.

[124] Ralph Miliband, 'Poulantzas and the Capitalist State,' *New Left Review* 82 (November/December 1973), 84-92.

[125] "Organicism" is Edmund Burke's similar concept of a 'naturally' evolving society, a conservative "legitimating perspective [which] naturalises processes and values", David Alderson, *Terry Eagleton*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 40.

[126] "A little 'confessed' evil saves one from acknowledging a lot of hidden evil" Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* [1957] (New York: Noonday, 1991), p. 42.

order; state imprisonment to uphold law; state responsibility for uneven capitalist distribution of wealth; imperialism – and state ideology's mendacity regarding all of the above. Le Carré's novels, however, focus upon the state's *bureaucracy*. It is primarily this antipathy to bureaucracy that lies behind le Carré's anti-establishment reputation (with some queasiness about state violence also). Whether that antipathy emphasises, from book to book, bureaucratic inefficiency or bureaucratic instrumentalism, the intelligence bureaucracy is all the reader ever really *sees* of the state in le Carré. Though of course this spotlight on the 'secret state', *seems* inherently dissident, with Cornwell's former colleagues like John Bingham suitably scandalised etc. However, in critiquing bureaucracy – or rather bureaucracy's entitled functionaries – le Carré occludes the uncomfortable sections of the state (capitalism, the landed class, the military) and thus implicitly *upholds* them. However, the hidden state makes its return via faultlines in the text.

Let us look more closely at this bureaucracy. Du Gay claims, "Weber recognizes a close affinity between bureaucracy and democracy" because "the political demands typically arising within democratic states can only be met by large-scale bureaucratic administration" (pp. 45-46).[127] This is a rather limited account. Mandel sees the steady expansion of the British state's bureaucracy from the late nineteenth century as a deliberate attempt to regulate capitalism's creation of a growing – thus dangerous – proletariat, via social and legal means.[128] This process culminated in the post-war Welfare State, wherein, Hobsbawm claims, politicians "wished to save the essentials of a capitalist system, but realized that this could now be done only within the framework of a strong and systematically interventionist state".[129] This is Keynesianism, which effectively continued the wartime National Government as a cross-party post-war liberal consensus, to much initial post-war optimism: "State intervention through expert bureaucrats was supposed to guarantee forever full employment, economic growth, rising standards of living, social

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[127] Paul Du Gay, *In Praise of Bureaucracy* (London: Sage, 2000).
[128] Ernest Mandel, *Power and Money: A Marxist Theory of Bureaucracy* (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 154-5.
[129] Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire* [1968] (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 224.

peace, a real brave new world" (Mandel, *Power*, p. 185). This consensus was scaffolded by the 'Long Boom' in British capitalism, post-war recovery creating a period of relative wealth, enshrined in Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan's 1957 claim that Britain had "never had it so good".[130] Contra Mandel's sarcasm, the Welfare State improved the lives of ordinary people and complicated leftist opposition to the capitalist state. Conservative and liberal antipathy to the state had a long history – John Stuart Mill decried, "the great evil of adding unnecessarily to [the state's] power" –[131] and at the end of our time-frame, Conservative neoliberal, Margaret Thatcher, parodied the Welfare state as "the nanny state", whilst also blurring being anti-bureaucracy with being anti-establishment,[132] but strengthening the power of the deep state (strongly tied to the establishment).[133]

It is this pseudo anti-statism – really anti-*bureaucracy* – we see in le Carré, which focuses on "the impersonal, expert, procedural and hierarchical character of bureaucratic reason and action", seen "as unethical or morally bankrupt" (Du Gay, p. 4). The bureaucratisation of Communist states provided a conveniently negative reference-point, filtered largely through the depiction of a bureaucratised Soviet/British amalgam in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. This is not an especially coherent critique: an entire *society* cannot be a bureaucracy. Moreover, le Carré's bureaucracy-focused anti-statism allows him to be all things to all men (useful in a popular novelist): a conservative critic of 'big government' *and* a radical anti-establishment figure. The narrowness of this critique occludes and leaves unchallenged the deep state, which is defended and upheld. Because the state is a culturally tricky issue, normatively negative, then an inoculation with anti-bureaucratic rhetoric secures the health of the entire state body, as per Barthes' equation.[134]

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[130] Schaub suggests the era's anti-Communism was a defence of this capitalist bounty (Schaub, pp. 58-9).
[131] Mill quoted in Domenico Losurdo *Liberalism: A Counter-History* [2006] (London: Verso, 2014) p. 200.
[132] Anti-bureaucracy is a key feature of the "liberal new right", whereby "collectivism restricts individual initiative and saps self-respect" (Heywood, p. 94).
[133] Strengthening the police force (Leys, p. 355); attempting to ban Peter Wright's MI5 exposé, *Spycatcher*; the GCHQ union clampdown; increased military spending "Conservatives [a]re always ready to strengthen the state structure to the degree necessary to control popular forces pushing for change", Wallerstein, p. 15.
[134] It is hard therefore to agree with Jameson's appealing idea that the spy genre attempts "to think the impossible totality of the contemporary world system: [the] enormous and threatening, yet only dimly

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The Nation

One way of avoiding the problem of the normatively negative state – for governments as for le Carré – is instead to emphasise the normatively positive nation: as in the *National Coal Board* or *British Rail*. The British nation is a potent theme in le Carré's work, and this thesis presents a "dissident reading" of what critics view as his "British decline" theme. However the elusiveness of the concept of nation is highlighted by, for example, British espionage chief, Control's briefing speech to Leamas in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*. "'We do disagreeable things so that ordinary people [...] can sleep safely in their beds at night'" (*Spy*, p. 20). The British nation is a symbolic stand-in for the state here – the *exceptional* subject ("we") which has the monopoly of violence ("disagreeable things") and is thus 'fallen'/guilty. But the British nation is also something completely distinct: the "ordinary" object (*them*) that is innocent (in a standard synonym, they "sleep"), indeed 'neutral'. But is the nation just the state in disguise, or does it have a *civil* location? The answer is somewhere between these positions.

'Nation', as Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner both revealed in contrasting ways in the 1980s,[135] is a relatively modern concept, forged from the interrelated development of printing, capitalism and expanding education (Gellner, p. 34). Being citizens of a 'nation' provided a way for the new bourgeoisie (industrialists) to collectively 'imagine' themselves as distinct from a hierarchical, religiously ordained feudal order. This had a particularly evident role in the bourgeois idea of "service" to country, pursued in Britain via administration of Empire (including joining British intelligence). As with education and the vote, the bourgeoisie, the gentlemanly upper-middle class, were forced to carry the working classes with them on their upward journey. Hobsbawm and Ranger show how British nationalism inculcated the working class into 'invented traditions', like the cult of

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perceivable, other reality of economic and social institutions". Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 38.

[135] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* [1983] (London: Verso, rev edn, 2006). Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983).

monarchy,[136] as "a way of welding together the state's subjects against subversion and dissidence";[137] i.e. providing a *national* loyalty to transcend threatening class loyalty.[138] As such, Victoria became Empress of India twenty years into her reign, India having been previously run by the East India Company: a symbolic means of securing the monarchy – *and* ennobling colonial plunder – which also reveals the way that 'national' concepts are state-created and are overlaid onto capitalism.[139]

Important in peacetime, the national imaginary is essential in war, when the working class is required to defend the ruling class. Whether the ruling class is viewed as a government or an elite, it is not something to die for. A nation, the entire body of the citizenry, is a far better banner, and one that had functioned effectively for two World Wars in the twentieth century.[140] A non-combatant *Cold* War was more abstract, but also more alarming, considered in terms of an *international* proletariat ("The workers have no country")[141] and an Eastern Communism that rejected and therefore threatened both British capitalism and British Empire – the very things that had made Britain Great, the pillars of British nationalism. Invocations of a British 'nation' then are potentially unifying strategies, galvanising support against an external enemy for fictional spies and real-world readers alike, defining where, who and what is being fought for. But invocations of nation also encounter contradictions: where can a British nationalism be located that does not expose the faultline of British Empire, British capitalism, or British class system?

The nation is not *always* invoked by the state alone, in the British Empire's mode of "official nationalism" (B. Anderson, p. 85). Anderson stresses the importance of the development of printing in creating the capacity to address a mass, simultaneous "us".

[136] *The Invention of Tradition,* edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: University Press; 1983) p. 108.
[137] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914* [1987] (London: Abacus, 2010), p. 148.
[138] Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain,* [1977] (London: Verso; rev edn 1981), p. 340.
[139] Timothy Brennan suggests Britain's sense of itself as a nation emanated from the English Civil War (p. 52) and imperial conquest (p. 59). Timothy Brennan, 'The National Longing for Form', in Homi K. Bhabha (ed.) *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990).
[140] Perry Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis', *New Left Review* I/23 (January-February 1964), 26-53, p. 35.
[141] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* [1848] (London: Penguin, 1985) p. 102.

Newspapers thus play a crucial role in defining where, what and who is, in this case, the British nation. So too do novels, which Jameson claims can function as "national allegories".[142] If *all* novels are national allegories, or in this case, 'condition of England' novels, Hammond convincingly argues that espionage novels, where 'Britain' is always what is being protected, are *more* state of the nation than other fiction (Hammond, p. 110). Let us briefly survey how le Carré's novels achieve this, how they define what is Britain, and thus what it is that is being defended.

Nationalism theorist, Anthony Smith, cites "the landscape itself [...] the peculiar beauty of 'our' hills and mountains, our rivers, lakes and fields..." as a key facet of how nations define themselves, and thus in this case, how le Carré defines *where* is archetypally British.[143] The British landscape in le Carré's work is a vista of windswept Cornish cliffs, Somerset downs, prep schools, public schools, sleepy Oxford colleges, London's bustling West End and the staid suburban commuter green belt around the capital. A Britain therefore that excludes the North and East of England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and London's outer boroughs. With such largely working class milieus largely excluded from le Carré's foreshortened Britain, we are presented with a traditional establishment vision of what constitutes British terrain and thus what is being defended in the Cold War.

No *ethnic* basis for 'British' nationality exists, the UK being "a composite of different nations" (Wood, *Pristine*, p. 31). So le Carré's definition of 'who' is Britain commendably includes a Hungarian (Toby Esterhase), a Pole (Fred Leiser) and a Russian (Villem, aka William Craven). But neither Esterhase, Leiser, nor Craven ever achieve "Britishness" in others' eyes: this might be considered a further satire of establishment manners did not the narrative emphasise these characters' "foreignness" (their accents and style are 'off'). The phrase "British to the core" is used in bad faith of both Leiser (*Looking Glass*, p. 148) *and* Villem (*Smiley's People,* p. 94). This latent chauvinism is enhanced by

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[142] Fredric Jameson, 'Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', *Social Text* 15 (Autumn, 1986), 65-88, p. 69.
[143] Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), p. 32.

scarce or negative portrayals of working class characters, and by le Carré's choice of an establishment figure, Smiley, as ultimate exemplar of Englishness, of *who* is Britain. "An ideological struggle over national identity, in Britain, is inseparable from the struggle over class identity" (Inglis, p. 202). This is all the more charged in fiction that champions Britain against a political enemy (Communism) that threatens those very class structures.

What is British is found in le Carré's attention to the abstract notion of British *character*. Across the novels we might say that British character encompasses "decency", individualism, humanism, War memorialisation (the Blitz spirit), high culture and the "reflux of imperialism" (Anderson, 'Origins', p. 34). These are set against the presented indecency, collectivisation, anti-humanism, fanaticism, philistinism and "absolutism" of Communism. Once again this is a distinctly elite, establishment characterisation of Britishness, and again, most of these national characteristics are imbued in Smiley, so nation functions as a "symbol" of the values that are being defended in the Cold War.[144] Nation then is a "narrative", which, like all narratives, contains contradictory impulses, whereby calls to national unity also expose faultlines in the social fabric (Larsen, p. 173). This national discursive field asserts British decency, British geopolitical power, British culture and British lack of ideology, but in doing so also exposes their obverse: British indecency, British decline, British philistinism and British ideology.

Political Enemy

The political enemy is a rather more straightforward term to define. In le Carré's 1960s novels Britain's political enemy is the GDR, in the 1970s, the USSR: more broadly, however, the political enemy is actually Communism. As such, this thesis's third theme is effectively a "dissident reading" as against critics' common "moral equivalence" trope. As Smiley admits in *Honourable Schoolboy* (p. 122) Soviet Communism had struck fear into the West since the Bolshevik Revolution (Westad, p. 25), which Britain tried to avert (le

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[144] Neil Larsen, *Determinations: Essays on Theory, Narrative and Nation in the Americas* (London: Verso, 2001), p. 173.

Carré precursor, Somerset Maugham, documents this in 'Mr Harrington's Washing' in *Ashenden*, 1928). World War II temporarily eclipsed Communism with a more immediate enemy, fascism, but the emergence of the US and USSR as the dominant post-war forces, and the latter's creation of an Eastern Bloc of Communist states (formalised by May 1955's Warsaw Pact) confirmed Western fears of Soviet expansionism. "An interpretive framework calculated to command immediate public support was purposefully articulated: the necessary ideological confrontation between a fiendish Soviet scheme of world domination and the forces of 'freedom'" (Sinfield, *Literature*, p. 107). Freedom untained by, for example, the continuance of US segregation. Although fear of a Soviet attack was genuine,[145] Soviet behaviour could equally be read as defensiveness against the West's overt hostility to Communism, and the US's pursuit of global intervention to combat Communism, enhancing what Martin Walker calls "the besetting syndrome of military inferiority which gripped the Soviet leadership".[146] As such, "revisionist" Cold-War historians like William Appleman Williams and Melvyn P. Leffler (Hammond, pp. 2-3), contemporaneous with le Carré's 60s and 70s novels, insisted the Warsaw Pact was a defensive response to the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO, formalised in April 1949). In the Western consensus few recall that the USSR twice applied to join NATO in 1954 and was rejected by the US, UK and France.[147]

Stalin's death in 1953 seemed to promise a thaw. However, although Nikita Khrushchev outlined a policy of "peaceful coexistence" (i.e. non-expansionism), from 1958, we see in le Carré how Western governments' disbelief in the policy filtered into fiction. The only people suggesting an alternate view of the Cold War, the Labour left and British Communists, were smeared as Soviet stooges by the post-war anti-Communist consensus in media and state (Lashmar & Oliver, p. 114). Dieter Frey in *Call for the Dead* and Jens Fiedler in *The Spy* are both Stalinists in an age of Khrushchev as Communism

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[145] Paul Lashmar and James Oliver, *Britain's Secret Propaganda War* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998), p. 23.
[146] Martin Walker, *The Cold War* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 84.
[147] Gaddis, p. 104; a footnote in Walker, p. 360.

and Stalinism became interchangeable in Western propaganda and Western cultural productions. Meanwhile, in reaction to the West's hostility (and internal hardliners), a Soviet siege-mentality developed, and Khrushchev became more bullish, with divided Berlin becoming a faultline. Berlin dominated headlines as le Carré's debut *Call for the Dead* emerged in June 1961, and Berlin would become a major setting for le Carré's breakthrough, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963).[148] With West Germany's premier Konrad Adenauer (1949-1963) pushing for a reunited Germany, Soviet fears of resurgent Germany were both genuine and acute.[149] As were le Carré's, given the British-Nazi alliance plot of *A Small Town in Germany* (1968). But as regards the East-West standoff, the old joke about paranoia – "just because I'm paranoid doesn't mean they haven't got it in for me" – is salient. Was it Communism that intended to "bury" capitalism (as per Khrushchev's famous threat)[150] or the West to bury Communism?

Meanwhile, the rapidly decolonising peoples of former European possessions in the Far East, Africa and the Americas were seen by the Soviets as potential Communist allies. Like the Berlin Wall, the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis ("the most dangerous Soviet-American confrontation of the entire Cold War"[151]) is rarely depicted as Soviet defensiveness, but positioning missiles on Cuba, in America's back yard was a direct response to American deployment of missiles in the Soviet Union's back yard, Turkey. In the event, the Soviets backed down, and the Americans quietly conceded the Turkish missiles' removal, but the Soviets were left depicted as the Cold-War aggressors. The approach here is not to defend Cold War Eastern bloc regimes, but to move away from the standard, consensus for/against, friend/enemy binary that dominates Cold War discourse.

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[148] *Observer*, 11 June 1961, p.1: 'Khrushchev – Call Berlin talks at once: delay impossible - threat to sign peace treaty with East Germans.' The Kennedy/Khrushchev summit was headline news through June 1961.
[149] Jeremy Isaacs & Taylor Downing, *Cold War: For Forty-Five Years the World Held Its Breath* [1988] (London: Abacus, 2008), p. 185.
[150] "We shall bury you", November 1956, Walker, p. 6.
[151] Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 90.

Following these early 60s scares, a period of relative calm ensued, known as *détente*, marked by the superpowers' 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and 1972 Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I). However, le Carré's Communists *during* détente become even *more* hardline. Where Jens Fiedler articulated some semblance of Communist 'ideology', Karla, in the 1970s, remained malevolently silent throughout the entire Karla Trilogy. Karla, initially, was a purely Manichaean portrait, an embodiment of unmitigated 'evil'. Of course, historically, the national enemy is *always* evil, as Jameson, historicising Frye's folk myths, points out (Jameson, *Political*, pp. 101-5). In this sense Communism in Western ideology and le Carré's fiction occupies a standard subject position for any national enemy. But as a *political* enemy, Communism presented a particular *type* of 'evil' – one that was symbolically, revolutionarily – opposed to capitalism, the West's system.

In le Carré's books, as we saw in le Carré's critics, 'ideology' is negative; something the *enemy* has, not Britain. This 'Communist ideology' is definable as 'repressive dogma' a bureaucratic instrumentalism that is fundamentally anti-human, as we see vividly in the depictions of Soviet society in *Smiley's People*, concurrent with the Second Cold War. However, Communist ideology is never understood as a coherent *philosophy*, or as a concept of political economy, let alone ever possessing any benign objective. It is only ever a malign, brutal 'reality'. Therefore, without ideological rationale to its bureaucratic rationalism, Communism is defined as *ends*, not means: "'We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power'" as O'Brien says in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: a work that haunts le Carré's fiction.[152] In presenting Communism in this way, the West's capitalist system is rendered neutral, normative, commonsensical, but again, a faultline is exposed. Because this portrayal of Communism – and particularly Communist characters – cannot hold: there is a huge gap, "an eloquent silence" (Macherey, p. 79) where the very thing that galvanises the Cold-War effort – Communism – should be. This silence is a faultline.

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[152] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* [1949] (London: Penguin, 2013) pp. 301-302.

5. Roadmap: Chapter Breakdown

Chapter 1 will examine *Call for the Dead* (1961), which introduces recurring British agent, George Smiley, who appears in each of the novels in this thesis. The contradictory relationship le Carré's spies will have with the state is established when clashes with his inefficient bureaucratic boss, Maston, cause Smiley to resign to investigate the murder of the Foreign Office's Samuel Fennan independently. Smiley's nostalgia for an 'amateur', pre-bureaucratic state apparatus is nostalgia for a pre-democratic state. However, when Smiley reveals the Fennan case represents a spy penetration of the British state, Smiley secures both the state and its bureaucracy, both within its fictional realm but also symbolically, resolving public loss of confidence in reaction to real-life espionage penetrations. As well as upholding the state, via the execution of Communist GDR agent, Dieter Frey, Smiley upholds the violent scaffolding of the state. The British nation in *Call* functions as an ideological field which meditates upon British self-image and public image. In killing Frey, Smiley highlights the contradiction of a national 'decency' underwritten by violence to defend Britain's interests. This imperialism and the associated elitism of British society, threatened by post-war reconstruction within and Communism without is defended by Smiley. The threat of the political enemy of Eastern bloc Communism is strongly asserted, and Communism is depicted via contradictory motifs that recur throughout le Carré's work: Communism as naivety and Communism as ideological 'fanaticism' that devalues human life, both undermined by no Communist ideology being presented.

Chapter 2, on le Carré's breakthrough novel *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963), claims that *The Spy* was – and is – widely misunderstood. The British state, via intelligence chief, Control, hatches a cynical, expedient plot, exploiting agent Alec Leamas and sacrificing his lover, Liz Gold, to secure British interests. Control's "totalitarian" plot is the basis for the "moral equivalence" trope in le Carré criticism. Despite this, the state's action is not unequivocally condemned, while the novel's reliance on the "empirical" mode

serves to reassert both state and status quo, whilst denying a British ideology. After *Call*'s elite claim on the British nation, *The Spy* represents a new understanding of Britain, with Harold Wilson's 'classlessness' explored via Leamas. The novel ultimately suggests the classless are powerless against the sophistry and ruthlessness of the patrician class represented by Control however. A shabby Britain suggests British decline, but also an antipathy in le Carré to democratisation at the dawn of the Swinging Sixties. Control's plot reasserts both Britain's and the patrician elite's potency at a time when both were weakened by the Philby and Profumo affairs. Via GDR agent, Fiedler, the ideology of the Cold-War political enemy is given its most detailed depiction in le Carré's fiction. This portrayal of the political enemy as parodically anti-humanist is used to outweigh the critique of an expedient Britain. With anti-Communism and the British class system thus reaffirmed, this 'radical' book is revealed as a resigned reassertion of the status quo.

Chapter 3 shows how *The Looking-Glass War* (1965) explores British decline via a faded Wartime intelligence Department's attempt to reassert itself. With its intensive focus on the British state bureaucracy, the Cold War enemy is nigh invisible, but a warning about *British* totalitarianism remains.[153] *Looking Glass* evinces apparently anti-establishment sentiments, satirising the Department's gentlemanly amateur class as anachronistic, but its state satire is undermined by the rival Circus's asserted efficiency. The depiction of the British *nation* via the dilapidated Department and a shabbily depicted London are synecdoches of a declining Britain that, even more than *The Spy*, is anything but 'swinging'. Yet there is a class divide here again between the presented grimy, working class areas of London and the glowing presentation of elite Oxford, that suggests sympathy rather than satire for the Department's nostalgia for an elite, pre-war world. Like *The Spy*, the working classes (agent, Leiser) remain expendable pawns in a corrupt patrician establishment's attempts to retain power. A plot that at first appears to question the

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[153] Nazism is invoked in three of le Carré's 60s novels as unambiguous enemy, and its totalitarian spectre merges with Communism in *Call*, *The Spy* and *A Small Town in Germany* (1968), where the warning of British proto-totalitarianism steps up via a British-Nazi alliance.

Communist threat, via an assertion of illusory GDR rockets at the Western border, falls back upon reassertions of Communism as toxic. In all then a supposedly radical book ultimately asserts consensus positions.

Chapter 4 demonstrates how, after a long break from the Cold War and popular success, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1974) returned le Carré to both. *Tinker* examines British decline via a reimagining of Soviet agent, Kim Philby's, penetration of the British secret service. Smiley, retired, working secretly to identify the treacherous 'mole' inside the state, is again disassociated from the British state even as he investigates and ultimately reinstates that state's security against this incursion. By defeating the political enemy, Smiley enacts a fictional resolution to the 'national' humiliation of Philby and implicitly 'resolves' British decline. In this national discursive field, British decency is firmly identified with Smiley, but comes into complex interplay with the violence used to achieve British political ends: in the Empire in the real world (increasingly visible in the 1970s novels) and the indirect, disavowed execution of the 'mole', Bill Haydon, in the novel. Meanwhile at this time of Cold-War détente, the political enemy, Communism, assumes a new, even more Manichaean, shape in the form of Smiley's inhuman, unscrupulous Soviet opposite-number and nemesis Karla, the 'mole's controller. Again neither Karla nor Haydon claim any political rationalisation for their murders and conspiracies, and consequently Communism elided in a novel about a Communist spy.

Chapter 5 examines how *The Honourable Schoolboy* (1977) sees Smiley become head of the intelligence bureaucracy, an official of the state. With Smiley controlling a Far Eastern operation from Britain, and Jerry Westerby the fieldman in the Far East, a tension between state duty and individual honour eventually prompts Westerby to split from the British state. Far from offering a radical critique of the state, Westerby's actions are an assertion of a chauvinistic, unreflective self-interest that takes imperialism as a given. Thus again does an anti-state critique ultimately uphold the state. With a raft of present and former European colonies forming the novel's background, imperialism is a major theme

in the book, wherein the national imaginary juggles assertions of British potency, British imperial nostalgia and British imperial guilt. This finds particular focus in the tense relationship between the old colonial hand, Britain and the now dominant America, and the novel can be seen as an elegy to British imperialism. With Karla relegated to background and his Chinese 'mole' only glimpsed briefly, a complex – and for le Carré unusually action-based – plot distracts from the political enemy. Yet the book shows that colonialism is being replaced in all these territories by Communism, which, defined again by brutal means not philosophical ends, is presented as the greater evil.

Chapter 6 reveals how *Smiley's People* (1979) again enacts a drama about Smiley saving the British state, whilst he and the state's functionaries mutually disavow his connection to that state. Smiley, again retired, is brought in by the bureaucrats, to solve a political murder of a Russian émigré, but in doing so stumbles upon a far larger plot by his Soviet nemesis, Karla. Bureaucracy is again heavily critiqued, and negatively associated both with the Labour party and the presumed impotence of détente. But while operating unofficially, Smiley remains a servant of the state's deeper interests: this is semi-ratified when the state deniably endorses Smiley's entrapment of Karla by equipping him with former state personnel. The novel also takes national fantasy to Bond-ian heights via the symbolic defection of Karla, head of Soviet counterintelligence. A questioning of British 'decency' returns regarding the methods Smiley deploys to achieve this: using Karla's disturbed daughter as leverage. Tallying with the 'Second Cold War', *Smiley's People* is le Carré's most uncompromisingly anti-Communist novel yet, entirely in tune with Margaret Thatcher, in a hawkish attitude to Soviet 'totalitarianism', with Soviet society depicted for the first time in le Carré, via Parisian émigré, Ostrakova. Contradictorily, the book's abrupt 'humanising' of Karla, via his daughter, provides a second flank of attack upon Communism, as incompatible with essential humanity, dooming it to failure. This failure is enacted by Smiley/Britain's climactic defeat of Karla/Communism at the Berlin Wall.

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Chapter 1: *Call for the Dead*

1. Calling Card: *Call for the Dead* in Context

Le Carré's debut, *Call for the Dead*, emerged at a moment of high historical intrigue in June 1961.[154] The Portland spy-ring trial occurred in March 1961,[155] while another Communist agent, George Blake's, trial – and draconian sentence – was front-page news as *Call* was published.[156] This was a telling coincidence for a book about Communist penetration of British government, especially with nuclear spies Alan Nunn May (1948) and Klaus Fuchs (1950) and MI5 defectors Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean (1951) also fresh in the public mind: indeed all are cited in the novel.[157] Moreover, the novel's plot-trigger, the vetting of government employees regarding Communist associations, was a live contemporary issue in British culture. Indeed, Cornwell had himself been very recently engaged in just such vetting interviews.[158]

The US was pushing Britain to improve its vetting system and the clubby atmosphere of its intelligence services.[159] More intrusive *positive* vetting (interviewing associates) was introduced by Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, in 1952, in response to the failure of negative vetting (checks on MI5 and Special Branch files): Fuchs had been vetted *six* times (Hennessy, p. 95). Macmillan's further civil service "purge" in 1955 meanwhile was a recent memory. However, with a characteristic queasiness regarding the state, there was deep British resistance to these procedures. Positive vetting's architect A.J.D. Winnifrith worried about impugning "men of blameless life and unblemished reputation within their own departments and [...] neighbourhoods" (Hennessy, p. 99).

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[154] The book was published by leftist Victor Gollancz, formerly Orwell's publisher, known for his early assertions of Jewish persecution in Nazi Germany.

[155] 'Three men blamed in Spy case scandal', *Daily Herald* 14 June 1961 p. 1.

[156] '40 Agents Betrayed by George Blake', *Daily Express*, 20 June 1961, p. 1.

[157] Soviet defector Igor Gouzenko (*Call*, p. 12) led to Nunn May's exposure. Fuchs (*Call* p. 76); Maclean (*Call*, p. 76.)

[158] Le Carré, 'Foreword to the Lamplighter Edition' *Call for the Dead* (Sevenoaks: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), pp. 6-7.

[159] Clement Attlee's "decency blended with a touch of naivety" in his faith in "the traditions of public service" as guarantor of loyalty Peter Hennessy, *The Secret State: Preparing for the Worst, 1945-2010* [2002] (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 101.

Call's plot establishes the complexity for which le Carré would become known. Set circa 1960,[160] "Circus" security agent, George Smiley, interviews Foreign Office official, Samuel Fennan about his Communist past. This is barely even negative vetting, and is distinctly clubby, given that the two have a walk and a coffee together, and Smiley tells Fennan that he has nothing to fear.[161] So Smiley is shocked when Fennan apparently commits suicide as a result. When Smiley's superior Mason accepts the suicide verdict against Smiley's evidence, Smiley resigns from the Circus. Smiley's suspicions rest on a classic detective novel trope, a dog that didn't bark, in the form of an early morning call that Fennan requested the night before his 'suicide'. Pursuing the investigation independently, helped by the Circus's Peter Guillam and Special Branch's Inspector Mendel, Smiley discovers Fennan was murdered because he was about to expose his wife, *Mrs* Fennan's espionage, a plot which transpires to be masterminded by Smiley's former student in pre-war Germany, Dieter Frey, now a GDR agent. Threatened with capture, Frey kills Mrs Fennan at a theatre, then when Smiley pursues him to the banks of the Thames, Frey does not attack Smiley but is himself killed in the ensuing scuffle.

Contemporary Reception of *Call for the Dead*

We see in the novel's few reviews the beginnings of the hailing of a "new realism" in the spy genre, as against Fleming's romances. Detective-writer, Francis Iles's positive review called *Call* "fresh and exciting [...] with what seems to be a wholly authentic background"[162] (though Iles made no reference to positive vetting or Communist spy scandals). Maurice Richardson's positive review called it "highly intelligent, realistic", noting *Call*'s focus on the bureaucratic *institution*: "a secret service now departmentalised and hyper-obsessionally red-taped".[163] In another positive notice, Nicholas Blake hailed

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[160] *Call*'s events (referenced as "January") are later stated as being 1959 (*Spy*, p. 14). Yet Elsa Fennan's claim she met Frey in January 1956, "five years ago", would set the novel in 1960.
[161] Peter Hennessy and Gail Brownfeld, 'Britain's Cold War Security Purge: The Origins of Positive Vetting', *The History Journal*, 25; 4, (1982), 965-974. (p. 967).
[162] Francis Iles, 'Criminal Records', *Guardian* 15 July 1961, p. 5.
[163] Maurice Richardson, 'March Past of the Spies', *Observer*, 18 June 1961, p. 25.

Call's realism, saying it "makes most cloak and dagger stuff taste of cardboard."[164] Again 'realism' did not connect with historical reality. Violet Grant's equally positive review claimed *Call* would give "the secret service novel a shot in the arm" and described director, Maston as "far more unpleasant [...] than any of the agents his department hunts down"[165] – the first appearance of both the anti-establishment *and* the moral equivalence critical trope in le Carré commentary. Percy Hoskins echoed this anti-establishment stance in another positive review, claiming Smiley "has lost faith in what Security Services have to do", again citing *Call*'s 'realism' and claiming it, "reads more knowledgably than most books on the subject".[166] Again, what the basis of realism's 'knowledge' is unspecified. A year later Anthony Lejeune served a reminder that le Carré's work was still seen as 'limited' genre fiction: "the art of knowing just how serious a writer can be in dealing with the passions is one which few detective novelists acquire".[167]

Some later literary critics have regarded *Call* as juvenilia (Barley ignores it): yet although Smiley is never allowed to kill again, *Call* establishes all of le Carré's staple themes. Critics recognise Smiley's anti-statism,[168] but not Smiley's practical defence of the state. Critics take little notice of the concept of the nation, central to the argument here, and, sustaining an almost fan-like deference to Smiley, largely gloss over the key contradiction of the 'decent' Smiley's execution of Frey. As regards the political enemy, critics mostly misread a Manichaean portrait of Frey as evidence of moral equivalence;[169] indeed several critics see the novel as pro-Communist.

This chapter will consider the novel in terms, first, of its unusually detailed presentation of the state. Can the novel rightly be called anti-establishment, the chapter asks, given that its antipathy towards bureaucracy leaves the state unchallenged, indeed

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[164] Nicholas Blake, *Sunday Telegraph*, 30 July 1961, p. 15.
[165] Violet Grant, 'Scenes of the Crime', *Daily Telegraph*, 16 June 1961, p. 18.
[166] Percy Hoskins, *Times Literary Supplement*, 23 June 1961, p. 392.
[167] Anthony Lejeune and Philip John Stead, 'Skills and Thrills', *Times Literary Supplement*, 31 August 1962, p. 661.
[168] E.g. Rothberg (in H. Bloom, p. 53); Ambrosetti, p. 101.
[169] E.g. Garson (in H. Bloom, pp. 77-78).

champions an anti-democratic elite amateurism? Secondly, the chapter examine how *Call* presents the British nation, the 'home front' that is being fought *for*, wherein the 'condition of England' is addressed via the character of Smiley and through the 'neutral' narrative voice. Thirdly, the chapter will examine the political enemy, and explore how far moral equivalence can apply when Communism is presented as a real, significant and unscrupulous threat to British institutions and verities.

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2. "A Symbol of Nothing at All": the British State

Call for the Dead's emphasis on the intelligence services as an institution was unusual in espionage fiction. Where Fleming and even Deighton focused on the "field" and the operational *agent*, le Carré focuses far more on the "desk", the less glamorous, bureaucratic facets of the "spy", bound up with files, dossiers and interviews – and the espionage workplace, the institution. The MI5/MI6 amalgam that le Carré dubs "the Circus" (*Call*, p. 114) will feature in all of the novels in this thesis. The contradictory relationship le Carré's spies will have with the state throughout these novels is also established in *Call*. Smiley's boss, Maston's bureaucratic inefficiency, and Smiley solving the case by operating *outside* of the hindering bureaucracy both appear to damn the state.[170] Contradicting this, however, is the fact that Smiley works to secure both the state and the bureaucracy by solving the espionage plot.

The second section shows how Smiley's critique of the post-war bureaucratic state comes from a position of a pre-war amateurism. Not only does Smiley's position advocate a pre-democratic elite system, it leaves the "*abstract* state"[171] – capitalism, the landed class, military, judiciary and legislative branch – unchanged. It is this "establishment" that is being protected by Smiley.[172] Hugh Fairlie is credited by the OED for the first use of the expression in 1955; satirist Peter Cook's nightclub, The Establishment opened in October 1961.[173] That the entitled functionaries (the bureaucrats) are 'saved' in *Call* is a side effect – albeit one that traces a faultline. This is Barthes' "Operation Margarine": the strategy in advertising where something is decried in order, ultimately, to be upheld. "A little 'confessed' evil saves one from acknowledging a lot of hidden evil" (Barthes, *Mythologies*,

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[170] Lewis calls Smiley's relationship with the Circus "uneasy and ambiguous [...] part-outsider and part-insider" (Lewis, p. 23).
[171] Karl Marx, 'Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right' [1843] edited by Joseph O'Malley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 31.
[172] "Protection not of ordinary people but of the structure of power", Phyllis Lassner, 'Paradoxical Polemics: John le Carré's Responses to 9/11' Kristine A. Miller (ed.) *Transatlantic Literature and Culture After 9/11: The Wrong Side of Paradise* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), p. 19.
[173] Cook's *Beyond the Fringe* team – all largely establishment insiders – was credited by le Carré as pioneering anti-establishment satire (August 1960-1964) 'Foreword to the Lamplighter Edition', *The Looking Glass War* (Sevenoaks: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), p. viii. Hugh Thomas's *The Establishment* collection was published in 1962, between *Call for the Dead* and *The Spy*.

p. 41). In his characteristic fret about his role within the state, Smiley asks himself, "Duty to *whom* for God's sake?" (*Call*, p. 26). This is a very good question, but in suggesting an anti-establishment attitude, it is actually only an anti-*bureaucratic* attitude. Bureaucracy is critiqued in order for the abstract state to be implicitly upheld, because explicit defence of the state is not possible within liberalism.

"The Cumbersome Machinery of Bureaucracy"

That the state had become normatively negative in the post-war era is nowhere better illustrated than Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) – standard reading in schools by the early 1960s:[174] a review of the 1956 film adaptation hailed "the bureaucracy run mad world which Orwell foresaw as the future".[175] We see here how the 'state' and 'bureaucracy' have become culturally synonymous. Meanwhile, the trial of Nazi bureaucrat, Adolf Eichmann, was front-page news from April 1961; Hannah Arendt's reports of the trial cemented her link between totalitarianism and bureaucracy, and Eichmann became the ultimate bureaucrat-demon: "an amoral technical expert who treats ends as given" (Du Gay, p. 28).[176] This instrumentalism finds forceful expression in the speech that concentration camp survivor Mrs Fennan makes to Smiley. Such is the complexity of the novel that the power of Mrs Fennan's speeches remains even once they are revealed to be mendacious:[177]

> 'The mind becomes separated from the body: it thinks without reality, rules a paper
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> kingdom and devises without emotion the ruin of its paper victims. But sometimes
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> [...] the files grow heads and arms and legs and that's a terrible moment, isn't it?

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[174] Tony Shaw, *British Cinema and the Cold War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), p. 104.
[175] *Daily Film Renter* 24 Feb 1956, in Shaw p. 112.
[176] That these were key cultural concerns is indicated by *Call*'s publisher, Victor Gollancz, protesting the death penalty for Eichmann ('A Jew Pleads for Eichmann's life', *Daily Herald*, 9 June 1961, p.10). This is especially interesting given the *literary* death penalty dealt to both Mrs Fennan and Dieter Frey by Gollancz's client.
[177] Cornwell later part-relayed Mrs Fennan's speech as his own views, "Then suddenly there comes a moment of crisis when all files grow arms and legs and then it isn't funny any more," Jordan Bonfante, 'The Spy-Master Unmasked', *Life,* 6 April 1964, pp. 71-73.

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The names have families as well as records, and human motives to explain the sad little dossiers and their makebelieve sins. It's like the State and the People. The State is a dream, too, a symbol of nothing at all, an emptiness [...] But States make war, don't they, and imprison people?' (*Call*, p. 27).

Just as in British culture, bureaucracy here morphs into the state, but let us attempt to separate them. There is injustice in Smiley being accused of such bureaucratic "instrumental rationality" (Du Gay, p. 4). Smiley's antipathy towards bureaucracy has been made clear via his regular disavowals and distancings from his institution ("duty to whom?"), while, soon after Mrs Fennan's speech, Smiley will quit the intelligence bureaucracy's employ altogether. Mrs Fennan's point however is that Smiley's interview with her husband was a state intrusion, a bureaucratic bulldozing of the personal. Moreover, for all Smiley's humanist, non-bureaucratic compassion for Mrs Fennan (*Call*, p. 37; p. 104), Smiley will *keep* coming back to intrude upon her home and her grief, in a 'private' capacity (pp. 37-38; pp. 99-108). Smiley is *not* a private 'individual' however: he has, in Gellner's felicitous definition of the state, "separated out from the rest of social life" (Gellner, p. 4). Investigating not a murder but an espionage penetration of the British state, Smiley intrudes upon Mrs Fennan in order to secure the state. Moreover, Smiley's intrusion – and thus positive vetting – will be *justified* contra the anti-statists' complaints (Andrew, p. 395) because Mrs Fennan *is* a spy, and her husband *was* complicit in her espionage. This, then, is a ratification of the state's interests in which bureaucracy is actually a blind. Indeed the whole novel could be regarded as a huge positive vetting investigation by the true-to-life MI5-Special Branch amalgam (Smiley-Mendel), reflecting reservations about state intrusion (*Call*'s suspect, Fennan, kills himself) that are ultimately quelled by assertion of the extent and aggression of the Communist threat.

However, in her speech, Mrs Fennan connects the British state's bureaucratic rationality to the Arendt and Orwell definition of a totalitarian system: given Mrs Fennan's

experiences this is the fascist state, but those capitals in State and People summon the Communism state too.[178] Mrs Fennan will later clarify the link: "'I have seen what human beings are. How could I believe in a formula for human beings?'" (*Call*, p. 101). Here the planning and social control of Communism is suggested to conflict with a flawed "human nature" revealed to Mrs Fennan by Nazi concentration camps, but, to leftists, by Stalin's gulags (Schaub, p. 7; p. 12). However, the state is condemned in *Call* not for bureaucratic instrumentalism but for a more downbeat – and British – bureaucratic fumble.

Mrs Fennan's citation of states making war and imprisoning people is worth a pause, as it moves beyond bureaucracy into the deep state's military and judicial system in a manner unusual in genre – or indeed any – fiction. Far from being "a symbol of nothing at all" – as unreliable a statement as any the unreliable Mrs Fennan makes – this is how the liberal state would prefer to be thought of. In fact the deep state is a symbol of a material collective of aligned interests - the law, the military, capitalism, the judiciary, the aristocracy. This glimpse in Mrs Fennan's speech is the last we see of the abstract state however: its utterance is a faultline, essentially, and thereafter in *Call* and in future novels, the state again becomes synonymous with bureaucracy, and continues to be decried and disavowed. By the end of the novel, the state has been upheld, saved from Communist penetration and restored. Maston will take the credit, but Smiley did the heavy lifting. There *is* a radical critique of bureaucracy to be made: Mandel and Miliband both stress the politicised nature of the civil service bureaucracy amidst its proclaimed 'neutrality' (administrative no-man's lands?), and its role in securing capitalism.[179] *Call*'s critique however, is limited, a superficial anti-establishment stance that occludes its own affirmation of the state. In a secondary strategy, the deep state and its structures are more overtly upheld, but from a classically conservative position of amateurism, which we shall now explore.

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[178] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harcourt, 1994).
[179] See: Mandel: p. 187; Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1969) pp. 128-9.

"Inspired Amateurism": the Pre-Democratic British State

In *Call*, the state – but really the state bureaucracy – is critiqued from the perspective of 'amateurism'. "The famous amateurism of the English 'upper class'" (P. Anderson, 'Origins', p. 41) was the basis of the pre-War, pre-professionalised state apparatus, predicated on informal recruitment within a public schooled, Oxford-educated elite, requiring no training or specialist skills.[180] We can trace *Call*'s amateur anti-statism to the detective novel to which it is deeply indebted. But rather than taking genre as a closed world, as Glenn Most did with his detective/le Carré analogy (in H. Bloom, p. 99), we might better ask what the historical *purpose* of this anti-state trope was. The Great Detective was a freelancer, working for disinterested 'justice' for no pay – an amateur. This distance between inspired individualist hero and plodding collective denigrates the state, true, but only at its lowest level of functionaries. In class terms, this attitude valorises the aristocratic amateur detective over the plebeian police. How does this map onto *Call?*

Early in *Call*, the text declares that since the war "the inspired amateurism of a handful of highly qualified, under-paid men had given way to the efficiency, bureaucracy, and intrigue of a large Government department, effectively at the mercy of Maston" (*Call*, pp. 12/13). The amateur system was chipped away at over the centuries, by the nineteenth century Northcote Trevelyan reforms;[181] and particularly by the post-war Attlee Labour government, which attempted to professionalise the booming bureaucracy required to service the Welfare State. Smiley, as no critic ever realises, is an *amateur*, recruited informally, with no professional training (p. 9), though with field experience aplenty. Maston by contrast, is a "the professional civil servant from an orthodox department" (p. 13), embarked on a state career, with no field experience. As such, Maston's function is said to, "integrate the brilliance of his staff with the cumbersome machinery of

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[180] Perry Anderson, 'Figures of Descent', *New Left Review* 161 (Jan-Feb 1987), p. 38.
[181] The bourgeois likes of Smiley were allowed into the establishment via the Northcote Trevelyan civil service reforms (1854). This "groomed rather than displaced this gentlemanly intake [...] assuring upper-class privilege more modern credentials" (P. Anderson, 'Figures', p. 38). Anderson is summarising Peter Gowan's 'Origins of the Administrative Elite', *New Left Review* 162 (March-April 1987), 4-34.

bureaucracy" (p. 13). Collective, professional bureaucracy thus tames but also takes credit for individual amateur inspiration: the irony here is that the professional is amateurish and the amateur professional.

We can see the Smiley/Maston clash in terms of Weber's "specialist" (Maston) versus the "cultivated man" (Smiley),[182] or the amateur's common-sense empiricism the bureaucrat's suspect rationality (Mandel, p. 181). Thus Maston's rejection of Smiley's view that Fennan was murdered: "'*Facts*? ...What *facts*? [...] on the one hand we have your *suspicions* [...] against that we have the opinion of *trained* detectives'" (*Call*, pp. 42/43; my emphasis). Later Smiley elaborates the pair's philosophical polarity:

> Suspicion, experience, perception, common sense – for Maston these were not the organs of fact. Paper was fact, Ministers were fact, Home Secretaries were hard fact. The Department did not concern itself with the vague impressions of a single officer when they conflicted with policy (*Call*, pp. 45-46).

Antony Easthope describes English empiricism as embodied in the following antinomies: practice vs. theory, common sense vs. dogma, amateur vs. professional, sincere vs. artificial, and masculine vs. feminine (Maston as "this obscene cissy with his greying hair and his reasonable smile", *Call*, p. 43).[183] We might also add individual vs. collective. We see all of these in the Maston-Smiley polarity. Maston's concern with "policy" is a separate criticism of bureaucracy, that it politicises an otherwise 'neutral', disinterested justice, so justice defers to the hierarchy's demands.[184] This 'disinterest' is crucial to the mythos that the aristocratic-styled amateur is not swayed by financial or hierarchical

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[182] Weber, p. 1002.

[183] Antony Easthope, *Englishness and National Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999) pp. 89-90.

[184] The Milgram experiment of July 1961 was seen to reveal the cruelty humans could impose upon others if 'taking orders'. This had acute relevance to the Eichmann trial.

imperatives, already possessing all the money and power he needs.[185] This is a distinctly

conservative critique of capitalism: as vulgar, the bourgeoisie distancing itself from the

"taint of trade" in its background.[186] In the novel as in society, class, however fractional

the distinction, is fundamental to this amateur vs. professional clash.

The salaried professional middle class expanded by 50% between 1938 and 1951

(Sinfield, *Literature*, p. 60). This clearly represented a challenge to the old order.

Hobsbawm evokes: "the old 'gentlemen's dismay [at] their monopoly of social positions

undermined [by new notions of] professional expertise rather than parentage and

'character'" (Hobsbawm, *Industry*, p. 264). As ever, the resistance to this very limited

class mobility is via language, custom and manners – a gentleman's "quintessences" (P.

Anderson, 'Origins', p. 41). Smiley, public schooled, Oxford-educated, married into the

aristocracy, is a member of a gentleman's club (*Call*, pp. 89-90), bastion of the elite of

Britain, its numbers declining in the post-war, but its tradition upheld by Smiley. So a

series of class putdowns culminate in Smiley's characterisation of Maston as, "a barmaid's

dream of a real gentleman" (p. 19).[187] This is the condescension of the older, aristocrat-

imitating bourgeois to the *arriviste*: Maston has not lost "the taint of trade".[188] The

narrative sympathy is clustered intensely around Smiley: his snobbery is the narrative's

snobbery. But as the text implies, to anyone below the gentlemanly line, Smiley and

Maston are socially indistinguishable. What's more, that the plot proves Smiley right and

Maston wrong affirms inspired amateurism over bureaucratic professionalism, effectively

rejecting democracy and merit whilst reasserting elitism and patronage. Given that both

Anderson ('Origins') and Harold Wilson were contemporaneously blaming amateurism for

British decline, le Carré's valorisation of amateurism in *Call* is a quixotic defence of the

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[185] Prior to his recruitment, Smiley is told the Circus "they pay badly enough to guarantee you decent company" (*Call*, p. 9).
[186] Eagleton rightly connects such "genteel amateurism" with Leavisite 'disinterested' literary criticism (Eagleton, *Literary*, p. 186).
[187] "Maston was off the peg" (*Call*, p. 18) not tailored; "his suit was just too light for respectability" (p. 18); Maston has "businessman's cutlery" (p. 21).
[188] See: Harold J. Laski [1932] *The Danger of Being a Gentleman* (New York; Viking Classic, 1972).

state's elite. As such, it reveals the extent to which le Carré's antipathy to bureaucracy, far from being anti-establishment, actually upholds the interests and hierarchy of the state.

In conclusion, we see in *Call for the Dead* that Smiley's apparent rejection of the state results in *securing* the state, by solving the conspiracy. This is a faultline, and results from the bureaucracy, the functionaries, being decried, not the state itself. The affirmation of the state and traditional status quo which is implicit in this complex faultline, or double-bluff, is meanwhile, rendered explicit in Smiley's valorisation of an elitist amateurism as against Maston's *arriviste* bureaucracy, an assertion of the nepotistic order, of a pre-democratic Britain. In tandem with this distancing from the 'state' is the use of the discourse of 'nation' for what is being upheld and defended by Cold War espionage. Smiley, when he kills his former friend, Dieter Frey, is serving his *country*, not the state.[189] Let us explore this next.

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[189] "The Establishment, for [le Carré], symbolizes the State not the nation [...] Consequently betrayal becomes an act against [...] the entire national organism not just its unhealthy, cynical, compromising leadership" (Barley pp. 12-13).

3. "Deep Love of England": Imagining the Nation

Serving one's country was another common sense notion for the British establishment. Public schools provided "a training for rule" via "ideals of service" (Anderson, 'Figures', p. 41) for future administrators of the British Empire. Smiley is recruited into (the secret) "service" in this way (*Call*, p. 9),[190] and is said to have a "deep love of England", whereupon the novel essays a montage comprising, "Oxford['s] beauty, its rational ease [...] windswept autumn holidays at Hartland Quay [...] long trudges over the Cornish cliffs..." (pp. 10-11). This echoes a war propaganda film – *this* is the Britain that is being defended against the Communist threat; a threat, moreover, that in *Call* is located physically *inside* this British landscape. Indeed, this montage is followed by the War itself (pp. 11-12), the apotheosis of the British Empire, with George Smiley quietly and heroically doing his bit.

However, Britain had been steadily declining as a world power since the War. Empire had been the basis of Britain's economy: but anti-colonial movements stopped the flow of money into Britain and investment was required to militarily enforce that relationship. The Empire was thus haemorrhaging colonies yearly (Cyprus, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Tanganyika alone went during 1960-61). The British bungle of Suez (1956) – simultaneously aggressive *and* inept – revealed the United States' hegemony over Britain, upheld by subsequent events in the Middle East and Congo.[191] So, in projecting Britishness, the national imaginary exposes anxieties when Britain's two claims to greatness – its industry and its Empire – were under attack: from Soviet Communism, from its American allies, from nationalist movements and from the British left. This anxiety is found in the text: "the NATO alliance, and the desperate measures contemplated by the

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[190] So was le Carré: "We really were brought up to believe that we were the best and brightest, that we'd inherited the mantle of post-war imperialism, that we were the people for whom the war had been fought and now the earth was ours and we had a great duty to run it decently. We realized that our problem was not running the world but to come to terms with the fact of the world running us." Paul Vaughan, 'Le Carré's Circus', *Listener*, 13 September 1979, p. 59.

[191] See British co-operation in the Congo with the Belgian/US-backed military coup (September 1960) and execution of supposed Communist Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba (January 1961).

Americans, altered the whole nature of Smiley's Service" (*Call*, p. 12), linking the new world pecking order to social reconstruction at home.

An even stronger implication of British decline is found in the following outburst from Inspector Mendel as he reads the evening paper: "'Krauts. *Bloody* Krauts. God, I hate them! [...] Why bloody well forget, I'd like to know. Why forget theft, murder, and rape just because millions committed it? [...] Krupp and all that mob'" (*Call*, p. 53). Overlooked by critics, contemporary readers would have known about Nazi steel industrialist, Alfried Krupp. Stripped of his empire post-war, but as US priorities changed from de-Nazification to anti-Communism, Krupp Steel had become Germany's fourth largest company, purchasing another large company in 1960 and thus plausibly in Mendel's paper. It can hardly be coincidence that Frey's espionage cover in Britain is the East German *Steel* Mission.[192] The point is that victorious Britain's "never had it so good" post-war Long Boom was piffling compared to that of defeated West Germany, and was also now showing clear signs of stagnation.

> The new cynical spy novels [were] haunted by the sense that the war was really lost, that the West German 'economic miracle' was not matched by a British 'miracle' [so] these 'historical' thrillers of German spies serve as compensatory tales of post-war decline, telling the *real* origins of the present crisis (Denning, p. 148).[193]

Denning is discussing novels that revisit World War II, but his comments have broader currency: the conflation of the new German enemy with the old is implicit in *Call* (and explicit in *Looking Glass*),[194] whilst the notion of the lost War can be seen in such cultural commentary as: "Such is the support for collectivist measures in Britain that it may yet

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[192] East German trade delegations were claimed by the IRD to be tools of Communist expansionism (Lashmar & Oliver), p. 138.
[193] 'Cabinet's Shock Plan to Meet Crisis. Lloyd Will Freeze Pay for Millions', *Sunday Express*, 16 July 1961, p. 1.
[194] The GDR was the "richest country in the Eastern bloc" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GDR (accessed 23/5/14) and its 6% annual growth was similar to that of the UK.

prove the case that she won the war but lost the peace".[195] Addressing this post-War slide, Paul Gilroy calls the British "defeated victors".[196]

It is important however not to overestimate British decline however: as against its former colonial satellites Britain maintained a position of economic and military strength via *informal* empire,[197] and it remained the world's sixth largest national economy. However, propaganda against its enemies and influence upon its allies, specifically America, became key substitutes for declining economic and military power.[198] So fiction had a vital role in presenting Britain as potent in the symbolic and moral realm. Indicative of over-compensation for national anxieties, the sheer profusion of British Cold-War literature means that, as Hennessy claims, "To an extraordinary and hugely disproportionate extent, the world sees this clash of the secret worlds through supposedly British eyes" (p. 4). Hennessy references Fleming and le Carré, but he might as accurately cite Orwell or Koestler: this was a key propaganda success. One of the key strategies in this fictional shaping of the Cold War is, as suggested, a projected 'nation', an assertion of what is being fought *for*. Let us examine how this is achieved in *Call* first in terms of narrative voice, and then via the fictional construct of 'character'.

Nation, Narration and Class

Following on from Anderson, Neil Larsen claims that, "'literature' simultaneously 'constructs' the 'national' culture or tradition that it had formerly been assumed merely to embody and represent" (Larsen, p. 170). To reveal how *Call* 'constructs' the British nation, let us now ally formal criticism to Benedict Anderson's concept of the novel as national imaginary: a political narratology. *Call* starts thus:

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[195] D. J. Manning, *Liberalism* (London: Dent, 1976), p. 110.
[196] Paul Gilroy, *After Empire* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), p. 118.
[197] Perry Anderson 'Critique of Wilsonism', *New Left Review* 27: I (October 1964) 3-27 (p. 18).
[198] John Jenks, *British Propaganda and News Media in the Cold War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 98-99.

> When Lady Ann Sercomb married George Smiley towards the end of the war she
>
> described him to her astonished Mayfair friends as breathtakingly ordinary [...]
>
> Viscount Sawley made a special journey to his club to observe that the cat was out of
>
> the bag (*Call*, p. 7).

This is an ostentatious Dickensian flourish, signalling that *Call* is a "social novel", in the

realist tradition, as against modernism's personal novel (Williams, *Revolution*, p. 332).

Integral to this attempt to summon an entire *society* is the narrative mode known as

omniscience – or "limitless vision".[199] (Omniscience frees narration from a personal

narrator's limited vision.) Against both Dorrit Cohn's empiricism and Foucauldian critics'

seemingly opposed idea that omniscient narration is a controlling, ideological mode (in

Sternberg, p. 707), this thesis suggests that *no* narrative forms are "politically neutral

instruments of expression".[200] 'Neutral', objective, narration, like 'neutral' criticism

disguises subjective political slant.[201] Let us examine the political effect of *Call*'s

omniscience.

First, *omnipresence*[202] (ability to 'go' anywhere) elides attempts to 'document' how

information was obtained (the epistolary novel), ranging over locations, 'hearing' both

Ann's comments to her "Mayfair friends" and Viscount Sawley's remarks both at his club

and the Smileys' wedding. As Anderson suggests, this omnipresence evokes a newspaper-

like simultaneity (B. Anderson, pp. 24-5), and thus we can see that the very narrative style

is defining a national community. We see this as *Call* ranges between aristocratic clubland,

middle-class suburbia, low-rent Battersea and politically elite Whitehall, alternately

panned omnisciently or zoomed in on via individual close-focalisation, primarily Smiley's

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[199] Meir Sternberg, 'Omniscience in Narrative Construction: Old Challenges and New', *Poetics Today* 28:4 (Winter 2007), 683-794, (p. 708).

[200] Dorrit Cohn, *The Distinction of Fiction* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, rev. edn. 2000).

[201] Neutrality is no better achieved via first-person narration ('cheating' as in Christie's *Murder of Roger Ackroyd*) or stream of consciousness ('who' collates Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* characters' 'thoughts'?). Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method* [1972] (New York: Cornell University Press 1980) p, 197; Barthes, 'Narrative', p. 263.

[202] William Nelles, 'Omniscience for Atheists: Or, Jane Austen's Infallible Narrator', *Narrative*, 14; 2 (May 2006), 118-131 (p. 119).

'thoughts' (Sternberg, p. 708); a narrative "telepathy".[203] Brennan says that in the nineteenth century, "the novel brought together the 'high' and the 'low' within a national framework [...] for specific national reasons" (in Bhabha, p. 52). So Dickens' omnipresent narration embraces the 'whole' of society, while in *Call* omnipresence depicts a very *narrow* fraction of society, the aristocratic 'set': society reduced to Society. The nation in *Call* then is foreshortened, reduced to an elite. But to 'claim' the nation for the ruling class is not merely snobbery, it is a reassertion of the British establishment contra Communism's challenge to the class system. Because it this elite, of course, that is most at threat from a Communism revolutionarily opposed to it.

Given that it is the focus of *Call*'s opening passage, Smiley's place in Society is worth a pause. Via the satirised "collective voice" (Bakhtin, p. 305) of the aristocratic set, Smiley is said to be "without school, parents, regiment, or trade": he "travelled without labels in the guard's van of the social express" (*Call*, p. 7). But this is a matter of class fractional nuance, reflective of tensions within the establishment's suturing of the old aristocracy and the new bourgeoisie, but irrelevant outside. One of the main strategies of this suture was bourgeois marriage into the aristocracy (Anderson, 'Pseudo', p. 8). So to posit Smiley as "breathtakingly ordinary" (*Call*, p. 7), therefore as British everyman, is not just inaccurate: it is to empirically normalise public schooling, Oxford education, informal recruitment, membership of a gentleman's club, and marriage into the aristocracy (via *Lady* Ann Sercomb) – and to again assert the establishment as the "ordinary" nation. To anyone outside "the set", Smiley is simply a 'gentleman'.

Call then is largely bereft of the web-like interconnections between disparate milieus that was characteristic of Dickens and Eliot. However, *Call*'s limited *omnipresence* does depict two other key locales. Firstly, suburbia, whose entryist lower-middle-class world's attempts to combine the aristocrat's town/country residences is derided for its pretentions (*Call*, pp. 23-24), whilst its anonymity overlays a veneer of 'respectability' upon 'dubious'

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[203] 'Telepathy': "The reporting of innermost thoughts and feelings, such as are usually inaccessible to human observers", Jonathan Culler, 'Omniscience', *Narrative* 12; 1 (January, 2004), 22-34 (p. 26).

origins. Indeed suburbia in *Call* proves to house murderous Communist spies, betrayers of the very Englishness for which suburbia is a synecdoche.

The novel also depicts Adam Scarr's criminal underworld, his range of illegal businesses' HQ literally squatted in an un-cleared Battersea bombsite (p. 53), suggesting an unpatriotic disrespect.[204] When Smiley and Inspector Mendel corner Scarr, an archetypal, even Dickensian, rogue, at, naturally, a pub in the daytime, Mendel tells Smiley: "'You're better out of this,'" protecting Smiley's gentlemanly sensibilities from contamination (p. 55). Waiting outside in this alien working class milieu however, Smiley is promptly attacked by Mundt, a Communist (p. 56), a physical *and* metaphysical manifestation of the working class's threat: both brutish and potentially suborned by international Communism.[205] Indeed, it transpires that Scarr, the novel's sole working class character, has (inadvertently) assisted Britain's political enemy via Mundt – for material gain (p. 57). The working classes then aren't simply excluded from *Call*'s nation but a *threat* to it, the enemy within that, via Scarr, literally links with the Communist enemy without to threaten a prescribed 'Britain'.

Second, *omnitemporality* (narrative's ability to 'show' events from past or future, Nelles, p. 121) in *Call* evokes an 'agreed' history, what Brennan calls a "usable past". In this way "the evocation of deep, sacred origins […] becomes a contemporary, practical means of *creating* a people" (Brennan, in Bhabha, p. 68). This is found in *Call*'s coy historical references. When, in 1930s Germany, watching Nazis burn books, Smiley "triumphed that he knew his enemy" (*Call*, p. 11), Smiley is established not just as anti-fascist but as a champion of moderation, of 'civilisation'. As such, the War is reaffirmed as key component in Brennan's national "sacred origins", a testament to British decency – a standard allusion in post-war British culture: "we are still good while our uncivilized enemies are irredeemably evil" (Gilroy, p. 96). Then witness also: "The revelations of a

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[204] Le Carré's own father, Ronnie Cornwell, was a war profiteer (Sisman, NP).
[205] "For all the average middle-class citizen knew of the working-class world […] the 'two nations' might have been living in different continents" (Hobsbawm, *Industry,* p. 266).

young Russian cypher-clerk in Ottawa had created a new demand for men of Smiley's experience" (*Call*, p. 12). This invokes Igor Gouzenko's 1945 defection, which defined Britain's post-War enemy as the USSR and so reasserts the Cold-War imperative on which the novel stands. Herein we see how two brief *omnitemporal* passages define the book's 'nation' in ideological terms.

The result of these formal strategies is to narrate the nation as ruling class, laying bare the reality that "nationalism [is] the dominant political ideology of the bourgeoisie" (Brennan, in Bhabha, p. 54), and affirming the very social status quo that levelling Communism, by definition, threatens. Let us now examine how the fictional construct of character reveals more optimistic faultlines in the presentation of the nation.

"Who Was Then the Gentleman?" Smiley, National Decency and Violence.

Like most protagonists of British spy stories, Smiley represents Britain both literally and figuratively. He works 'for' Britain; Smiley's love of England, his saintliness and even his Christian name evoke British patron Saint George. As a result of this representative role, Smiley's occupation of the moral high-ground provides a symbolic counter-argument against national decline, asserting a British 'way of life' – a system of values – to counter the threat of Eastern bloc Communism. These values include individualism and decency.

"Individualism", notes Andrew Heywood, "is the characteristic theme of liberal ideology",[206] the belief that "society should be constructed so as to benefit the individual, giving moral priority to individual rights, needs or interests" (Heywood, p. 30). This is heavily emphasised in *Call*. "Everything [Smiley] admired or loved had been the product of intense individualism" (*Call* p. 144), as against the collective imperative of Communism. However, an "individual" representing the collective British state is a contradiction. As Williams says of the very liberal rights being defended, "if the rights [...]

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[206] Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies: An Introduction* [1992] (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 28.

may be called individual, the condition of their guarantee is inevitably social" (Williams, *Culture*, p. 291). Individualism is thus a contradiction in Western thinking.

In terms of 'decency', World War II's reputation as a moral war put Smiley and Britain on the side of the angels, as discussed, early in *Call*. Shaw quotes government papers' promotion of Britain "as the highest exemplar of Western civilization" (Shaw, p. 85). However, this decency is contradicted by the violence involved in 'civilising' other countries in Britain's imperial past. At the time of *Call*, moreover, the bloody Malayan Emergency (1948-60)[207] had only just ended, as had the Kenyan Mau-Mau uprising, while Britain had aggravated the volatile situation in Palestine, and in 1961 became embroiled in protecting its oil supply via former colony Kuwait.[208] Consequently, much British propaganda was intended to "counter Russian allegations of British imperialism" (Shaw, p. 25).[209] Violence abroad, via imperialism, and at home (usually against the working class) is a faultline in British liberalism, and it finds focus in the novel in Smiley's execution of his wartime friend and colleague Dieter Frey. Let us now close-read Smiley's reaction to Frey's death.

> Dieter was dead and he had killed him. The broken fingers of his right hand, the stiffness of his body and the sickening headache, the nausea of guilt, all testified to this. And Dieter had let him do it, had not fired the gun, had remembered their friendship when Smiley had not. They had fought in a cloud, in the rising stream of the river, in a clearing in a timeless forest: they had met, two friends rejoined, and fought like beasts. Dieter had remembered and Smiley had not. They had come from different hemispheres of the night, from different worlds of thought and conduct. Dieter, mercurial, absolute, had fought to build a civilization. Smiley, rationalistic,

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[207] The brutal British put-down of the Communist rising, costing 11,343 Malayan casualties, ended in July 1960. John Springhall, *Decolonization Since 1945* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 56.
[208] 'British force ready for action on Iraq border', *Guardian*, 4 July 1961, p. 1.
[209] "British newsreels adopted a stridently anti-Soviet tone from early 1946" (Shaw, p. 32), often skewing Soviet politicians' message via militarist images. By 1950 Gaumont-British news was "condemning pacifists as 'Reds' who threatened 'the Free World'" (Shaw, p. 32).

protective, had fought to prevent him. 'Oh God,' said Smiley aloud, 'who was then the gentleman...?' (*Call*, p. 145)

The overwrought language here is itself a faultline, indicative of the anxieties being worked over in this dense passage. The first point is that state violence undermines national decency. Smiley's attack upon Frey is a response to Frey attacking Mendel, Frey spying upon Britain and being guilty of three murders (Mr and Mrs Fennan; Adam Scarr). Thus Frey/Communism needs to be 'contained' (in the language of the Truman Doctrine) in order to defend Britain. Yet Smiley's summary execution of Frey is the rough justice of *feudal* not liberal Britain (Britain had abolished the death penalty in 1957). The act is not, *gentlemanly*, not civilised (both words are used contra Smiley in the passage just quoted). Both act and language used expose a series of faultlines.

Firstly, if Dieter acts the more 'gentlemanly' in not killing his former friend, then Dieter is more 'decent' than Smiley; Communism is more decent than liberalism. This faultline arises, arguably, because for the younger Frey (shown to be ruthless and murderous) to be defeated by Smiley ("too old", p. 13) and too mild for physical aggression) then Frey must have forborn.

Secondly, use of the word 'gentleman' as a measure of conduct is a faultline. Smiley is referred to throughout as a "gentleman" (e.g. *Call*, p. 89), and we have seen that the elite Britain Smiley represents and defends is a gentlemanly one. 'Gentleman' was originally applied solely to the feudal aristocracy, but because the new industrial bourgeoisie were trained to 'become' gentlemen in aristocratic style, via the new public schools,[210] this weakened the *structural* basis of the gentleman, as inherited landed aristocrat, and caused the word's meaning to become qualitative not quantitative: an ideal of courteous or

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[210] "The new public schools [...] were designed to socialize the sons of the – new or old – rich in a distinctive, uniform pattern, which henceforth became the fetichized criterion of the 'gentleman'", P. Anderson, *Origins*, p. 32. Chesterton called the public school system, "a *factory* for aristocrats". G. K. Chesterton, *What's Wrong With the World* (Digireads, 2009), p. 122.

humane *behaviour*.[211] The concept 'gentleman' thus becomes a faultline between the two

definitions, its claim of humane – 'gentle' – behaviour in tension with the violence that the

gentleman was founded on, both old (the aristocracy's feudal repression), and new (the

bourgeoisie's brutal repression of working class militancy and 'native' populations).

Thirdly, to complicate matters in the most interesting way, Smiley is *quoting* here.[212]

"When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?" comes from a sermon

by John Ball, a Lollard preacher complicit in the 1381 Peasant's Revolt, advocating social

equality at feudalism's height. "From the beginning all men by nature were created alike,

and our bondage or servitude came in by the unjust oppression of naughty men." I.e. in

humans' 'natural' state there were no class distinctions. In (unconsciously?) quoting this,

le Carré undermines the very nation he has established, predicated on a gentlemanly, elite

'way of life'. Instead he allows in a radical glimpse of levelled, democratised Britain, a

tradition which has nothing to do with liberalism or imperialism, wherein Blake's

'Jerusalem' trumps 'Rule Britannia' as national anthem and gentlemen are parasitic idlers.

This is a home-grown British answer to European Communism. There is a Bakhtinian

'polyphony' operating here (Bakhtin, p. 327) the text undermining le Carré's stated views.

Barthes, under Bakhtin's influence, declared:

> [A] text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message'
>
> of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings,
>
> none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from
>
> the innumerable centres of culture.[213]

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[211] *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1856), "generally accorded to all persons above the rank of common tradesmen when their manners are indicative of a certain amount of refinement and intelligence", in Christine Berberich, *Image of the English Gentleman in Twentieth-Century Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 6.
[212] Recognised only by Lewis (p. 37), and William Walling, 'The Doubleness of Class', *Columbia Library Columns* 2 (February 1988), p. 28.
[213] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana, 1977), p. 146.

There is a fourth, final, "blend and clash" in the passage being examined. The purple passage, "in a clearing in a timeless forest [they] fought like beasts" does two things. It asserts what Schaub shows was a common post-war riposte to Communism, that it is unworkable due to a flawed, competitive 'human nature', which capitalism, crucially, yokes via competitiveness (Schaub, p. 7). But this Social Darwinist view was overridden by later liberalism and so should be anathema to Smiley's liberal "decency".[214] In all of this then, we see how the execution of Frey exposes faultlines within Western liberalism, whereby the state's use of violence is in tension with a proclaimed liberal mildness. Who indeed now *is* the gentleman?

However, Smiley's actions as 'national' figure narratively overwhelm these faultlines. Smiley's agonising about killing Dieter can be seen as a post-facto assertion of British decency as liberal PR gloss, an apology that does not condemn the ugly strategy, just the ugly consequences.[215] This is Operation Margarine again: "what is this trifling dross of Order, compared to its advantages?" (Barthes, *Mythologies*, p. 41). Rebutting contemporary British decline, Smiley's investigation is efficient and terminates the espionage plot, with all enemies eliminated (including Scarr) and no negative publicity ensuing. By contrast, Nunn May only served six years of his sentence and later publicly defended his actions; Fuchs served nine years then emigrated to the GDR and a high-profile science career; Maclean and Burgess were allowed to defect, while their collaborator Kim Philby O.B.E. stayed in place, and indeed was publicly cleared by Harold Macmillan (Prime Minister by *Call*). For all Blake's draconian sentence, he managed to escape from prison, while Portland spy Gordon Lonsdale was traded for British spy Greville Wynne after only three years' imprisonment. Smiley thus resolves these national espionage humiliations via more definite conclusions.

So the national imaginary opens up faultlines, exposing ideological

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[214] Hobbesianism resurfaced in Margaret Thatcher's neoliberalism, which David Cameron's Conservatives attempted to gloss over in the 2010s.
[215] See David Johnson on 2010s conservative 'apologies' for imperial atrocities. Review of Bill Schwarz, *Memories of Empire, Transformations* 84: 1 (2014), 145-52 (p. 151).

inconsistencies, operating as an "unconscious of the text" (Macherey, p. 92): as McCracken suggests, the puzzle is more powerful than the solution always, and order ever cannot ever be *fully* restored in fiction any more than culture (McCracken, p. 52). However for all these pulls and contradictions, in *Call*, the national imaginary also reasserts powerfully reactionary ideas of nationhood enshrined in Empire and an elite, establishment custody of the British nation. It is this nation that is posited as threatened by the political enemy of Communism. Indeed, unlike other spy fiction (e.g. Desmond Cory's *Hammerhead,* 1963), the threat occurs *inside* Britain itself. Eastern bloc Communism invades that bastion of British respectability, suburbia (the Fennans' home); the complacent citadels of middlebrow culture (Mrs Fennan passes secret files to Mundt at the local repertory theatre; she is murdered by Frey at a Hammersmith theatre); and the heart of gentlemanly government (Fennan works in the Foreign Office). Thus, the unusual domestic dowdiness of *Call* compared to Fleming's exotic locales has a political purpose. Let us now explore that political enemy.

* * *

4. "Mass Philosophy": the Political Enemy

Call for the Dead reflects the new, Cold-War understanding of conflict, whereby the enemy is not a country but an ideology. This is shown not just by the book's attack coming from the GDR rather than the USSR, but through the claim that Communism is infiltrating Britain itself. Communism, *Call for the Dead* tells us, does not infect just enemies, but friends (Smiley and Frey), colleagues (Fennan), even spouses (the Fennans' marriage; arguably the Smileys').[216] Parlaying the post-war liberal unease about "a habitual and dangerous innocence" about Communism (Schaub, p. 11), *Call* asserts that political naiveté does not infect just upper middle class 1930s students (Fennan became a Communist at the same time as the Cambridge spies, but later recanted). Communism also suborns the suburban middle class (the naive solicitor's daughter from the rep theatre fawns over the murderous Mundt, *Call*, p. 88) and even the intelligence services (thus Maston's denial of any Communist plot). Smiley is the only one who sees Communism clearly. This, in part then, is the new "realism" reviewers were perceiving in le Carré, and which would become an orthodoxy with *The Spy*'s reviews: but it has an epistemological relationship with post-war liberal retreat, which, taking its linguistic cue from George Kennan's 'Long Telegram', deployed "realism" as a synonym for anti-Communism (Schaub, pp. 5-13).

The 'neutrally' named British Information Research Department (henceforth IRD), a propaganda unit with strong links to MI5 and MI6[217] helped create the idea of the USSR as an "ideologically driven expansionist power" (Jenks, p. 34),[218] as against "British defensive virtue" (Jenks, p. 27). Indeed BBC top brass in the late 40s seemed to equate 'objective' with anti-Communist, resulting in such reprimands as "false objectivity", "too neutral" and "objectivity run riot" (Jenks, p. 50). Critics reflect this empiricism,

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[216] The lover for whom Ann leaves George Smiley in 1947 is Cuban. She returns in 1959 or 60. The Cuban revolution lasted from1953-1959, although it was not officially Communist until 1961.
[217] Lashmar & Oliver, pp. 67-75.
[218] This 'information' was filtered out via the likes of Malcolm Muggeridge and George Orwell (Jenks, pp. 81-82).

regurgitating the Cold-War consensus:[219] e.g. "Smiley, the vanguard of British values, battles Dieter, a Byronic symbol of cold war ideology" (Beene, p. 35). 'Ideology' is again on one side only and the East takes sole responsibility for the Cold War. Rothberg's meanwhile echoes the complaints of BBC executives: that *Call* doesn't sufficiently support the anti-Communist consensus.[220] But these are quixotic readings, and *Call for the Dead* is acutely anti-Communist from start to finish. It is via character that le Carré attempts to resolve ideological contradictions, and thus close attention to three Communist characters exposes revealing faultlines.

Ideologues Without Ideology: Characterising Communism

That Communism is never given direct voice in *Call* is a faultline. The voice of the Communist 'other' is not so much silenced as heavily *mediated*. Fennan's youthful 1930s Oxford Communism, contemporaneous with the Cambridge spies' recruitment, is *twice* mediated, once via Fennan's adult perspective and by Smiley's memories of their conversation, as if to inoculate the reader against infection. The language seems initially neutral, even sympathetic:

> Besides the party was respectable then: the failure of the Labour Party and the
>
> Coalition Government had convinced many intellectuals that the Communists alone
>
> could provide an effective alternative to Capitalism and Fascism (p. 68).

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[219] Smith describes IRD.'s Background Books as "innocuously factual, offering a commonsensical take on contemporary issues": James B. Smith, 'Establishing a Beachhead', in *Pressing the Fight, Print Propaganda and the Cold War*, ed. Greg Barnhisel and Catherine Turner (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), p. 116.

[220] "Smiley's last words on Dieter Frey and Mrs Fennan [...] are almost Communist slogans, and neither le Carré nor Smiley says anything to show the difference between dream and reality" (Rothberg in H. Bloom, p. 54). Note the use of "reality" as per post-war anti-Communism. "Smiley's sympathetic appraisal of their motives comes close to being an exoneration" (Lewis p. 36). "*Call* [...] ends [...] without western democratic principles affirmed or Eastern totalitarianism seriously questioned" (Beene, p. 36).

But this neutrality is a precursor to suggestions of naivety: Communism is "a treasure

[Fennan] had outgrown and must leave at Oxford with the days of his youth". The

omniscient focalisation regards Fennan's Communist colleagues as similarly naïve:

> They were not men, but children, who dreamed of freedom-fires, gipsy music, and
>
> one world tomorrow, who rode on white horses across the Bay of Biscay or with a
>
> child's pleasure bought beer for starving elves from Wales; children who had no
>
> power to resist the Eastern sun, and obediently turned their tousled heads towards it
>
> [...] Soon [Fennan] found them comic and touching" (p. 70).

Satire veers into overwriting here and is a faultline: we remain unclear what exactly

Communism *is* as an ideology – Communists here are simply romantic, foolish, naïve. But

hinted by that "Eastern sun", Communism is soon also ominous in "its intellectual

ruthlessness [...] its fearlessness, its academic reversal of traditional values [...] a

philosophy which exacted total sacrifice to an unassailable formula" (p. 70). This is the

ideological 'absolutism' Smiley opposes, wherein socialism bleeds into fascism as

'totalitarianism'. Materialising this threat, Fennan, his wife and Adam Scarr are all

murdered in the Communist cause.

If Samuel Fennan's Communism is twice mediated, Mrs Fennan's Communism is

three times mediated. Given that Mrs Fennan will prove to be the Communist spy, not her

husband, we can only assume the views she attributes to 'Samuel' are actually her own.

Thus it was to *Elsa* not Samuel Fennan for whom the Soviet invasion of "'Hungary made

[...] not a tiny bit of difference'" (p. 105). Hungary caused an acute crisis amongst British

Communists: some adopted the "realist" anti-Communist position Schaub describes, while

the leftist theorists quoted in this thesis (Williams, Thompson, Anderson) differentiated

themselves as the anti-Stalinist 'New Left'. Because Mrs Fennan's hardline, expansionist

Soviet ideology is voiced only via her *criticism* of it, Mrs Fennan's pretended *anti-*

Communism is textually more convincing than her never-articulated Communist faith. "The same guns, the same children dying in the streets" she says, linking Communism with fascism, ends with means in the patented "totalitarian" blur: "Only the dream has changed, the blood is the same colour'" (p. 105). This is powerful rhetoric.

Consequently Guillam's question in the novel's concluding scene, "'Was she a Communist?'" is an admission of textual failure. So inconsistent is Mrs Fennan's characterisation, so complex the double bluffs, that the reader can be forgiven for sharing Guillam's confusion. In the last pages of a novel about a Communist spy, this is a messy faultline, an anxious working over of unruly textual material. Smiley's answer to Guillam fails to resolve the contradiction: "'I don't think she liked labels. I think she wanted to help build one society which could live without conflict. Peace is a dirty word now, isn't it? I think she wanted peace'" (p. 156). Then Smiley reverts to the common claim of British Communists as naïve dupes of the cynical East (Lashmar & Oliver, p. 114), suggesting Mrs Fennan was acting *against* fascism (standard galvaniser of 1930s Communists) not *for* Communism. However why, in 1956, as a concentration-camp Jewish survivor, would Mrs Fennan be outraged by the prospect of West German rearmament ("the same plump pride returned", p. 106), but *not* by Stalin's anti-Semitic policies?

Smiley's invocation of "peace" regarding Mrs Fennan is another faultline. To a decontextualized reading, Smiley means peace is unfashionable (while implying *Smiley* is sympathetic to 'peace'). Yet, claims Jenks, "by 1953 the word 'peace' had been thoroughly debased in British political discourse" (Jenks, p. 126) by the British government's black propaganda against the "Peace Partisans'" 1950 Sheffield congress (Jenks pp. 119-122). British propaganda also ridiculed Khrushchev's policy of "peaceful coexistence"[221] and Jenks even uses the same phrase as Smiley, "peace had become a dirty word" (Jenks, p. 126). If the Peace Partisans did have Soviet connections, the CND-led peace movement did

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[221] "If Mr Khrushchev really wants peaceful coexistence, he must be prepared to alter the ground rules by giving up all support for 'wars of liberation' and the arming of Communist rebellions in other countries." Leader, *Observer*, 4 June 1961, p. 10.

not, but were still regularly smeared as Soviet dupes by the government in the late 1950s (Jenks, p. 126). Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell worked hard to overturn party links with CND via jettisoning the Party's commitment to unilateral disarmament. The IRD made no distinction between hard left, Communist and pro-Soviet positions: nor indeed do even critical histories of the IRD (see: both Jenks and Lashmar & Oliver). As in propaganda; so in *Call*. Smiley's last words on the Frey/Fennan case declare: "'they dreamed of peace and freedom. Now they're murderers and spies'" (p. 156). Naïve "dreams" of "peace" blur into the ruthlessness of murder and espionage. The text's anti-Communism trips over itself in what will be a common contradiction between Communist frailty (naivety in the face of an unruly "human nature") and Communist potency (ideology overwhelming humanity). Now let us examine the third – and only overt – Communist character: Dieter Frey.

Numerous faultlines cluster around the character of Dieter Frey. Initially the naive 'dupe' trope seems to be being parlayed: Frey is Smiley's student in Nazi Germany, and Frey's Jewishness, disability (*Call*, p. 92) and incarceration are emphasised (p. 94). However, Frey is described by Smiley in terms that 'answer' Mrs Fennan's earlier critique of bureaucratic instrumentalism ("a mind without a body"): "He used to say that the greatest mistake man ever made was to distinguish between the mind and the body; an order does not exist if it is not obeyed" (p. 96). This resonates with the contemporaneous Eichmann trial ("he had always acted upon "superior's orders"),[222] and suggests that Frey is no dupe. Only pages later, Frey has become first Britain's enemy, organising an aggressively extensive infiltration of the British state, scaffolded by a series of expedient murders that in combination betoken an unambiguous Communist threat to Britain. By the time Frey is introduced in the flesh he has become, "satanic in fulfilment" (*Call*, p. 131), at which point he cold-bloodedly kills his accomplice, Mrs Fennan, at the theatre when she has outlived her usefulness. This lack of detailed or consistent characterisation of Frey is a huge hole in the book. We only have the most meagre details concerning the primary

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[222] Arendt, *Eichmann*, p. 294.

villain and Communist ideologue, and, as mediator, we have to take Frey at Smiley's word. And Smiley's word is consistently overwrought regarding Frey:

> He was the same improbable romantic with the magic of a charlatan: the same unforgettable figure which had struggled over the ruins of Germany, implacable of purpose, satanic in fulfilment, dark and swift like the Gods of the North (p. 131).

Contradictorily, the reader is invited to accept Smiley's equally overwrought quotation from Marlowe ("'my dearest friend'" p. 142) after Smiley has killed Frey, when there is little evidence for such depth of friendship. As Frey himself only speaks two words (p. 140) and one reported sentence (p. 93) throughout the book, we only have Smiley's mediated account of Frey's politics:

> [Dieter] cared nothing for human life: dreamed only of armies of faceless men bound by their lowest common denominators; he wanted to shape the world as if it were a tree, cutting off what did not fit the regular image; for this he fashioned blank, soulless automatons like Mundt (*Call*, p. 138).

This is Frey as totalitarian, antipathetic to all that Smiley/Britain stands for: committed to planning, to shaping mankind beyond the dictates of 'human nature', to a utopian ideal that is left sinisterly opaque. Superficially attractive yet deformed, an intellectual giant yet lacking human empathy, romantic yet ruthless, Frey is a personification of 'Communism' in propaganda terms. Frey is, "larger than life, undiminished by the moderating influence of experience. He was a man who thought and acted in absolute terms, without patience or compromise" (*Call*, p. 131). Again note Frey's contrast to the 'organic', the 'human' to "life". Again this is the post-war liberal consensus (Schaub, p. 12). "Absolute" and "absolutist", favoured terms of le Carré's for Communists, probably derive from Attlee's

1948 national address – "the absolutists who suppress opposition masquerade under the name of upholders of liberty"[223] linking the Soviet Union and Tsarist absolutist monarchy in despotic brutality. No critics challenge the use of 'absolutism' in le Carré.[224]

However, there is another contradiction in Frey's characterisation, hinted at earlier in consideration of "who was then the gentleman?". If Frey "care[s] nothing for human life", why does he not kill Smiley? Just as Smiley undermines his own liberalism by murdering Frey, so Frey demonstrates anomalous veneration for the personal by refusing to fight Smiley. While this sudden humanism makes little sense following Frey's murder of Mrs Fennan, it complicates Smiley's stock assertion of Frey's ruthless anti-humanism. Critics are at a loss in respect of this.[225]

Finally then, here is Smiley's summary of Dieter's beliefs: "'God knows what Dieter wanted. Honour, I think, and a socialist world [...] He was one of those world-builders who seem to do nothing but destroy'" (*Call*, p. 156). This collapses the notion of a transformed society (a 'dream') into abstraction ('honour'), expansionism ("world-builders"), and anti-humanist ruthlessness ("do nothing but destroy"). Smiley's emphasis on the destructiveness of Communism was a regular trope of British propaganda: "its systematic assault on civil liberties, disregard for basic human rights" (Shaw, p. 66). There is, notably, no sense of any ideological principle throughout the novel's accounts of Communist action: means have entirely subsumed ends. Where principle should be there is instead what Macherey calls "a determinate absence [...] an eloquent silence" (Macherey, p. 79). Communism, in an insecure, defensive portrayal, seemingly cannot be allowed to articulate a belief system: it must be mediated, silenced and parodied, but never given a proper hearing.

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[223] Andrew Defty, *Britain, America and Anti-Communist Propaganda 1945-53: The Information Research Department* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 42.

[224] "Smiley objects to [Dieter] chiefly because he has forsaken personal for collective values; the dialectical materialism he has allegedly swallowed whole from Marx shirks the individual" (Wolfe, pp. 82-3).

[225] Bennett sees the contradiction but can do nothing with it (Bennett, p. 26); Wolfe actually makes Frey's death an enactment of Communist ideology: "so enslaved is [Frey] to doctrine that he merges silently with both the night and the river below" (Wolfe, p. 82).

Critical Mass: "Mass" as Contradiction

There is a faultline in the novel located in the contradictory invocation of the "mass culture" of capitalism and "mass philosophy" of Communism. "[Smiley] hated the press as he hated advertising and television, he hated mass media, the relentless persuasion of the twentieth century" (*Call*, p. 138). This echoes Leavis's views about "mass civilization" - capitalist mass production threatening elite high culture, and the role of an elite minority to uphold values.[226] A dissemination of Leavis's views on 'mass society' had become a common liberal trope in the post-war period (Schaub, p. 56). As we saw via Roger Bromley, and prior to that the Frankfurt School, this attitude even affected the literary left. Smiley, with his quotations of Goethe and Marlowe, is strongly associated with this elite culture as is in many ways a Leavisite figure.[227] The Long Boom's increase in consumption, the invention of the teenager, the increase in consumer goods of the 1950s and early 60s, a capitalism considered to be in its 'golden age':[228] these are what Smiley objects to. This is a conservative – indeed a Leavisite – critique of capitalism: a critique that is culturally rather than materially based (Shiach, p. 181). Yet there are three contradictions written into this: firstly, that capitalist consumerism has a direct relationship to Smiley's veneration of the 'individual' via liberalism. Secondly, as a spy novel, a part of the "popular fiction" discussed in the Introduction, *Call* itself is a manifestation of that same "mass culture" Smiley decries. Which leads to the third contradiction, which, again as per the Introduction, involves a collapse between 'mass' object (cultural artefacts like bestsellers) and 'mass' subject (the mass or the working class), which contains the implication that *both* are inferior.

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[226] The strong link between elites and high culture is indicated by the sheer number of titles in my Bibliography published by Macmillan – Harold Macmillan owned and then chaired the company 1964-1986.

[227] Anderson cites Leavis's "enormous nostalgia for the 'organic community' of the past", his veneration of Cambridge as cradle of civilisation (c.f. Smiley/Oxford) and the way "Leavis saw the new media of communication – newspapers, magazines, radio, cinema and television – as the menacing apogee of commercialism and industrial civilization," P. Anderson, 'Components of the National Culture', *New Left Review* 50 (July–August 1968), 3-57 (pp. 52-3).

[228] Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* [1994] (London: Abacus, 1995), p. 6.

On top of this, the text also parlays a third understanding of "mass" in a passage that immediately follows:

> Everything [Smiley] admired or loved had been the product of intense individualism. That was why he hated Dieter now, hated what he stood for [...]: the fabulous impertinence of renouncing the individual in favour of the mass. When had mass philosophies ever brought benefit or wisdom? (*Call*, p. 138).

"Mass" is now a *philosophy* of the socialist collective, but with a slippage into a fearful, conservative framing of that collective, of the working class: the 'mass' – "a new word for mob" (Williams, *Culture*, p. 298). Simplistically, there is a normative antipathy to the working class in all of these uses of 'mass': it carries with it the slur of 'common' as debased, but also as threatening. However, as Williams famously pointed out: "There are in fact *no masses*; there are only ways of seeing people as masses" (Williams, *Culture*, p. 300).[229] This captures ruling class condescension towards, but also fear of, the working class. The working class and Communism were a natural alliance. "It was this phenomenon of mass man that [liberals] attributed to the rise of totalitarianism" via fascism and Communism (Manning, p. 18-19). The working class is lent a merely *epistemological* power via association with "totalitarianism" (see: Schaub p. 62), when the *real* power in the Nazi and Stalinist regimes remained with elites. Again 'mass' simply becomes a bovine herd. So liberal philosopher, J. S. Mill, on trade unionism as mob rule sounds remarkably similar to Smiley on Communism: "individuals are lost in the crowd [...] the only power deserving the name is that of masses, and of governments while they make themselves the organ of the tendencies and instincts of masses" (quoted in Losurdo, p. 199). Trade unions had been dubbed, "the peril in our midst" in a 1956 title by IRD

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[229] Eagleton claimed Williams' dismissal of 'mass' also dismisses 'class'. Terry Eagleton, 'Criticism and Politics: The Work of Raymond Williams', *New Left Review* 95, (Jan/Feb) 1976, p. 13. Williams' formulation however is a rejection of bourgeois prejudices about the mass, sometimes regurgitated *by* the left: Eagleton, unlike Williams, showed little interest in 'mass' rather than elite culture.

associate, Woodrow Wyatt (Jenks, p. 106).[230] This distrust and fear of the working class

united conservatives and liberals,[231] aristocracy and bourgeoisie (Hobsbawm, *Industry*, p.

264), and, in *Call*, it unites Smiley and the supposedly distinct aristocratic 'set'. After all,

Smiley's one venture into a working class (and criminal) milieu results in his being

clobbered on the head (itself source of Smiley's power): the masses are dangerous, while

working-class Adam Scarr assists – albeit inadvertently – in a Communist plot.[232] Orwell's

1984 contains exactly this conflicted view of the working classes as both conformistly

apathetic *and* revolutionarily powerful ("If there is hope [...] it lies in the proles", *1984*, p.

80). How though can the 'mass' be simultaneously docile consumers of capitalism *and*

dangerous to capitalist society? Because one meaning is a hope and the other is a fear: that

both coexist regarding the same body of people is proof of the working class's potential for

power. As anti-Stalinist socialist, E. P. Thompson, pointed out at the time:

> Anti-Communism has provided an apologia for paralysis, an ideological cover for
>
> accommodations, the main means by which orthodox social democracy (sometimes
>
> in active liaison with employers, the popular press, or the State) has sought to isolate
>
> the Left.[233]

The Communist spectre was often invoked to attack the left. "In the red scare climate it

was *de rigeur* to ascribe any organization demanding a wage increase, or taking industrial

action [...] as the tool of Communist agitators" (Lashmar & Oliver p. 107). In a culture

whose closed circuit of "common sense" asserted the political choice as between Stalinism

and welfare capitalism, socialism was easily slandered as Stalinism. Indeed Christopher

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[230] The IRD had a large hand in 1961's court case against Communist infiltration of the electricians' union, ETU (Lashmar & Oliver, p. 119).

[231] "Conservatism and liberalism had effectively merged after the revolutions of 1848 with Marxist-based socialism now seen as the common threat" (Wallerstein, p. 17).

[232] "Generations of Englishmen had been brought up to believe that an Englishman's word is his bond, [..] that never under any circumstances would he fail his King and country. The lower classes would, of course, do all these things" (Atkins, p. 180).

[233] E.P. Thompson, 'Peculiarities of the English', *Socialist Register*, (1965), 311-362 (p. 347).

Mayhew of the IRD made this conflation clear: "'Stalinism was an evil thing and certainly IRD's propaganda coincided with a considerable political defeat of the extreme left in the Labour Party'" (Lashmar & Oliver, p. 113).

The Jewishness of the Communist conspirators is here worth a pause. Le Carré proclaimed: "I used Jewish people because I felt that after Stalin and Hitler they should particularly engage our protective instincts" ('To Russia', p. 6). But Jews in *Call* are a cipher for the working class, existing, like the international proletariat, outside of nation (*Communist Manifesto*, p. 102). The strong symbiosis between Communist villain and Jew[234] is not so much anti-Semitism but fear of those not readily neutralised by ideologies of nation. "'I'm the wandering Jewess, the no-man's land,'" claims Mrs Fennan (*Call*, p. 101). The example of Dutch Jewish spy George Blake clearly haunts such a narrative; so too does or Italian Jewish spy Bruno Pontecorvo; but so too does non-Jewish Nazi refugee-turned-British citizen-turned-Soviet spy, Klaus Fuchs.[235]

It is important to note that to highlight anti-Communism in *Call*'s text is not to defend Eastern bloc regimes; any more than the fact that so much anti-Soviet analysis came from the far right,[236] and was financed by the government's IRD propaganda unit (Lashmar & Oliver p. 122), negates criticisms of Eastern bloc regimes. That le Carré's work echoes British propaganda so closely is not just hugely significant; it overthrows a body of criticism that fails at its own empirical level when it declares a "moral equivalence" in le Carré's novels that is perennially textually elusive.

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[234] Mendel undercuts this equation of Jew/villain. "'My Dad was a Yid'", says Mendel of Mrs Fennan. "'He never made such a bloody fuss about it'" (p. 98). Although there's no indication Mendel's father was sent to a concentration camp, Mendel, despite his Jewishness, chooses the 'right' side in the Cold War.

[235] David Cornwell worked for British intelligence in refugee camps in Austria at the end of the war (Sisman, NP).

[236] Robert Conquest (*The Great Purges*, 1968) later became a speechwriter to Margaret Thatcher.

5. Call to Account: Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how *Call for the Dead* presents a traditional Britain, exemplified by Smiley, assailed from within and without. The British state is rendered inefficient by bureaucracy, implicitly connected with the class mobility of the post-War period, edging out the old, undemocratic amateur order, represented by Smiley. The novel's anti-statism is actualised by Smiley's resignation, but disguises Smiley's continued defence of and ultimate reaffirmation of the state.

Similarly, *Call*'s presentation of the nation being protected asserts the establishment as the essence of Britain, a gentlemanly elite to which, despite textual protestations, Smiley firmly belongs. The working class is not just rejected from this Britain as an active threat to it, collaborators with hostile Eastern bloc Communism. The text's attempts to 'resolve' Smiley's execution of Communist agent, Dieter Frey, creates a contradiction in the novel's claims for national decency. This is largely overwhelmed by Smiley's overwhelming of a graphically depicted Communist 'threat' however, which also reasserts British potency.

Regarding this Communist political enemy, contradictory motifs that recur throughout le Carré's Cold-War work are established: Communism as naiveté (Samuel Fennan); Communism as ideological 'fanaticism' that devalues human life (Dieter Frey), and the undermining of both tropes by a failure to depict a Communist ideology. However *Call*'s polemical perception is awry: both the administration of the state and the social construction of the nation was undergoing very limited change; Empire was still an ongoing concern,[237] while Soviet expansionism was exaggerated in the West. *Call for the Dead* therefore is an over-assertion of traditionalist, conservative values. After a digression into a murder mystery – and another elite microcosm of Britain via a public school – in *A Murder of Quality* (1962), le Carré would rethink this elitism in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, considered next.

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[237] Cain and Hopkins, pp. 620-622; Leys, pp. 172-173.

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Chapter 2: *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*

Cover Story: *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* in Context

Le Carré's breakthrough third novel,[238] *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (September,

1963), was a major cultural incursion into the Cold War at its most dangerous point, a

direct response to the erection of the Berlin Wall (August 1961), the Berlin Crisis (June-

November 1961), and laterally, the Cuban Missile Crisis (October 1962). It should be seen

as a companion-piece to Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* as a key anti-Communist Cold-

War text.[239] Both books issued a warning about the state's threat to individuals, pitting an

archetypal 'little man', armed/disarmed with the love of a woman, against a monolithic

state, with dire consequences. Both books helped define the Cold War in the popular

imagination, being bestsellers, assisted by successful films;[240] both introduced new or

reimagined phrases to the language, and concepts to the culture: "Big Brother",

"Newspeak"; "in from the cold",[241] both are ambiguous and contested texts.[242]

To capture in snapshot an immensely complex novel: *The Spy* concerns an elaborate

double bluff by the British Secret Service's Control. Rough-hewn, classless secret agent

Leamas's German networks have been "rolled up" by Hans Mundt, of *Call for the Dead,*

former Nazi, now head of the GDR's espionage *Abteilung.* The reader only understands

belatedly that Leamas's decline into alcoholism and his subsequent imprisonment are deep

cover, designed to draw East German Communists to a potential 'defector'. Unbeknownst

to his lover, Liz, Leamas is taken to the GDR, where it transpires his *Abteilung*

interrogator, Jens Fiedler, suspects that his own boss, Mundt, is a British agent. When

Fiedler brings the case to a Tribunal, Mundt springs Liz as a witness to discredit Leamas,

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[238] A non Cold-War, detective novel, *A Murder of Quality* (1962), set in a public school, followed *Call.*
[239] "The individual pitched against totalitarianism, interrogation by state machine, and the tragic defeat of the hero" connect the novels (Easthope, p. 155). Notably Stanley Kubrick's *Dr Strangelove*, coalescing nuclear fears, came out this year.
[240] Director Martin Ritt had recently got through US HUAC investigations into Communist associations.
[241] E.g. Henry Zieger, *Ian Fleming: The Spy Who Came in with the Gold* (Duell, 1965); Jonathan Steele, *Socialism with a German Face: The State That Came in from the Cold* (Cape, 1977); *The Spy Who Went into the Cold: Kim Philby, Soviet Super Spy*, BBC4 documentary, broadcast 19 Nov 2013.
[242] Both films starred Richard Burton and Cyril Cusack.

and Fiedler himself is arrested. Fiedler's theory transpires to be true however: Leamas –

and the reader – now discover that Leamas's function all along was to discredit Fiedler and

secure Mundt's position. When Liz is killed in the same plan, as she and Leamas are trying

to escape over the Berlin Wall, Leamas chooses to die rather than return to the West.

Contemporary Reception of *The Spy*

The Spy "hit the publishing world like a bolt of lightning," declared *Daily Express.*[243]

Indicative of the ongoing popular vs. literary standoff, Gollancz issued *The Spy* in a red

'literary fiction' cover rather than its traditional "thriller" yellow jacket. Gollancz's press

release to reviewers also presented *The Spy* as the 'answer' to the *TLS*'s complaint of the

lack of a "really realistic spy novel" in a climate of spy scandals,[244] *The Spy*'s media

reception latched onto this. Cultural pulse-monitor, *Life* analysed the cultural phenomenon

of the "new-style thriller", a post-Bond "realism" combined with a new 'literariness'.[245]

"Realistic" here seemed first to mean "plausible", especially in comparison to Bond,

"realism" as against romance. In a raft of almost unanimously positive notices, spy writer

Robert Harling wrote, "here is no bogus superman stuff but what must be something like

the real thing";[246] David Holloway declared, "The spies are not playing Bond-like games:

they operate nastily, unspectacularly" concluding, "a brilliantly bitter novel with a deal of

truth behind it";[247] Francis Iles called it "a spy story documentary"[248] – rather than

'drama'. This plausibility point was regularly repeated.[249]

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[243] *Daily Express*, 14 Feb 1964, p. 1.
[244] *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 February 1963; Victor Gollancz, 'Supplementary Sheet No. 179', p. 1.
[245] Conrad Knickerbocker, 'The Spies Who Come in from Next Door', *Life,* 30 April 1965, p. 13.
By June 1964 *Spy* was outselling Fleming's *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* by more than 2:1 (Anthony
Boucher 'There's a Spy between the Covers', *New York Times Book Review*, 7 June 1964, p. 7).
[246] Robert Harling, 'Something Near the Truth?' *Sunday Times,* 15 September 1963, p. 33.
[247] David Holloway, 'Recent Fiction', *Daily Telegraph,* 13 September 1963, p. 19.
[248] Frances Iles, 'Criminal Records', *Guardian,* 11 October 1963 p. 9.
[249] "Wickedly plausible", N.N. 'New Fiction', *The Times,* 12 September 1963, p. 13; Peter Phillips, 'Crime
Shelf', *Daily Herald,* 14 September 1963, p. 4, 'The way things really do happen' Maurice Richardson,
'Agents and Victims', *Observer,* 15 September 1963, p. 22; "Authenticity", N. N. 'More le Carré Capers',
Time, 29 May 1964, pp. 62-63.

A second interpretation of "realistic" was that the book offered inside knowledge. Julian Maclaren Ross noted a "stamp of authenticity seldom found in stories of this nature".[250] Kenneth Allsop assumed its evocation of "the murky pond-life of espionage" and "a dossier-like knowledge of undercover Europe" meant that le Carré himself was a spy.[251] In the US, Orville Prescott also wondered whether the aforementioned lack of Bond-ish "glamour, sex, impudent daring and masterful heroics" meant le Carré was an espionage insider.[252] *Newsweek*'s reviewer brashly declared, "It bristles with details about the CIA and Britain's MI6 and its author [...] is a Briton whose inside credentials make it all chillingly plausible". The magazine even consulted CIA officers who vouched for Cornwell's "bona fides": they insisted such an operation would never have been approved; as did Kim Philby.[253] Again this 'authenticity' was a common critical trope.[254]

The third, least popular, interpretation of "realistic" was that *The Spy* offered negative insight into the conduct of the Cold War. Patrick Gaffney noted, "There is a chilling authenticity about it: one feels that here truly are the monstrous realities behind the news paragraphs which record the shifts and tensions of the Cold War."[255] John Clarke considered, "here is the trench warfare of cold war espionage and counter-espionage" again as against Bond.[256] Allsop thought it offered, "the truth about the spy sub-world, the secret war between East and West". In citing the Vassall Tribunal,[257] Maclaren Ross was unusual in mentioning actual Cold War *events*.[258] In fact, the Cold War remained vague in all three approaches: G.W. Stonier mentioned Communism,[259] Knickerbocker cited

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[250] Julian Maclaren Ross, 'Limits of Control', *Times Literary Supplement* 13 September 1963, p. 693.
[251] Kenneth Allsop, 'Is This the Private Nightmare of a Master Spy', *Daily Mail,* 12 September 1963, p. 10
[252] Orville Prescott, 'The Brutal Business of Espionage', *New York Times,* 10 January 1964, p. 27.
[253] N.N. 'Inside Job?' *Newsweek,* 3 February 1964, p. 81.
[254] "Bitterly authoritative", N.N., *New Yorker,* 25 January 1964, p. 112; "told from the inside" Katherine Gauss Jackson, 'Books in Brief', *Harpers,* 1 January 1964, p. 106.
[255] Patrick Gaffney, 'Crime Calendar', *Scotsman,* 21 September 1963, p. 6.
[256] John Clarke 'Not Exactly an Agent in the Bond Image', *Evening Standard,* 17 September 1963, p. 10.
[257] Admiralty clerk John Vassall was entrapped while working in the Soviet Union, and in 1962 was revealed to have sold British secrets. Thomas Hennessy & Claire Thomas, *Spooks: The Unofficial History of MI5 from the First Atom Spy to 7/7* (Chalford: Amberley, 2011), pp. 136-7. British Soviet spy, Ashe, has a Dolphin Square flat (*Spy*, p. 60), like Vassall.
[258] Robert M. Adams, 'Couldn't Put it Down', *New York Review of Books,* 3 May 1964, p. 13, "intricate and moving study [...] of history and men as its active and passive agents."
[259] G.W. Stonier, *New Statesman,* 25 October 1963, p. 580.

Vietnam, but only three reviewers cited the charged political location of the Berlin Wall that begins, ends and intersects the novel.[260] *The Spy*'s "realistic" elements thus remained sealed off from historical reality.

There was relatively little sense of shock amongst reviewers at *The Spy*'s "realistic" depiction of supposed British Cold-War behaviour.[261] Richardson put it most directly: "the homicidal wickedness and unscrupulousness of our side; sacrificing agent after agent, is laid on very strong". *The Times*' reviewer attested to the cynicism, but largely defended the actions: "it may be, suggests Mr Le Carré, that the end justifies the means, but the means are very terrible indeed". Allsop suggested vague cynicism in the "prosy pipe-and-cardigan bureaucrats gloating over their plots". Iles declared, "once personal ethics are at war with national interests the ending becomes inevitable". Peter Phillips equivocally declared, "Leamas realises that he has been betrayed by his own side for a "higher purpose"". By contrast, Coxhead claimed the depiction of "British intelligence [...] plumbing depths of double-dealing that would make Machiavelli look an absolute beginner [...] failed to convince".[262] In American reviews, Prescott stated "a spy has nearly as much reason to fear his superiors in his own organization as members of the opposition", while Adams cited "the problem of ends and means" and Anthony Boucher called Control's plot "fiendishly intricate".[263]

There was little recognition of one facet of le Carré's 'realism', the social realism of *The Spy*'s voguely lower class hero, Alec Leamas min contrast to the previously blue-blooded espionage hero. Only Maclaren Ross acknowledged this: "a consciously new-style hero: brusque, disillusioned, non-U". Holloway offered a hint ("without the university degree essential to the young entry"), but while Knickerbocker saw Leamas posited as

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[260] Berlin Wall mentioned only in *Daily Mail, New Statesman, TLS, Harpers* and *Atlantic* reviews. N.N. *Atlantic*, March 1964.

[261] Le Carré claimed in 1964 that *The Spy* was intended "to implant a feeling of alarm [...] it was supposed to shock" (Bonfante, p. 42).

[262] Elizabeth Coxhead, 'Fiction of the Week', *Sunday Telegraph,* 15 September 1963, p. 15.

[263] Anthony Boucher, 'Temptations of a Man Isolated in Deceit', *New York Times Book Review,* 12 January 1964, p. 5.

"just folks, another nebbish from next door", he felt Leamas was a traditional "hero" in an era of real-life bureaucratised espionage. Hill[264] and Coxhead concurred.

Reflecting the way that commentary tends to 'fix' understandings, the state's behaviour became the later literary critical orthodoxy about *The Spy,* which is still conventionally seen as anti-establishment. Again, Leamas's class status hardly figures in le Carré criticism, indeed the 'nation' is a barely noticed thematic. With much closer attention to GDR agent, Fiedler, than reviewers paid, Fiedler's portrayal was considered even-handed, and to evince that staple moral equivalence between East and West.[265] Only a minority of critics perceived anti-Communism in the book. "He does in fact finally assert that, for all its faults, the British way of life is preferable to the Communist alternative" (Monaghan, pp. 112-113).[266]

This chapter will attempt to correct these lacks in both commentary and criticism. It considers the nation first, reconfigured here via its new, 'classless' hero, Leamas, in contrast to the establishment Smiley. What, the chapter asks, does the book have to say about Britain and class in the 1960s? Secondly, considering the state, the chapter will explore the way Western ideology is elided in *The Spy,* via "English empiricism". It will examine how anti-establishment the book is in its ambiguous clash of individual and state. Third, the chapter will analyse the presentation of the political enemy. The iconography of the Berlin Wall, Fiedler's characterisation and the book's depictions of life in the GDR constitute Communism's most detailed portrayal in le Carré's work until *Smiley's People.* To what extent is this dismal picture conceivable as equivalent to the book's presentation of the West? Given the books' aforementioned commonalities, all these questions will be examined with reference to Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four.*

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[264] William B. Hill, *America,* 9 May 1964, p. 635.
[265] Ambrosetti (p. 112); Rothberg: "le Carré is saying 'a plague on both your houses'" (in H. Bloom, p. 62); repeated by: Homberger (p. 56); Beene (p. 53); Powell (p. 59); Hoffman, (p. 75).
[266] See also on anti-Communism: Barley (p. 28); "Tension between a monstrous utilitarianism that dismisses all human costs as means to a greater good and western respect for individual worth" (Dobel p. 194); "Although le Carré equates the methods used by both sides as equally distasteful, he maintains the superiority of Western ends, individualism and humanism, to the absolutism of Soviet Communism" (Aronoff, p. 93).

2. "Not Quite a Gentleman": Classlessness and the British Nation

Concerns about British decline were, by 1963, widespread, as the Long Boom visibly receded at home,[267] and colonies continued to haemorrhage abroad (this year Kenya and Zanzibar, with Aden also breaking free). Amongst the domestic responses was a series of "state of the nation" treatises,[268] and new Labour leader (from February), Harold Wilson's rhetoric of 'modernisation'. In his "white heat of technology" speech of 1 October 1963, weeks after *The Spy* came out, Wilson declared his ambition to modernise Britain into a "technocratic society". Wilson was attempting to capture votes from a new demographic not automatically Labour-voting, while also encouraging British workers to achieve greater productivity to compete abroad and reverse British economic decline.

Crucial to Wilson's concept of a modern Britain was a new 'classlessness' to British society. This was a concept first asserted by Orwell: "a new kind of man [...] middle class in income and to some extent in habits".[269] Wilson himself emblematised this 'new kind of man', part of a breed of upwardly mobile grammar school boys, Wilson sported a workers' Gannex raincoat, and a regional accent and proclaimed a love of HP sauce and football.[270] New Prime Minister, Lord Home, coming to power mere weeks after Wilson's "white heat" speech, was derided as an "elegant anachronism" by Wilson,[271] emblematising the patrician, amateur order that had already been discredited that year by both the Profumo scandal[272] and Kim Philby's defection. These two events also showed the centrality of espionage to British society at this moment in history. That the press ignored government

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[267] Leader, *Guardian,* 6 July 1963: "a decade of Conservative remedies has failed to cure the UK's economic malaise [...] output has risen more slowly and more erratically than in almost all other countries, and our prices have risen faster."

[268] Anthony Howard, *Listener,* 29 August 1963, p. 319; 'Suicide of a Nation', *Encounter* (July 1963), guest edited by Arthur Koestler; Perry Anderson, 'Origins'.

[269] George Orwell, 'The English People' [1943] *Collected Essays, Vol 3: As I Please* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 36.

[270] "A contemporary classless figure [...] a sort of homespun Kennedy", 'Leader Without a Label', *Observer,* 17 February 1963, p. 8. Indeed Wilson's technological emphasis was also an echo of Kennedy (Westad, p. 34).

[271] Marcus Collins, 'The Fall of the English Gentleman c. 1918-1970', *Historical Research,* 75: 187 (February 2002), 90-111 (p. 105).

[272] John Profumo resigned in June 1963, but the issue still ricocheted that September with the Denning Report front-page news, e.g. 'In the Clear, or Very Nearly So' *Evening Standard,* 17 September 1963, p. 1. Cornwell was present at Christine Keeler's trial in an MI5 capacity.

D-notices on Philby that summer indicated a decrease in traditional deference to the governing elite. This potentially was what Raymond Williams calls the "emergent" chafing against the "dominant" in British culture.

The first-ever *Sunday Times* colour supplement,[273] helped define this cultural moment, via profiles of 1960s 'classless' types: an airline pilot, a footballer, a sociology lecturer, Mary Quant and pop artist Peter Blake, built-up professionals in explicit contrast to the informally-recruited "inspired amateur". Even James Bond was classlessly reconfigured in a story in the supplement, and also in the new films (from *Dr No*, October 1962), via the casting of lower-class Scot, Sean Connery as against Fleming's choice, aristocratic-styled Englishman David Niven. Another le Carré competitor, Len Deighton's working class hero in November 1962's *Ipcress File* brought the democratised American hardboiled detective genre into spy fiction. Thus it is no coincidence that Smiley, patrician hero of le Carré's previous two books, gives way to classless Leamas as hero at this 'democratic' moment. This represented a cultural democratisation on a par with what the hard-boiled detective novel did to the Great Detective genre.[274] Especially coming after the elite claim on Britishness made by *Call for the Dead* (and *Murder of Quality*, 1962), this parallels Wilson's championing of classlessness.

What, however, did 'classless' mean? Was it, in Williams' terms "a new class", an "emergent ideology" (Williams, *Marxism*, p. 124)? One might suggest a threefold understanding: a means of 'explaining' the encroachment of non-aristocratic characters, milieus and producers upon a previously elite culture; a euphemism for the "new middle class" (upper-working or lower-middle); and a means of taking 'class', in the larger sense, off the agenda, as if Britain's social inequalities had been levelled. Classlessness *was* a refutation of Communism, a logical conclusion of social democracy that removed class struggle from the socialist project. But it was also another untenable concept of 'neutrality', a world without class: another non-existent 'no man's land'.

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[273] NN, 'A Sharp Glance at the Mood of Britain', *Sunday Times,* 4 February 1962, p. 1.
[274] Ernest Mandel, *Delightful Murder: A Social History of the Crime Story* (London: Pluto, 1984), p. 36.

Let us attempt to read *The Spy* as a "national allegory" or 'condition of England' novel in light of this classlessness. The first task is to establish Leamas's 'classless' credentials. Christopher Booker adds to 'classless' the 60s keywords 'sceptical', 'irreverent' and 'abrasive':[275] all apply to Leamas. The focalisation of an airhostess (a typically 'classless' occupation) suggests Leamas is 'North Country', which the omniscient voice semi-affirms (*Spy*, p. 15). A 'collective voice' suggests Leamas is Irish and grammar school, while the omniscient voice states he has no degree (p. 24). The omniscient voice claims Leamas has a "non-U" style of dress ("utilitarian", modern) and manner (terse, abrasive) (p. 15). The ambiguity here is indicative of the vagueness of the concept of classlessness. But the key point is that Leamas is in a dormitory group, *between* classes, having left the working class but far from accepted by the upper middle: thus the small snobberies inflicted upon Leamas by Fawley and Control. "'You haven't got a pass, have you?'" taunts Fawley (p. 17); "'You're going to find these more expensive'" Control says of his own cigarettes (p. 18). In terms of the Wilson project, Leamas's sojourn in "technocratic" Banking Section is key, while Liz as a librarian also has a typically classless occupation.[276] Again, Leamas and Liz parallel the technocrats Winston and Julia in *1984*. They are the "new men", working in service industries. However, that Leamas abhors deskwork (p. 13) insisting he is "operational", is a reassertion of his original class status – working class as manual fieldman, "classless" as technocratic deskman. This begins to suggest how reading Leamas as classless hero reveals problems with the *concept* of classlessness and that the national allegory is less "emergent" negative. Let us break this down.

Firstly, Leamas's classlessness carries with it the 'threat' of the working class mass: "[Leamas] looked like a man who could make trouble, a man who looked after his money, a man who was not quite a gentleman" (*Spy*, p. 15). This echoes Orwell's claim that

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[275] Christopher Booker, *The Neophiliacs* [1969] (London: Fontana, 1970), pp. 23-30.
[276] Le Carré had wanted Rita Tushingham to play Liz in the film, being more working class than Claire Bloom: (http://www.dvdtalk.com/reviews/61660/spy-who-came-in-from-the-cold-criterion-collection-the/, accessed 7/2/15). Burton however was the personification of 'classlessness', working class boy done good.

"classlessness" displaced "the old distinction between a man who is a 'gentleman' and the man who is 'not a gentleman'" (Orwell, *Essays* 3, p. 36). As such, to anyone *above* the gentlemanly line (Control, Smiley, Fawley) everyone *below* it is 'classless': synonym for 'lower'. The distinction is piquantly relayed via violence:[277] a gentleman delegates violence (as Control and Smiley do); Leamas administers it himself; indeed enjoys it. Leamas is part of the feared 'mass': violence thus becomes associated with the fieldman-'manual' nexus.[278] This then, is not a particularly positive presentation of classlessness.

Secondly, as hero, Leamas's is "the movement of a solitary hero through a sociological landscape of a fixity that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside" (B. Anderson, p. 30). But, as Leamas traverses a grimy, grey London, the landscape shown is an anything but "modernised" Britain of the Swinging Sixties: more the austere, monochrome Britain of the immediate post-war that inspired Orwell's dystopian Airstrip One. *The Spy*'s Britain contrasts sharply with the Britain presented in *Call*. Where in *Call* we have Smiley's "unrespectable" gentleman's club, *The Spy*'s tawdry sex club (*Spy*, p. 63) is hardly Larkin's anno mirabilis of the Beatles and sexual intercourse.[279] Contrasting even with Scarr's fly-by-night entrepreneurialism, the working class simply isn't working in *The Spy*, with a Labour Exchange a major focus (p. 30), alongside a grocer's offering tick (p. 44) and a prison (pp. 45-47). Leamas's flat is "Small and squalid, done in brown paint [...] fraying brown carpets [with] clumsy darkwood furniture, like something from a seaman's hostel" (p. 27) with a gas fire. This suggests redundancy, itinerancy, functional décor, and is in glaring contrast to Smiley's Chelsea home's wealth, homeliness, and tasteful decor: "books everywhere [...] a pretty room; tall with eighteenth century mouldings, long windows and a good fireplace" (p. 54). These contrasts cannot but suggest that this democratic historical moment is a degraded one, a

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[277] Leamas assaults a grocer (*Spy*, p. 45); he attacks a prisoner with a hoe (p. 47); and attacks a guard in the GDR: "He wondered if he'd killed the guard. He hoped so" (p. 163).
[278] Leamas considers "[driving] the side of his right hand into Peters' throat, smashing the promontory of the thorax" (p. 116).
[279] "Sexual intercourse began / In nineteen sixty-three [...] Between the end of the *Chatterley* ban / And the Beatles' first LP," Philip Larkin, 'Anno Mirabilis' [1967] *Collected Poems* (London: Faber, 1988), p. 167.

shabbiness both moral and material as the "mass" moves into the mainstream. The classless – increasingly figured as working class – are thus negatively associated with the very decline that Wilsonian modernisation was designed to dispel.

Thirdly, Leamas may be voguely "irreverent" in speech, but in terms of his actions, he is entirely obedient to the dominant class hierarchy. Leamas goes to some personal inconvenience and discomfort to do exactly what the state, via establishment figure, Control, with gentlemanly Smiley in shadowy attendance, tells him to. Leamas does express a kind of class hatred when he fully understands Control's plot: "'I can see them working it out, they're so damned academic,'" (Smiley tends to conduct meetings at his gentleman's club; Control is "donnish", *Spy*, p. 17): "'I can see them sitting round a fire in one of their smart bloody clubs'" (p. 227).[280] But Leamas also makes a very strong defence of these ruling class figures' plot (p. 231). Even Leamas's most famous speech is more an assertion of 'fallen' human nature than of a trenchant anti-establishment stance: "What do you think spies are: priests, saints and martyrs? They're a squalid procession of vain fools […] pansies, sadists and drunkards, people who play cowboys and Indians to brighten their rotten lives" (p. 231). Classlessness here – and in society – is simply a contemporary veneer of irreverence that masks adherence to traditional class distinctions and hierarchies. The emergent here simply regurgitates the dominant.

Fourthly, Leamas is partly induced to accept the GDR mission by ruling-class Control offering him *money*: the "purely narcotic effects of prosperity" that created 1960s classlessness (Anderson, 'Wilsonism' p. 4).[281] But as Williams claimed, "More money in more pockets will mean […] classlessness" but this is "the small change of the system" while the system itself, "that quite different 'money' which is capital […] the ownership and creation of the means of social life itself" remains "unaltered in any major way"

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[280] Critics witnessed to this class dynamic: "The tension between the amateur and all-round attitude of the gentleman and the specialist attitude of the professional" (Sauerberg, p. 104); "A really jeering attack on the upper-class […] detestation of the […] lower-class spy in the field for his upper-class administrative superiors" (Rockwell, p. 336).
[281] Control tells Leamas, "'I think you might make a lot of money out of [the operation]'" (*Spy* p. 22).

(*Orwell*, p. 24). Indeed, social mobility under Wilson proved relative: "as workers bought houses and fridges, so the 'middle class' bought second homes and freezers" (Leys, p. 173), while, despite attempted meritocratisation, the class structure tended to reproduce itself, especially in Leamas's civil service (Leys, p. 81). Admitted into the anterooms of state power, Leamas remains economically lower class, while the real power remains with the elite ruling class of Fawley and Control, possessed of the passes and the capital.

Fifthly, Leamas's classlessness in *The Spy* is actually disempowering, as it has atomised him. This atomisation has its roots in genre, "alone, competitive, sexy" (as Palmer calls the generic spy hero, p. 24), but the *effect* of the loner hero – from the Great Detective, through the hardboiled "shamus", to Ambler's "innocent abroad" – is to abstract the individual from community in the real world (even as, ironically, the individualist hero protects the collective community). Material improvements in working class life created by the Long Boom and Welfare State meant many moved up the class 'ladder', but became more individually motivated (Leys, p. 175), losing the collective motivation Williams defines as working class culture's core – and losing also its locus of resistance against the ruling class.[282] The establishment's investment in such atomisation is relayed by Control *fostering* Leamas's isolation as a "cover story": Control tells him to avoid "old friends" and to cultivate a loner image (*Spy*, p. 23). Thus classlessness is depicted as atomisation, even a means of manipulating the lower orders. Again, when sent to prison, "[Leamas] preserved from collectivisation some discernible part of his personality; he could not be drawn at moments of sentiment to talk of his girl, his family or his children" (*Spy*, p. 47). The individual is prized over the communal here, while "collectivization" even links this to Soviet Communism.[283] In turn, the working class either reject Leamas (the prisoners; the Street) or don't recognise him as their own: "'he was a gent'" one character says,

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[282] "Improvement is sought, not in the opportunity to escape from one's class, or to make a career, but in the general and controlled advance of all" (Williams, *Culture*, p. 326).
[283] Notably, where Leamas keeps the IRA prisoner at a distance (*Spy*, p. 46), Communist spy George Blake made sufficiently strong connection with Sean Bourke that Bourke helped Blake escape.

inaccurately (p. 106). Classless Leamas is "alone, competitive, sexy": but also, it will turn

out, powerless. The dominant stays dominant; the emergent doesn't emerge.

The Spy's national allegory and suggests that, separated from community, the

classless (Leamas) are easily manipulated to push themselves to extremes of *productivity*

to secure the ruling class (Control). Then, their use over, the classless are not rewarded by

social ascent but shot down in the very act of *climbing*. Classlessness then is no neutrality,

no no-man's land. The 'message' is that class is not escapable: not in the snobbish sense

based on "accent, clothes, tastes, furnishing, food" (Williams, *Orwell*, p. 24), but rather the

structures of society: the class system.[284] To provide a telling parallel: power resides only

with *1984*'s Inner Party: Winston and Julia's Outer Party really have no more power than

the proles, of whom O'Brien declares: "'The proletarians will never revolt, not in a

thousand years or a million. They cannot,'" (*1984*, p. 100).[285] Similarly, in *The Spy*, ruling

class power is entrenched and the lower classes beneath it (Leamas), after being proposed

as heroic modern everymen, are revealed ultimately as passive pawns: deferential,

unreflective, atomised, unable to effect change.[286] Whether this national allegory is

despairing or triumphant can only be speculative: likely it derives from competing

anxieties: fear of the rebranded-as-classless violent, degraded "mass" on one hand – and

unease with the establishment's feudal reflux on the other.

In any case *The Spy*'s national allegory proved inaccurate. While Wilson's limited

attempts to restructure society failed,[287] sabotaged by establishment interests, his

government's attempts to push capitalist growth for the benefit of all quickly found the

state at war with a far-from-"modernised" – or indeed powerless – traditional working

class: ironic for a Labour government. The rhetoric of 'classlessness' quickly disappeared

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[284] "Class is a powerful and continuing economic relationship – as between the owners of property and capital and the owners only of labour and skill," Raymond Williams, *Orwell* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1971).
[285] "[Orwell] sees the working class as a class without a voice, without an idea, without resources, it's a class without consciousness" not a "countervailing popular force" (Campbell, in Samuel, p. 228).
[286] "The proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class", Marx & Engels, *Communist Manifesto* (p. 91).
[287] Williams is only semi-correct to call Wilsonism "Newspeak" (Williams, *Orwell*, p. 75): there *was* a political project, even if both technocracy and classlessness were largely semantic.

from British politics.[288] An attempt to hobble the militant working class movement (via 1969's anti-union *In Place of Strife* proposals), also failed, and that class asserted their power throughout the 1970s by bringing down the governments of Heath (1974) and Callaghan (1979). That Thatcher effectively 'completed' Wilson's project of the hobbling of labour and the atomisation of the working class, should not allow retrospect to cloud 1963's reality of a potent British working class, contra *The Spy*'s narrative trajectory's 'message'. This is to leap ahead however: now let us make a study of the representation of the British state in *The Spy*.

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[288] A British Election Survey after Wilson's 1964 win found only 5% calling themselves 'classless'. This classless category had increased by only 1% by 2005. Anthony Heath, *Guardian*, http://www.theguardian.com/society/2009/oct/07/class-influence-british-sense-identity, accessed 10/6/14.

2. "We are Defensive": British State 'Neutrality'

The contradictory disavowal and defence of the state in *Call* is repeated in *The Spy*, but with even greater ambiguity. While the focus is not this time on the state's bureaucracy, and new hero Leamas is a mere functionary rather than a member of the establishment, Leamas, no less than Smiley, still works for the British state. Indeed for all his surface disrespect of authority, Leamas serves the state beyond the call of duty via a hugely demanding operation, and upholds the state – including Control's plot that exploits him – until the novel's very last page. The deep state in *Spy* is a ruthless monolith, exemplified by Control's cynical plot, which expands the bureaucracy theme into a sinister expediency: an "instrumental rationality through which technical questions become split from ethical [...] ones".[289] Indeed, with this fact little noticed in reviews, le Carré felt compelled to highlight this issue of expedient morality:

> Western inhibitions spring from the Christian and humanist ethic that the individual
> is worth more than the collective. In espionage [...] Western man sacrifices the
> individual to defend the individual's right against the collective ('To Russia', p. 5).

Into this gloss is wrapped the novel's central ambiguity: if the British state is expedient only in imitation of, and in defence against, a political enemy that threatens Britain's way of life, is the British state therefore justified? This chapter will show that, again, the novel's disavowals of the state are a distraction, a faultline, and that the text implies that such a defence of the British state *is* justified. The chapter will begin by examining the discursive mode through which the British state and its ideology is both denied and ultimately asserted.

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[289] Paul Hoggett in Du Gay (ed.), *Values of Bureaucracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 169-70.

English Empiricism and the British State

When naive young Communist librarian, Liz Gold, asks her older lover, Alec Leamas, what he believes in, Leamas replies: "'I believe an eleven bus will take me to Hammersmith. I don't believe it's driven by Father Christmas'" (*Spy*, p. 36). This is English empiricism – Winston Smith's "'It exists' he cried" (*1984*, p. 283); Dr Johnson kicking the wall – empiricism as subjective, experience-based 'knowledge'. More correctly, Perry Anderson calls this "pseudo-empiricism": *subjective* 'evidence' based on 'common sense' rather than scientifically recordable data. Anderson calls such empiricism an ideology,[290] neatly summarised by Buzard, "The Western ideology which proposes that the West has no ideology, that it has only its cherished 'way of life'."[291] However I accept Anderson's antagonist, E.P. Thompson's nuance that empiricism is an 'idiom' via which Western ideology is naturalised as commonsensical.[292]

In *The Spy* this empirical tradition is modernised via the American hardboiled detective genre and the British Angry Young Men into an abrasive, irreverent 'nihilism' via Leamas. "Leamas was not a reflective man, and not a particularly philosophical one," we are told, early on (*Spy*, p. 13). "'Oh for Christ's sake'" Leamas snaps to another question about his 'philosophy' (p. 133). Leamas is espousing "the tough, no-nonsense professionalism of a new meritocracy, recognising no loyalties of class" that this thesis has shown to mask a passive acceptance of the status quo (Bennett & Woollacott, p. 239). Critics recognise Leamas's common sense,[293] sometimes his antipathy to ideas – or "theory",[294] but almost never that his non-ideological stance is disingenuous. So, that Leamas is, in that conversation with Liz, posing as a drunken *ex*-spy, at the British state's behest, in order to attract Eastern Communists, distinctly troubles his own emphasis on

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[290] P. Anderson, 'Socialism and Pseudo-Empiricism', *passim*.
[291] In Downing and Bazargan, p. 157.
[292] Thompson, 'Peculiarities', p. 336. Thompson was defending himself from Perry Anderson's accusations of empiricism ('Socialism', *passim*).
[293] Dobel calls Leamas a "common sense agent" (p. 195) without recognising the anti-philosophical implications.
[294] "Leamas's theory-despising short-range 'commonsense'" (Barley p. 41).

empirical surface as transparent meaning. Moreover it renders specious Leamas's attempt to establish himself as neutral, to set himself apart from the state.

In another key passage that "asserts his privacy and individuality against the state" (Easthope, p. 155), Leamas watches a girl feeding birds on a beach in Holland:

> He knew what it was then that Liz had given him [...] it was the caring about little things – the faith in ordinary life [...] It was this respect for triviality which he had never been allowed to possess; whether it was bread for the seagulls or love, whatever it was he would go back and find it; he would make Liz find it for him (*Spy*, p. 100).

This recalls Winston and Julia watching a working class washerwoman (*1984*, p. 250-1): observation of empirical "life" affirming "ordinary" love. Leamas sums up his *imagined* rejection of the political for the private, with the phrase "come in from the cold". Indeed for many critics love affirming "ordinary life" is the very meaning of "in from the cold".[295] But as Hugh Kenner complained, this reduces the novel's meaning to a naïve empiricism:

> One can value nothing but immediate human relations: Leamas loves Liz, food is good, bed is warm [...] render[ing] specious every principle of action except the one that carries hot beans to the gullet, or girls to the pallet. [...] The reassurance [le Carré's readers] crave he amply provides: reassurance that to what really matters, the immediate satisfaction of modest desire, everything over which men lose sleep is irrelevant; discipline, reason, civilization, guff like all that.[296]

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[295] See: Lewis, p. 77; Beene, p. 58; "Leamas's despair is mitigated by Liz's simple trust in ordinary experience" (Cawelti & Rosenberg, p. 167); Woods, p. 125; Hepburn explicitly opposes "ideology" to love. (Hepburn, p. 170); William Boyd, 'Rereading: 'The Spy Who Came in from the Cold'', *Guardian*, 24 July 2010, http://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/jul/24/carre-spy-came-cold-boyd, accessed 7/2/15; Yildiz & Durmus, p. 53.
[296] Hugh Kenner, 'The Spy Comes into the Drugstore', *National Review*, 27 July 1965, pp. 655-656.

This is acute about the way the warm, banal and personal (see also: Winston's cherished scraps of childhood memories; a girl feeding birds) is valorised over the cold, collective and political in empiricism. Kenner rightly links this to Leamas's statement "'I don't believe in anything'" (*Spy*, p. 231), but fails to see that Leamas's statement is disingenuous, because naïve empiricist "ordinary life" is *itself* ideological, a naturalisation of Western capitalist society as against Communist 'ideological' existence.

Just as the washerwoman scene occurs immediately before Winston and Julia's arrest, this beach scene occurs while Leamas is in captivity in a Communist safe house, working for the British state. Like Winston and Julia in *1984* then, Liz and Leamas's love is presented as empirical personal reality in opposition to the abstraction of politics.[297] However, Leamas's desire to "come in from the cold" is specifically cited as to *England*, another valorisation of the British 'way of life'. What's more, there is clear evidence later in the book that the pair's relationship is actually far from organic; that they were brought together by the state. Liz complains "'Heavens above, Alec, can they even tell when people will fall in love? [...] I feel dirty, Alec, as if I'd been put out to stud'" (p. 228). This parallels the state's repossession of Julia and Winston's relationship. There are no no-man's lands.

Let us now examine Control's briefing speech to Leamas, as it is the novel's primary exposition of British state ideology. Control is a figure of the British establishment, the novel's representative of the deep state. Control deploys an empirical, common sense idiom throughout ("'do you think that's fair?'") with Leavisite formulations like, "'You can't [...] can you now?'" (*Spy*, p. 20). This rhetorical mode helps naturalise British state actions as 'neutral'. Leamas is as impatient with Control's rationalisations as he is with Liz's inquiry about belief, but only because he is eager to *act* on behalf of the state, not talk. In fact, Control's rationale is just a sophist's version of Leamas's own empiricism: emergent and dominant merge.

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[297] With Julia and Winston's affair conducted in defiance of the state's Anti-Sex League, "Their embrace [...] was a political act" (*1984,* p. 145).

Control claims an equivalence of "methods" between the Soviets and the West (p. 20) which most (Western) critics take as the totality of book's message.[298] Critics miss Control's three key statements that underlie – and undermine – this claim. Firstly, Control says: "We are never going to be aggressors [...] We do disagreeable things but we are *defensive*'" (*Spy* p. 20). This is a crucial, empirical assertion of Soviet aggression threatening 'innocent' Britain. It was also standard Western propaganda: "the Soviet Union, was consistently presented as expansionary and offensive in contrast with the West, which was presented as essentially defensive" (Lashmar & Oliver, p. 128). This assertion elides Western provocations like missiles in Turkey, the US nurturing European capitalism via the Marshall Plan, ongoing international imperialism, the US's interference in Communist regimes throughout the world, West German rearmament, and indeed in this fictional context, Britain's penetration of Communist intelligence services. Control's pseudo-empiricism does violence to the concept of "defensive", unless one regards Communism's very existence as 'aggressive' (as opposed to merely 'offensive').

Secondly, Control declares: "'we do disagreeable things so that ordinary people [...] can sleep safely in their beds at night'" (*Spy* p. 20). So Britain defends an *innocent*, neutral "ordinary life", not an ideology. Thirdly, Control carefully separates "benevolent" 'ideals' (distinct from 'ideology'), a 'way of life', from state 'methods' to protect those ideals and way of life: "'You can't be less ruthless than the opposition simply because your government's *policy* is benevolent, can you now?'" (*Spy*, p. 20). This suggests both that Soviet 'ideals' ('ideology') and methods ('means') are the same (pursuit of power), and that the British state, in doing 'wicked things' – e.g. sacrificing Liz to safeguard Mundt's position – is simply keeping up with the Soviets. In this speech then, Control effectively denies a Western ideology while perpetuating it; avows Western defensiveness whilst

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[298] "No one system is better than another", Grella, p. 136; See also: Gillespie, p. 58; Symons, p. 282; Rutherford (in H. Bloom, p. 16); "no essential differences, methodologically or morally, between East and West", Alan R. Booth, 'Development of the Espionage Film', in *Spy Fiction, Spy Films and Real Intelligence* ed. by Wesley K. Wark (London: Frank Cass, 1991), p. 151; "the West is no different to the East [...] in the ideology of the novel" (J. Thompson, p. 158); Hoffman, pp. 75-76.

asserting Western political imperatives. This shows how pseudo-empiricism becomes subjectivity and sophistry. Indeed, "we are defensive" has an entirely different potential interpretation of 'we are sensitive to criticism' or even 'we have a guilty conscience'. Yet most critics accept Control's rationale:[299] so does Leamas, by accepting the mission.

In a later parallel scene to Liz's discussion of 'belief', Leamas will again deny having any philosophy to his Communist GDR interrogator, Jens Fiedler: "'What do you mean, a philosophy? [...] We're not Marxists, we're nothing. Just people" (p. 133). *Communists* have ideology, claims Leamas, whereas Westerners are (ordinary) "people", thus like Leamas, "nothing": ideologically neutral.[300] By extension, Communists are *not* people. At the point Leamas claims this ideological neutrality he is operating, in great danger, undercover on behalf of the West, of the British state, for which he has already posed as a drunk, assaulted a grocer, and been to prison. Is he merely defending 'neutrality' itself? This Western "neutrality" trope is popular with critics – Beene is typical: "In the ensuing ideological confrontation, the West was at a philosophical disadvantage; it [...] had no appealing affirmative doctrine to counter Soviet ideology" (Beene, p. 47).[301] With Orwell having cited his own venerated 'empiricism' as what has been defeated by the Party in *1984*,[302] *The Spy*'s Fiedler/Leamas interrogation parallels *1984*'s interrogation scenes, where Winston tries to cling to the empirical against O'Brien's 'ideological' brainwashing. "'How can I help seeing what is in front of my eyes?'" Winston cries (*1984*, p. 287). Leamas's neutral empiricism is thus set against Fiedler's 'ideology' as objective 'truth' against subjective 'lies', as defensive against offensive.

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[299] E.g. Dobel, p. 198.
[300] Le Carré said something very similar: "Western democracy seems to have only one unifying force [...] that individuals are more valuable than philosophies," Le Carré, 'The Writer and the Spy', *Sunday Telegraph*, 29 March 1964, p. 18. "Philosophies" exist only one side. In both cases there is a denigration of philosophy.
[301] "Leamas believes that philosophies are dangerous because they make people willing to destroy for their sake" (Cawelti & Rosenberg, p. 161). Hoffman, a former spy, claims a similar "ideological indifference" to Western spies (Hoffman, p. 12). "The innocent middle [...] caught in a cross-fire of ideologies perpetuated by the political oligarchy"" (Ambrosetti, pp. 103-104), which suggests ideologies of East *and* West, located to left and right of 'neutral' Liz and Leamas.
[302] "The empirical method of thought [...] could not survive in a strictly regimented society" (*1984*, p. 218)

Leamas's admission of an ideological position only occurs *after* his discovery that the entire purpose of the operation has been to secure the hated Mundt as a British agent. He snaps at Liz:

'They need him so that the great moronic mass that you admire can sleep soundly in their beds at night [...] They need him for the safety of ordinary crummy people like you and me' (*Spy*, p. 231).

We should not be distracted by the bogus nihilism of "moronic" or "crummy": these are rhetorical synonyms for the novel's venerated "ordinary", and Leamas includes himself and Liz (again, Communist citizens are *not* "ordinary"). The point is that Leamas is parroting Control's briefing: "We do disagreeable things so that ordinary people [...] can sleep safely in their beds at night" (*Spy*, p. 20).[303] The emergent ventriloquises the dominant. Given that Leamas switches his loyalties like the state redefines the enemy a la *1984*,[304] is this satire, whereby Leamas, like Winston is a passive dupe of *British* totalitarianism (the novel's Nazi alliance being a suitably totalitarian marker)? Unlike O'Brien's gleefully irrational rationales however, Control's logic is empirically sound, within its own parameters of defending British Cold War interests.[305] The following Leamas speech is not simply Leamas loving Big Brother: there is logic here.

'This is a war [...] It's graphic and unpleasant because it's fought on a tiny scale, at close range; fought with a wastage of innocent life sometimes, I admit. But it's nothing, nothing at all beside other wars – the last or the next. [...] We're a tiny price to pay' (*Spy*, p. 231).

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[303] This assertion of the political imperative is noted only by Panek (p. 252) and Goodman (p. 168).
[304] C.f. an IRD member's insistence, "this paper ['Foundations of Stalinism'] was not propaganda, it was simply a collection of facts" (Smith, in Barnhisel and Turner p. 114).
[305] The recent exposure of British-run Soviet agent, Col. Oleg Penkovsky and associate Greville Wynne, in May 1963, revealed the kind of 'interest' Britain might be protecting inside the Iron Curtain.

It is however British state logic. We might ask why is *this* War's killing of civilians worse than, say, the British massacre at Hola, Kenya (1959), or indeed Britain's fire-bombing of Dresden during World War II (*Call*, pp. 119-126)? Because the citizens are *British*? But in war, states routinely sacrifice their citizens. Le Carré's gloss suggests there is something *aberrant* in the Western state's expedient sacrifice of the individual: "the humanist ethic that the individual is worth more than the collective" ('To Russia', p. 5). But we recall Wallerstein's point that liberalism is "the ideology of the strong state in the sheep's clothing of individualism" (Wallerstein, p. 10). This is an unsolvable contradiction within liberal society. Liberalism's claim on humanist value of the individual is undermined by ~~intrinsic anti-humanist propensities, be that~~ workforce alienation, the violence used to maintain the system, or the brutal enforcing of that system abroad. This tendency Fiedler quite correctly calls "shrouded in a kind of *pudeur Anglaise*" (p. 124). But these shrouded anxieties make their return. Control's expedient alliance with a Nazi could be seen as reflective of anxieties about contemporary British support of far-right regimes in Greece, or British support of rightist Suharto in Indonesia against Communists (Lashmar & Oliver, pp. 1-10), or indeed former Nazis in power throughout West Germany.[306] *The Spy*'s simultaneous satire and endorsement of the British state shows Western ideology coming into conflict with itself: empirical "ordinary life" in conflict with empirical "defence" of the British liberal capitalist system against Communism. This is a faultline in the book and its reception: thus, for instance, the polarity between le Carré's anti-state gloss and the critical minority report that asserts *The Spy condones* Control's plot, and the logic of Control and Leamas's rationales just cited.[307]

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[306] Former Nazi, Heinz Felfe, in the BND (West German intelligence), was later exposed as a Soviet spy. Many ex-Nazis retained positions of power in the GDR, Feiwel Kupferberg, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic* (Piscataway: Transaction, 2002), p. 166.

[307] "Despite its critical tone, the story [...] seems to defend the sacrifices as sometimes necessary" (Aronoff, p. 93). "A defence of values which make the sacrifices of Leamas [and] Liz [...] necessary" (Sauerberg, p. 54). "The fact that [securing Mundt's position] condemns them both to death does not dispose of [Control's] contention" (Rutherford in H. Bloom, p. 17).

This faultline in liberal thought is further indicated by the contradictory role of Smiley throughout the book. Smiley is said to "disapprove" of the Leamas operation (*Spy*, p. 56), yet he "sees the necessity"; lends his house to the plot; colludes in Leamas's deception by 'briefing' him on Mundt; (deliberately?) sets up Liz by visiting her; then oversees the operation's conclusion at the Wall.[308] Deploying Smiley, intertextually associated with the compassionate state, is an attempt to resolve these contradictions: to simultaneously assert an empirical need to defend Britain alongside an empirical assertion of Britain as liberal, decent and neutral. That this attempt fails is indicated by the fact that some critics *still* see Smiley as endorsing the operation.[309] Thus is empiricism in Western liberalism in conflict with itself: there are no no-man's lands.

We can conclude then that empiricism represents no material resistance to a despotic state, such as we see in *1984* or *The Spy*, because its individualistic subjectivism can process only what it observes, a superficiality that will almost always reassert the status quo.[310] Empiricism can conceive no transformative agenda, no way out. Winston's ultimate acceptance of Big Brother and "2+2=5" is the logical endpoint of naïve empiricism. Appellations of "empiricism" such as this chapter's are usually a prelude to Althusserian anti-humanism. While Althusser's revelation of how much Western "common sense" is ideological has been useful, countering the idea that ideology is on the Soviet side only, for Althusserians, ironically, the state is equally inescapable, the status quo as impossible to reconceive. Easthope is so anti Winston Smith's empiricism that he ends up valorising O'Brien's rejection of a stable reality ("2+2=5"),[311] and thus embracing

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[308] Radio 4's *The Complete Smiley* (adapted by Robert Forrest) furthered this ambiguity by giving Smiley both a more central role in the "ghastly trick" and also telling Leamas not to accept the operation.

[309] Smiley "carries out a vicious double-cross of his own agent," Pearl K. Bell, 'Coming in from the Cold War', *New Leader*, June 1974, pp. 15-16. "Smiley [...] sets up the betrayal of the hero's mistress" ('The Incongruous Spy', *Time*, 1965, p. 62). Lewis views Smiley as "a shadowy and sinister figure" (p. 65) who "has helped to engineer her fate" (Lewis, p. 71). When Smiley shouts, "'where's the girl'" what he "wants to know is not whether the girl is safe but whether the girl is dead" (Boyd, *Guardian*).

[310] O'Brien: "'You believe that reality is something objective, external, existing in its own right. You also believe that the nature of reality is self-evident, but I tell you, Winston, that reality is not external. Reality exists in the human mind and nowhere else'" (*1984*, p. 285).

[311] Easthope, pp. 158-9. See also: Christopher Norris, 'Language, Truth and Ideology: Orwell and the Post-war Left' in Norris, pp. 243-44.

despotism. This is a philosophical Stockholm Syndrome, whereby, transfixed by the Gorgon gaze of 'power' – the state, the system – Althusserians are rendered as passive as empiricists.[312] But this is a closed circuit: we do not have a choice only between credulous empiricism and playful pessimism, both of which leave the system unchallenged. Cultural materialism shows that while it is important to understand the power of state ideology, state brainwashing is never entirely complete: thus the emphasis on faultlines. While it is important to understand the power of the state, the state is rarely as efficient as O'Brien's or Control's plots.[313] Indeed le Carré later regarded *The Spy* as "like a fan letter to the British secret establishment".[314] Indeed MI5 'cleared' *The Spy* for publication (Sisman, Ch. 12, NP), and we only have to compare 1963's real-life espionage cases to see this: the Profumo affair and the Philby defection hardly betokened an almighty, efficient British state. This is Operation Margarine again.

So *does* Leamas finally escape the state in *The Spy*? Alas not. At the very end when Liz is killed and Leamas finally realises the extent of the "tiny price" he and Liz represent, he finally rejects the state by choosing to die in no-man's land. Critics claim Leamas thus prioritises the personal over the political: either as an assertion of individualism,[315] or of love against the collective, monolithic state.[316] Suicide is not much of an assertion of anything other than romantic morbidity however. Moreover, the individual and the state are not so readily separable, particularly not a *secret agent of the British state*. Leamas has already fulfilled his mission, has secured the state, so his death is just collateral damage in achieving the overall objective, "a small price for a big return" as he himself says (*Spy*, p.

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[312] Orwell's is "a politics of pessimism". Beatrix Campbell, 'Orwell Revisited', in Samuel Vol. III; a point made also by Williams (*Orwell*, p. 61) and Inglis (p. 106).

[313] "Orwell [...] underestimated [...] the sheer incompetence of the state" (Inglis, p. 106). Le Carré conceded: "I don't think *The Spy* [...] could happen, because I don't believe that it's ever possible to operate such a clean conspiracy, where all the pieces fit together [...] if you have to choose between conspiracy or cock-up, my instinct is to go for the cock-up every time." Miriam Gross, 'The Secret World of John le Carré', *The Observer*, 3 February 1980, p. 33.

[314] Le Carré, 'Foreword', Lamplighter edition, *Looking Glass*, p. vii.

[315] Leamas "eventually chooses [...] love over professional standards, and by this act he affirms individualism over institutional tyranny" (Beene, p. 51); Leamas "wishes to regain his lost sense of human feeling" from "dehumanizing forces of twentieth century society" (Woods, p. 125).

[316] Leamas's suicide is a "humanly courageous protest against the code of expediency and in support of Liz's rival code of love" (Lewis, p. 77).

230). In conventional war Leamas's name might feature on a plaque – erected by the state. Empiricism is again in conflict with itself. Leamas dies for love as an expression of empirical Western values; but Leamas also dies for the asserted empirical political necessity of 'defending' Britain. This contradiction cannot be solved: the liberal state is inevitably violent and, like all states, sacrifices individuals in pursuit of its collective needs. Wedded to the promotion of its decency and neutrality, liberalism cannot admit this, and so we have seen a whole series of strategies to deny and occlude this reality. An equally potent strategy is to deflect the violence and expediency onto the political enemy, to present the British as guilty only of imitation and defending their legitimate interests. "We are defensive".

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4. "Party Terms": Political Enemy Ideology

By beginning and ending with citizens gunned down by the GDR at the Berlin Wall,[317] *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*'s very iconography suggests an intransigent Eastern Communism. The erection of the Berlin Wall by the GDR in August 1961 was presented in the West as aggressive. Le Carré later claimed the Wall made espionage "more clandestine, more perilous, more questionable" and called the Wall "a perfect symbol of the monstrosity of ideology gone mad".[318] For Western propaganda already presenting the Soviet Bloc as a prison incarcerating its citizens (Shaw, pp. 74-5),[319] the Wall's fortifications and armed guards were perfect ammunition: this was 'ideology' militarily enforced on a citizenry divorced from empirical "ordinary life". Leamas's focalisation calls the Wall, "A dirty, ugly thing of breeze blocks and strands of barbed wire, lit with cheap yellow light, like the backdrop for a concentration camp" (*Spy*, p. 10). "Concentration camp" emphasises the Eastern Europe-as-prison theme and invokes Arendt's links between Communism and fascism. We see these prisoner/captive population images throughout *The Spy*.[320] Few Western critics challenge this presentation of the Berlin Wall: "built to quarantine West Berlin and seal desperate East Germans from freedom" (Beene, p. 49). In such formulations, the 'ideological' East is empirically hostile to the 'neutral' West, which is straightforwardly synonymous with 'freedom'.[321]

The idea that 'ideology' is the dominant motor of totalitarian society is found in Arendt: "the difference between ends and means evaporates [...] and the result is the

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[317] East credits le Carré as the first writer to use the Wall: Andy East, 'The Spy in the Dark: A History of Espionage Fiction', *Armchair Detective* 19:1 (1986), 35. *Life* declared a "Berlin setting" key feature of the "new-style" spy thriller (Knickerbocker, p. 13). Len Deighton followed with *Funeral in Berlin* (1964), filmed, like *The Spy* in 1965; *which* also featured an expedient British state alliance with a Nazi, and several Berlin Wall scenes, culminating in a shooting at the Wall.

[318] Le Carré, 'Foreword to the Lamplighter Edition', *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (Sevenoaks: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), p. 6.

[319] "Our Western propaganda was [...] entirely true: the East German regime was indeed hated by those it governed" (*Spy*, 'Lamplighter', p. 7). This was written in December 1989; the Wall was opened in November.

[320] The Wall intersects the book at the middle too, when, Leamas will observe, "dragons' teeth, observation towards and double aprons of barbed wire" (*Spy*, p. 117). The GDR safe-house Leamas is held in is described as "like something from a prison camp" (*Spy*, p. 126).

[321] "The Wall [...] is a barrier to prevent East Germany's own citizens from escaping to the West," (Rutherford, in H. Bloom, p. 17).

monstrous immorality of ideological politics" (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p. 249). 'Ideology'

morphs in the course of a sentence from a political principle into a mechanism of pure

power, while the *West* (like le Carré criticism), is exempt from "ideological politics". This

is particularly striking regarding *The Spy,* as the "ends and means" theme is emphasised

via Communist subordination of individual to state (Fiedler's speech; Prison Wardress).

Let us briefly try and balance this assertion of an ideology-driven GDR. It was true

that, "the East German economy was being bled to death" by emigration to the West

(Isaacs & Downing, p. 191), and Eastern methods of dealing with defectors were summary.

But both the USSR and GDR felt their political system was under threat from the West.

"Anti-Fascist Protection Rampart" was not mere rhetoric: the Wall actualised genuine

Soviet fear of a reunified Germany: the deterrence to defectors was a bonus (Isaacs &

Downing, pp. 184-188). Consequently the Wall was a Cold-War faultline, highlighted

when the opposing side's tanks faced each other off at Checkpoint Charlie on 27 October

1961 (Isaacs & Downing p. 200; Sisman claims Cornwell was present, in a diplomatic

capacity). Indeed, in *The Spy*'s opening scene, there is direct reference to the Berlin crisis

when the checkpoint guards tell Leamas, "'We can't give covering fire [to Leamas's agent

as he crosses the Wall] they tell us there'd be war if we did'" (*Spy*, p. 9). With new US

President Kennedy raising defence spending sharply and the Soviets having developed the

thermonuclear bomb, such a war would *be total war: annihilation.*[322] Kennedy admitted

the Wall actually lessened the danger of military conflict over Berlin.[323] So while the Wall

in history may have helped keep the Cold 'peace', in *The Spy* the Wall is a symbol of

Communist 'ideology' and aggression.

The Spy offers some rare scenes in le Carré's work of a Communist country. Despite

her Communist sympathies, Liz Gold's visit to the GDR also evokes this *1984* vision of

'ideology' controlling 'ordinary life'. GDR citizens "talked politics at every meal [...] it

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[322] *Evening News*, 26 July 1961, p. 7, 'President Orders Defence Build-up to Meet Berlin Threat: Kennedy
Warns Krushchev 'We'll Fight If We Have To'.'

[323] Frederick Taylor, *The Berlin Wall: 13 August 1961 - 9 November 1989* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007).

was like living in a religious community" (*Spy*, p. 175), a cult. There are, as in *1984*,

endless shortages, lack of the sensual "ordinary things" of life – "The little house she

stayed in was dark and meagre, the food was poor […] you felt the world was better for

your empty stomach" (p. 175).[324] *The Spy* presents a lack of popular support for the

regime, thus the poor attendance at the branch meeting (pp. 176-7); the bunting around the

picture of Lenin is "dusty" (p. 177), a Communist icon neglected, unloved. The regime is

maintained under coercion – witness Frau Ebert's fear of the Party official (p. 178), akin to

the fear of officialdom in *1984*. So for all this 'ideology', the dreariness and fearfulness of

life in the GDR offers no "greater good" only elite power for its own sake.

We witness a powerful presentation of the 'ideology'-driven GDR state in the secret

Tribunal where Leamas is tried.[325] Leamas sees the Tribunal's President with her "small,

cruel eyes" (p. 217) as grotesque, acknowledging her gender with a "shiver" (p. 179). The

President has a commonality with Fleming's Communist grotesque, Rosa Klebb (*From*

Russia With Love, 1957). There is little more subtlety in le Carré's Manichaean portrait:

the powerful elite is driven by *cruelty*, not principle, and delivers a travesty of

'ideologically' driven 'justice', acquitting Mundt and arresting and probably executing

Fiedler (p. 228). Fittingly, the Tribunal scene is leeched of colour, bar the saturated red of

a suspended Red Star, "ordinary life" eclipsed by 'ideology': 'ideology' that only spells

power not philosophy. That Liz and Leamas's personal relationship is exposed in this

political context is further illustration of the trampling of empirical values by Communist

ideology (as Winston and Julia's relationship is exhibited in *1984*).

Emphasising the "party terms" outlined here – an ideology-driven expediency – *The*

Spy gives far more space than any other le Carré novel to Communist 'philosophy', what

Carré called "the Communist evaluation of the individual's place in society ('To Russia',

p. 5). Again a study of the literary construct of character is revealing in this respect.

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[324] Similarly, Leamas is told of "a temporary shortage of potato" (p. 125) and given "black bread and ersatz coffee" (*Spy*, p. 126).
[325] MI6's Soviet plant, Oleg Penkovsky's 1962 show-trial may have had input into *The Spy*'s trial scene (Hennessy, p. 44).

Characterising Communism

Jens Fiedler is the most sympathetic Communist character in le Carré's 1960s and 70s novels. Personable, thoughtful, patient with the truculent Leamas, Fiedler however, is also *The Spy*'s O'Brien – an ideologue of totalitarianism.[326] Prior to meeting him, Leamas calls Fiedler "'a savage little bastard'". Leamas's focalisation terms Fiedler, "remorseless in the destruction of others", and Leamas claims later that Fiedler tortured Guillam's agent (*Spy*, p. 118). Moreover, Fiedler, we are told, was "anxious to take part, whatever the personal cost, in the construction of Stalin's Germany" (p. 121). If that were not damning enough, Fiedler approvingly quotes Stalin in the main exposition of his ideology to Leamas. This is an anachronism at this historical moment: Stalin was discredited in the Eastern Bloc by his successor, Khrushchev, who was ubiquitous in the early 1960s Western media. In tandem, Walter Ulbricht was temporarily taking a gentler, post-Stalinist approach in Fiedler's GDR.[327] Let us examine this speech of Fiedler's, as it is the book's core exposition of Communist 'ideology':

> 'It is not fashionable to quote Stalin – but he said once 'half a million liquidated is a statistic, and one man killed in a traffic accident is a national tragedy.' He was laughing, you see, at the bourgeois sensitivities of the mass. He was a great cynic. But what he meant is still true: a movement which protects itself against counter-revolution can hardly stop at the exploitation – or the elimination, Leamas – of a few individuals. […] I myself would have put a bomb in a restaurant if it brought us further along the road. Afterwards I would draw the balance – so many women, so many children; and so far along the road' (*Spy*, pp. 133-134).

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[326] Fiedler wears an insufficiently black hat for some critics; "he has retained a conscientious concern for human life" (Tracy, p. 23). However, Cobbs observes: "to see Fiedler as anything but a ruthless ideologue is to misunderstand the character completely." Cobbs however goes considerably further: "self-professed Stalinist who clearly understands the viciousness not only of Communism's means but also *of its ends*" (Cobbs, p. 53, my emphasis).

[327] Anthony Kemp-Welch, 'Stalinism to Solidarity', in Leffler & Westad (eds.) *Cambridge*, p. 219.

Fiedler here rejects the value of the individual as against the needs of the collective. The bomb in the restaurant recalls O'Brien condoning throwing sulphuric acid in a child's face in the name of the 'cause' (*1984* p. 199): both are carefully chosen images for their alienating anti-humanism, their extremes of instrumental bureaucratic accounting logic ("'I would draw the balance'") is totalitarian. However where *is* the greater good in Fiedler's speech? What *is* the objective: "the road" that the bomb gets his state further along? The only motive Fiedler cites is preventing "counter-revolution", easily equated in Western sensibilities with Communism retaining undemocratic power. Thus, again the idea of power for its own sake, as per O'Brien's "'Power is not a means, it is an end'" (*1984* p. 302). Ends and means have merged in Fiedler, but contrary to Arendt's assertion (Arendt, p. 249), it has nothing of 'ideology' left in it.[328]

The text pushes the idea of the parallels between Control and Fiedler's ideologies. Fiedler asks: "'would you kill a man, an innocent man […] suppose it were me they wanted to kill: would London do it?'" Leamas replies, "'It depends…it depends on the need'". Fiedler responds, "'Ah […] it depends on the need. Like Stalin, in fact. The traffic accident and the statistics'" (p. 173/4). Indeed, we will later find that this, effectively, *is* what London *does* do. But the presentation of this debate as a defeat for Leamas is disingenuous. Because the British "need" has been established to contain "ideals", a "way of life", a comprehensible "greater good" (to Western readers), Fiedler and Communism's approach by comparison is nihilistic, a pursuit of pure power with no discernible, articulated, "greater good". What's more, Control has already asserted that Britain only *imitates* Communist methods ("we do disagreeable things, but we are defensive"), methods that *originate* with Communism, which is implicitly *offensive*. This then is not "moral equivalence".[329] The novel may not condone Control/Britain, but in the novel's terms, Fiedler/Communism is worse.

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[328] In this Western consensus is contained a concept of a base human nature, to which Stalinism gave full rein, but capitalism reins in (Schaub, pp. 7-10).

[329] "Fiedler's arguments are really the same as Control's" (Beene, p. 53).

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Other Communist characters serve to reassert this anti-individualist expediency theme. Leamas focalises GDR agent, Peters, "for whom the end and the means were identical" (*Spy*, p. 81), though Peters – barely characterised – does and says nothing to support this assertion. The GDR prison wardress who incarcerates Liz after the Tribunal, declares: "'We cannot build Communism without doing away with individualism [...] They are reactionaries who call themselves progressive: they defend the individual against the state'" (*Spy*, p. 219). This is another *1984* characterisation, an 'ideology'-spouting automaton, who also now tars Khrushchev as Stalinist by quoting him at his most bullish, on the 1956 Hungarian uprising: "'He said it would never have happened if a couple of writers had been shot in time'" (p. 220).

Compared to such caricatures of Communism, Liz Gold is a more complex case. Indeed her characterisation is a further faultline, tracing key contradictions in liberal thought. Leamas laughs at Liz when she first declares herself a Communist (p. 36), and this condescension pervades her characterisation throughout. In Liz alien Communist 'ideology' is in contradiction with her native British empiricism. After a moment of doubt, for instance:

> She was suddenly filled with a feeling of warmth and gratitude towards the Party. They really were decent people and she was proud and thankful to belong [...] Centre was such a wonderful thing – stern, benevolent, impersonal, perpetual. They were good, good people. People who fought for peace (*Spy*, p. 157).

Although this is presented as close-focalisation, as Barthes points out, 'objectivity' always smuggles in judgement, and Liz's thoughts here are being parodied.[330] "Warmth and gratitude" suggest Liz's insecure need to belong, even, in a sexist slur, to be controlled;

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[330] Roland Barthes, 'An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative', *New Literary History* (Winter, 1975), 237-272 (p. 263).

"stern, benevolent, impersonal, perpetual" ominously suggests Big Brother. Even Liz's use of "peace" mingles naïve empiricism (peace as neutral 'good') and the ideological perversion of language (the discredited Peace Partisans). Thus Communism is, as we saw in *Call*, ominous and threatening whilst *also* naïve and unworldly.[331] The reason for this faultline in Communist characterisation lies in contradictory ideological desiderata: Liz is required both to represent Communism as hardline antihuman ideology *and* also Communism's antipathy to humanism via her own humanity. But Liz's naiveté as a result becomes both a negative *and* a positive: the *reason* for Liz's Communism *and* what ultimately undermines it: Liz's path to salvation. We will see this again later, with the Karla of *Smiley's People*.

So, after the GDR party Branch Meeting, Liz is again beset by doubt in the face of the empirical 'reality' of Communism:

> Peace and freedom and equality – they were facts, of course they were. And what about history – all those laws the Party proved? No, Alec was wrong: truth existed outside people, it was demonstrated in history, individuals must bow to it, be crushed by it if necessary (*Spy*, p. 177)

This is another "(s)he loved Big Brother" moment,[332] conveying the sterile creepiness of 'ideology'. Yet the faultline reappears: Liz's naïve empiricism struggles with 'ideology's anti-humanism and her assertion of expediency has a ring, again, of self-persuasion. The very inconsistency of Liz's characterisation then has an ideological anti-Communist logic.

This battle in Liz is effectively won, by the novel's end, by empiricism, her Communism apparently overwhelmed by the 'reality' of the GDR. Now this Communist

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[331] Cornwell had been involved in surveillance of the CPGB only a few years before (Sisman, NP) and thus knew that Liz's Communist Party of Great Britain was by this stage riddled by government surveillance and thus had very little independence of manoeuvre (Andrew, p. 404).

[332] "Everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother" (*1984*, p. 342).

suddenly articulates liberal humanist sentiments wherein individuals' "love" is pitted against the "wicked" state (*Spy*, p. 229). Leamas upbraids Liz's inconsistency, and imputes the *origin* of such expediency to Communism. "'Your Party's always at war, isn't it? Sacrificing the individual to the mass [...] I never heard that Communists preached the sanctity of human life'" (p. 229). Leamas concludes: "'They're party terms - a small price for a big return. One sacrificed for the many'" (p. 230). Again no principle exists behind this Communist expediency: what *is* the "big return"? But although Liz has previously asserted a version of this expedient argument, now she simply reasserts empirical humanism, "It's far more terrible, what they are doing: to find the humanity in people [...] and use it to hurt and kill...'" (p. 231).

The contradictions in Liz's characterisation are compounded by her death. Leamas's dying vision is of "a small car smashed between great lorries" – the lorries are the opposing Cold War state, he and Liz, the children, the 'innocent' victims caught in the crossfire (p. 240). The image of the lorries may be an effective rhetorical device for suggesting large powers in conflict and the loss of citizens' life in ideological struggles those citizens do not fully understand. But in the context of *The Spy*'s plot the image is as disingenuous as the suggestion that Control and Fiedler's moralities are equivalent. The equivalence of the image actually slurs the GDR with an action it is not party to. Because Liz is sacrificed by the expedient morality of her *own* state, not that of the Communist GDR. The text is ambiguous, but the most likely interpretation is that Mundt – or possibly Control – gives the order for Liz's death, because she is a threat to Mundt's continued security (Liz: "'It seems odd that Mundt let me go [...] I'm a risk now, aren't I?" (p. 229). Is the GDR equally to blame for the – critically overlooked – deaths of the British spies that Mundt shoots to maintain his cover? Only by the original sin of being Communist: or of building the Berlin Wall – which is where we came in.

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5. Means to an End: Conclusion

The Spy gives a highly cynical appraisal of social and political attempts to recalibrate Britain as a classless nation. Contra contemporary events like the Philby defection, the establishment represented by the novel's Control has its potency reasserted over the passive, manipulable, ultimately powerless 'classless' Leamas and Liz. Thus *The Spy* depicts a society in which resistance is impossible and again resignedly, if critically, reasserts the social and political status quo.

However, the British state is attacked in *The Spy* more strongly than in *Call*, due to an operation that apparently involves the sacrifice of Liz to British strategic political gain. It is therefore possible to see Control as being as much a proponent of bureaucratic accounting logic, on the Western side, as Fiedler is on the Eastern side. However, *The Spy*'s anti-state implication is ambiguous and is contradicted by several strategies, including the role of a sidelined but surely significant Smiley. Furthermore, the anti-state theme is strongly subverted via the novels' discursive mode of English empiricism, which denies a British ideology whilst affirming the British political status quo and thus the state.

As regards the political enemy, Communist Fiedler – and others' – articulation of an expedient Stalinism is the most specific delineation of 'Communist' ideology in all these novels. That this 'ideology' lacks any tangible 'greater good' rationale makes nonsense of critical claims of East-West equivalence made of the novel. Both West and East are shown to exploit their citizens for political purposes: the difference, crucially, is that Control's claim of the West's "benevolent" 'policy' is set against the depiction of a malevolent ideology of pure, nihilistic power in Eastern bloc Communism.

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Chapter 3: *The Looking Glass War*

1. Reflected Glory: *The Looking Glass War* in context

Following the huge international success of *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, *The Looking Glass War* was highly anticipated, securing major advances from new UK and US publishers prior to publication in June 1965.[333] It was serialised in the *Daily Express* ("the fictional event of 1965") and the US *Ladies' Home Journal*: two middlebrow endorsements of popular success. The international hit *The Spy* film came out the same year, further enhancing le Carré's work's popular profile. However, following poor reviews, lesser sales and a less successful film adaptation, *Looking Glass*'s currency quickly depleted, retaining a cultural half-life as a title (e.g. Episode 2 of Dominic Sandbrook's 2013 BBC Cold War documentary) and is now little discussed.[334]

Looking Glass War is among the simplest of le Carré's complex plots. Leclerc, head of a defunct intelligence Department, feted in the War, gains intelligence that suggests the GDR is installing rockets near the Western border, an Eastern version of the Cuban Missile Crisis. First, Department member Taylor is mysteriously killed whilst in Finland attempting to obtain a pilot's aerial photographs of the rockets. Second, Leclerc's aide Avery fails to retrieve the film whilst in Finland. Third, Fred Leiser, a middle-aged Pole who worked for the Department in the War, is sent to the GDR to investigate. Although Leiser's training in Oxford takes up most of the book, this training is slipshod and hurried, and Leiser is saddled with out-dated equipment. As the Department listen in via radio near the border, Leiser kills a border guard, and finding out nothing about the rockets, is quickly intercepted and captured by the GDR authorities. The Department's intelligence rival Circus, which has been watching the operation, sends Smiley to shut the operation down.

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[333] Le Carré switched from Gollancz to the more 'literary', Heinemann, selling UK paperback rights to Pan for £50,000, and US rights to Dell for $400,000. 'Where the Money Lies' *Time*, 12 March 1965. This maintained a foot in 'literary publishing' and the bestseller market.

[334] See also: Frank Beddors, *Looking Glass Wars* series (2004); G. Edward White, *Alger Hiss's Looking Glass Wars: The Covert Life of a Soviet Spy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Contemporary Reception of *Looking Glass War*

Contemporary reviewers largely condemned *The Looking Glass War* for its perceived attempt to 'transcend' the thriller genre. Anthony Curtis complained: "He has stopped writing straight thrillers; he has not started writing novels".[335] Most reviews echoed this.[336] There were frequent complaints of "dullness": "There are grindingly dull sequences – the refresher course for the rusty spy notably among them," declared Patrick Gaffney.[337] Alex Campbell made negative comparison to the very writer to whom le Carré had previously been deemed superior: "maybe fun died with Fleming".[338] In all this, the established literary class system reasserts 'entertainment' as popular fiction's purpose.

Julian Symons' rare positive review recognised the book's key component: focus on the intelligence services themselves: "the subject of the book is really the Department", which "reversed the Buchan formula that "we" are nice and "they" are nasty". This negative view of the state was acknowledged in a small number of reviews,[339] with Saul Landau's positive review even invoking the state's expedient morality, calling Leiser and the border guard "expendable pawns" and "cannon fodder".[340] *Newsweek* declared the book, "a legacy of scorn and anguish directed [...] at the system, the Establishment" which challenged its "redeeming escutcheon of Country, Queen and God" (*Newsweek*, p. 65). However *The Times* (negative) and Eric Ambler (positive)[341] deemed the Department's incompetence unconvincing.

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[335] Anthony Curtis, 'Work Out for a Keen Spy', *Sunday Telegraph,* 20 June 1965, p. 19.

[336] On genre limits: Maurice Richardson, 'Le Carré tries too hard', *Observer,* 20 June 1965, p. 27; Hilary Corke, *Listener*, 24 June 1965, p. 949; Richard Mayne, 'Carré on Spying', *New Statesman,* 25 June 1965, pp. 1013-1014; Peter Dickinson, 'Blood Count', *Punch,* 12 July 1965, p. 99; George P. Elliott, *New York Times Book Review*, 25 July 1965, p. 5; Orville Prescott, 'The Smell of Failure and Incompetence', *New York Times,* 23 July 1965, p. 27; N.N. 'Spy to the Slaughter', *Newsweek,* 26 July 1965, pp. 64-65.

[337] Patrick Gaffney, 'Spy Time', *Scotsman*, 26 June 1965, p. 3. See also, on "dullness": A.C. Cockburn, 'Twenty Years After', *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 June 1965, p. 533; Howard Enzenberger, 'Up the Circus', *Spectator*, 25 June 1965, p. 827; Richard Bury, 'Fiction', *Books and Bookmen*, August 1965, p. 35; P.L. Buckley *New Review,* 2 November 1965, p. 995; Andrew Leslie, 'The Spy Who Went Out', *Guardian*, 25 June 1965, p. 9; N.N. 'New Fiction', *The Times,* 24 June 1965, p. 15; Ernest S. Piske, 'More Mist Than Mystery', *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 July 1965, p. 6; Alan L. Otten, 'Thrills and Chills', *Wall Street Journal*, 2 August 1965.

[338] Alex Campbell, 'Thrillers for Eggheads" *New Republic*, 3 July 1965, p. 26.

[339] Bury (p. 35), Mayne (p. 1014).

[340] Saul Landau, 'Alice in Bondland', *Ramparts* (December 1965), 74-78 (p. 74).

[341] Eric Ambler, 'John le Carré Escapes the Follow Up Jinx', *Life*, 30 July 1965, p. 8.

Reviewers largely disregarded Cold War politics in favour of office politics. Robert Ostermann suggested the state was simply an employer: "ambition and its corrosive effects [...] is the theme [...] making its intelligence-work setting of secondary concern."[342] William Barrett saw only "querulous civil servants", and big government, "the spy becomes merely a pawn of the bureaucracy, [...] just like the ordinary citizen in our society, a victim of excessive organization."[343]

While the patriotic *The Times*' reviewer complained that *Looking Glass* "exposed the falsity of British patriotism, public school camaraderie, and Free World ideology" (p. 15), most British reviewers ignored the novel's theme of British decline (the Department's preoccupation with the War is barely mentioned): only Elizabeth Berridge hinted: "Mr le Carré writes with cold anger at the folly and pride of men so romantically and dangerously embalmed in their heroic dreams".[344] It was left to US reviewers to be specific: "The aristocratic leftovers from Kipling have convinced [Leiser] that he is doing this for the Empire" (Landau, p. 74). Marcus even suggested that "the Empire [Britain] served and the class system it embodied [...] has all gone to pot; it is irrelevant to the contemporary world."[345]

Reviewers concluded that the political enemy was absent in *Looking Glass*. Curtis saw the Department as "creating artificially a private emergency of their own" (Curtis, p. 18), an idea echoed in many other reviews.[346] While some reviewers suggested the rockets' existence was politically unimportant,[347] Steven Marcus uniquely noted that "the political implications of such a possibility are of course staggering", as did Ostermann (p. 19); while Ambler mentioned "a Cuban situation in Europe" (p. 8), while a hint by Granville

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[342] Robert Ostermann, 'In the Looking Glass War, Some Sharp Reflections of Characters', *National Observer*, 26 July 1965, p. 19.
[343] William Barrett, 'Tradition of the Spy', *Atlantic* (August 1965), 124-125. Also on *Looking Glass* as office politics: "prissy and incompetent bureaucrats" (Campbell, p. 26):; N.N. 'Giving Up the Game', *Time*, 30 July 1965, p. 82; "bureaucratic interdepartmental bickering" (Bury, p. 35); N.N. *Kirkus*, 15 June 1965, https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/john-le-carre/looking-glass-war/, accessed 21/8/2014;
[344] Elizabeth Berridge 'Losing Heart in South Africa', *Daily Telegraph*, 24 June 1965, p. 23.
[345] Steven Marcus, 'Grand Illusions', *New York Review of Books*, 5 August 1965, p. 20.
[346] Ostermann, p. 19; *Newsweek*, p. 64.
[347] Elliott (p. 5); *Newsweek* (p. 64), Otten; Landau (p. 74).

Hicks about "CIA activities" suggested another Cuban connection, the US's CIA-organised Bay of Pigs invasion.[348]

Like reviewers, subsequent critics have tended to overstate *Looking Glass* as a novel of "work".[349] Barley treats the novel as manifestation of "transactional analysis" (Barley, pp. 48-65), a study of "corporate behaviour" little connected to Cold War. However, critics hail *Looking Glass* as le Carré's most anti-establishment novel: "more biting and condemnatory toward the Cold War intelligence industry" than *The Spy* (Hoffman, p. 77); Homberger sees a condemnation of "the paralysis of the British official class itself" (Homberger, p. 57). Curiously, critics focus on Smiley as locus for negative state activity, Richard Locke calling him, "a member of the evil but realistic modern espionage Establishment, effective but devoid of honor and idealism."[350] Unlike reviewers, critics largely acknowledge the national decline theme. Sauerberg claims all le Carré's 60s novels are "an effort to place responsibility for the national decline" (Sauerberg, p. 170) but fails to do so himself. The novel "satirizes Britain's unwillingness to face the reality of its diminished role in world affairs" (Aronoff p. 65).[351] Lewis even suggests a national allegory in the Jamesonian sense: "the Department is in some ways emblematic of postwar and postimperialist England, a country living not in the present but in its collective memory of greatness" (Lewis, pp. 90/91). There's a vagueness to these critical analyses of decline however,[352] and it will be one objective of this chapter to be historically specific in its analysis of the novel's British decline theme.

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[348] Granville Hicks, *Saturday Review*, 24 July 1965, pp. 39-40. Le Carré made the Bay of Pigs connection himself, claiming both JK Galbraith and Allen Dulles, former CIA director, had done so also (Foreword, Lamplighter, *Looking Glass*, p. viiii).

[349] See also: Cawelti & Rosenberg (p. 171); Neuse on 'bureaucratic personality' (Neuse, p. 302).

[350] Richard Locke, 'The Spy Who Spied on Spies', *New York Times,* 30 June 1974, p. 1. Also on Smiley as negative state, see: Aronoff (p. 21); Pearl K. Bell, 'Coming in from the Cold War', *New Leader*, 24 June 1974, p. 16.

[351] Homberger calls *Looking Glass* "a sustained examination of the inner decay of British intelligence, romantically imagining that England had an independent role still to play on the world stage" (Homberger, p. 58).

[352] E. g. "an allegorical and cautionary tale intended to call attention to the dangers of contemporary British governmental thinking" with its "backwards-looking, ultimately dangerous British world-view" (Goodman, p. 67)

So this chapter will first examine the presentation of the Department as emblem of an anachronistic British state, then analyse how this satire becomes a faultline via the competing representation of the Circus-as-state. Second, the chapter will explore what *Looking Glass* has to say about the British nation in the midst of the Swinging Sixties in the dawn of détente and the twilight of decline, and how the nation, in turn, becomes a faultline via competing, contradictory representations of Britain. Thirdly, the chapter will examine the political enemy and examine a faultline wherein an implicit questioning of Communism's threat is countered by a reassertion of consensus anti-Communism.

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2. "That Secret Elite": the Department and the British State

The intelligence bureaucracy is even more central to *Looking Glass* than le Carré's previous books. There is none of the outsider-insider push and pull of Smiley's role in *Call,* while *The Spy*'s depiction of the espionage field is largely replaced by an equally vivid depiction of the espionage desk, the bureau.[353] However, reviewers, critics and le Carré himself all interpreted *Looking Glass*'s focus as general office-work:

> 'The kind of chaps you meet in my books are the kind of people you work with in the office. Intrigue, treachery, loyalty, these are the things you can find. Anywhere. [...] That's simply what I do. Make observations on ordinary people, and then put them straight into the high-tension situation of espionage.'[354]

This is a rather disingenuous statement: most office workers are not risking their lives – or others' – or impacting upon the power- or information-balance of the Cold War in the course of their daily work.[355] The Department is an organ of the state, involved, in however subsidiary a role, in the defence of the realm, possessed of some facet of legitimate violence (Leiser kills a border guard), and with a political implication to its every action, however inept.

This insistence on office politics over real politics is an indicator of Jameson's analysis of the "radical split between the private and the public", the opposition of "Freud versus Marx" ('Third World', p. 69) in liberal thinking, particularly in regard to its literature. Several of le Carré's glosses make just this private/public distinction: "The ideological deadlock [of] *The Spy* [...] is replaced by the psychological deadlock of men

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[353] "The shift away from the individual agent to the organization behind him is a more radical departure from literary convention than anything in *The Spy*" (Lewis, p. 80).

[354] Mandrake, 'Why Author John le Carré Believes James Bond is the Ideal Defector', *National Observer*, 26 July 1965, p. 19.

[355] Denning's claim that spy novels are fantasies for classless white-collar workers makes sense regarding the glamour and heroics in Buchan or Fleming (Denning, p. 35), but the dowdiness and dullness of espionage in le Carré is anchored in realism not fantasy, whilst the novels' more dramatic elements – the fates of lower-class Leamas or Leiser – are hardly empowering.

whose emotional experiences are drawn from an old war" (*Looking Glass* Letter, p. 4). Le

Carré continues: "The "motor" of their energy lies [...] not in the Cold War [...] but in

their own desolate mentalities" (*Looking Glass* Letter, p. 7). In this, le Carré contradicts

himself; these 'desolate mentalities' cannot be both personal *and* fused in the social and

political crucible of the old war. This reveals the point that the private and the public

realms always co-exist. As Herbert Marcuse puts it: "The sickness of the individual is

ultimately caused and sustained by the sickness of his civilization".[356] Indeed both

Marcuse and Althusser deployed Freud and Marx in tandem, Marcuse drawing on Freud's

analysis of groups to suggest they possess "a sort of collective mind".[357] Certainly the

behaviour of the Department suggests a collective mind, indeed a collective madness in the

Leiser operation, or perhaps a collective "cure" for the sickness of society: for British

decline. Let us look further at this 'civilisation' in *Looking Glass*, and what the focus on

the state achieves.

The Department and the Establishment

Unlike *The Spy*'s ambiguous attitude, *Looking Glass*'s anti-establishment attitude is

apparently both overt and specific. The book's is not a veneer of irreverence towards the

elite, like Leamas's, but a tangible antipathy towards the very amateur class that was once

valorised in *Call*. "That secret elite" is how Leclerc's aide, John Avery, describes the

Department, a phrase le Carré also used of MI6 (*Philby*, p. 36), and this readily embraces

the increasingly fashionable concept of 'the establishment'. In this vein, Perry Anderson

had recently argued that the "amateurism and nepotism" of the aristocracy's continued grip

on power had led to an enervated capitalism that couldn't match the innovation and

productivity of its rivals and a state apparatus ill-fitted to manage it (P. Anderson,

'Origins', p. 51). Anderson blamed British decline on the amateur elite; so did new Prime

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[356] Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (London: Routledge, 1956), p. 245.
[357] Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), p. 99.

Minister Harold Wilson (from October 1964), whose attempts to modernise both state and nation were well underway as *Looking Glass* was published (Leys, pp. 79-81), usefully illustrating the complexity of the 'state', in that Wilson headed the state's legislative branch. If *Looking Glass* initially seemed a fittingly bracing, radical counterpart to Wilson's first hundred days then both would prove disappointing.

Again using characterisation to expose contradictions and complexities, let us examine Department director, Leclerc. Leclerc sharply recalls Anderson's analysis of the amateur class (P. Anderson, 'Origins', p. 41). Anderson cites an aristocratic styling: whatever Leclerc's real economic status, he wears brogues on Friday to suggest he is *en route* to the country like an aristocrat (*Looking Glass*, p. 24), and belongs to a gentlemen's club, however shabby (p. 70). Anderson also cites "a coagulated conservatism" ('Origins', p. 40): the local café isn't good enough for Leclerc (*Looking Glass*, p. 35), and he won't queue for a bus (p. 36). Anderson speaks of "traditionalism": "tradition demanded that the junior staff arrived at half past nine; officer grades at ten or quarter past [...] a gentleman, Leclerc would say, never watched the clock" (p. 86). Anderson also cites a "mystagogy (towards institutions)" ('Origins', p. 40): this is seen in the reverent invocations of the Department, especially with regard to its war record (e.g. "their custom dated from the war", p. 86) justifies a fussy hierarchical order. Finally, Anderson says the amateur is, "defined not by acts which denote skills but by gestures which reveal quintessences" ('Origins', p. 41): thus Leclerc "had the illusionist's gift, whether he spoke of rockets or wireless transmission, of cover or the point at which the border was to be crossed, of implying great familiarity with his subject" (*Looking Glass*, p. 205). Leclerc suggests "in the unchallenged authority of [the Department's] judgments an unearthly, oracular immunity" (p. 208).

Leclerc, as representative of an amateur establishment is literally amateurish, being bumbling and inept. So Carré claimed, the state/establishment here is less monolithic and unstoppable than in *The Spy* (Gross, p. 33). However Leclerc also retains power over life

and death – the state's monopoly of legitimate violence. The combination makes for a chilling charge sheet: Leclerc risks children's lives via illegally deploying a domestic flight from Finland to the GDR for surveillance photography: the pilot believes he was strafed by Soviet MIGs (*Looking Glass*, pp. 12-14). Leclerc puts untrained bureaucrat Taylor in danger to collect the resultant film from the Finnish pilot, costing Taylor's life (pp. 3-17). Leclerc sends his untrained aide, Avery, into presumed danger in Finland without adequate cover, to retrieve the film.[358] Leclerc sends working-class Fred Leiser into enemy territory with outmoded equipment whilst symbolically unmanning him by depriving him of his gun (pp. 220-273), then abandons him to his death when the operation goes awry (pp. 264-66).

All told, Leclerc and his nostalgic department of outmoded war relics are anything but the modern technocratic, professional 'new men' of Wilson's vision: they are leftovers from what le Carré would later call "the thousand year sleep of Eden and Macmillan" (*Philby*, p. 41) – he could equally have added "…and Home", Wilson's defeated predecessor. Intriguingly, Ralph Richardson's portrayal of Leclerc in the *Looking Glass* film adaptation (Frank Pierson, 1969) physically and sartorially recalls Lord Home. However, while Wilson had derided Home as "an anachronism", Home remained powerful and was Foreign Secretary when Wilson was defeated at the polls by Edward Heath (1970-74). Home's re-ascent to power was representative of the failure of Wilson's "wide range of institutional reforms designed to modernise the structure of the state" (Leys, p. 80). Reform of the Civil Service's tiered 'class' system – echoed precisely in the Department's organisation –foundered with the Fulton Report: internal resistance meaning it took years to even *partially* implement. Wilson's attempt to break the status monopoly of the older universities via the Open University etc. brought more into higher education without unseating Oxbridge's hegemony. Whilst Wilson introduced key social legislation on divorce, homosexuality, abortion and capital punishment, the gentlemanly redoubt of the City derailed his government altogether via a series of financial crises.

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[358] *Looking Glass*, pp. 73-77; pp. 82-85; pp. 89-92.

Similarly then, while Leclerc is out-manoeuvred by Control and Smiley's rival department in *Looking Glass*, this is firstly a 'defeat' at the hands of Leclerc's own amateur class, a "night of the long knives", and secondly, it is not clear, by the novel's end, as he makes deals and forges strategic alliances, that Leclerc *is* defeated. His last words are "we're still operational, you know", speaking "like a man intent upon appearances, conscious of tradition" (*Looking Glass*, p. 266). This narrative trajectory is considerably closer to a depiction of – and criticism of – the abstract state than le Carré had come previously. Whilst capitalism remains invisible, the state's monopoly of violence is emphasised, as is its rarefied social composition, its links with the landed interest, and its lethal disregard for those not defined as gentlemen. The establishment then is defined as essaying a kind of British totalitarianism. Let us examine this.

After only hints in *Call,* and suggested more of Fiedler than Control in *The Spy*, le Carré evoked this totalitarianism in *Looking Glass* as an entirely bureaucratic phenomenon:

> 'It seemed to me that the western dilemma of the small man is that the institutions we create to combat the ideology to fight the Cold War are getting so big that the individual himself is losing his identity in our society, just as he is in eastern society.'[359]

Leiser is the "small man" (i.e. working class) crushed by the monolith of the (elite) bureaucratic state Department. If this seems like a less ambiguous take on *The Spy*'s treatment of state expediency versus the individual, there is a further corollary between the romanticism of the crushed lovers in *The Spy* and the 'love' between Avery and Leiser. Love is ever the liberal marker of individuality, freedom and humanity, the empiricist's touché to totalitarianism: see also Winston and Julia against the Party. The narrative

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[359] Leigh Crutchley interview, *Listener*, 14 April 1966, in Broccoli and Baughman, p. 7.

expends considerable energy on semi-ironic, yet still homoerotic, suggestions of agent Leiser and agent-runner Avery as lovers. They walk arm in arm in the rain, in Oxford, during Leiser's training, Avery "holding Leiser's hand captive" (*Looking Glass*, p. 161); Avery is "a guilty lover" (p. 180); Avery gives Leiser a token with which to go, effectively, to war, when Leiser crosses into the GDR on his mission. Later, in the GDR, Leiser thinks of Avery via two romantic clichés: "Avery's young face in the rain" and the conceit that, "like divided lovers, they were looking at the same star" (p. 242).

By ironic contrast, Leclerc's implicitly homosexual deputy, Adrian Haldane is defined – and condemned – by his inability to love: "'Do you know what love is'" Haldane cynically asks Avery: "'It is whatever you can still betray'" (*Looking Glass*, p. 224). At the end, to Haldane's bureaucratic sneers, a weeping Avery complains of the Department's abandonment of Leiser in the field, and demands they listen to his last transmission "'for the sake of [...] love'" (p. 265). This narrative arc is a broadside against bureaucratic instrumentality's opposition to the 'human'. However, this is hardly a coherent critique. Du Gay convincingly claims that consideration of the emotional realm is entirely impractical as a means of institutional organisation (Du Gay, p. 25).[360] Indeed, compared to the critique of the state's social composition, this anti-bureaucratism is a conservative critique, especially given the extensive state "planning" of the Wilson regime. Such competing radical-conservative impulses are typical contradictions in liberal thinking,[361] and highlight what will now be analysed as the limitations of the anti-establishment motif in le Carré. Similarly, Sinfield argues that Wilson's aims, anchored only in anti-establishment sentiment, were not ambitious enough (Sinfield, *Literature*, p. 281).

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[360] Sinfield characterises such strategies as, "There is a flaw in the state: it fails to accommodate the particular consciousness of the refined individual" (*Faultlines*, p. 107).
[361] It is worth noting that le Carré quit the UK c. May 1964-May1965, writing *Looking Glass* in Crete. Probably aiming to avoid the hike in Income Tax associated with Labour governments, it is indicative of his contradictory politics that he apparently rethought this position by returning.

The Circus and the Establishment

Looking Glass's critique of the establishment is fatally compromised by its Circus subplot. Interestingly, Leclerc's Department's rivalry with Control's Circus was not present in an earlier MS;[362] le Carré later credited the change to the advice of his new American editor and regretted the resultant teeth-drawing.[363] The Circus subplot muddies the metaphor of the British state, because the Circus, as a rival department becomes a rival *synecdoche* of that state. In three respects then this subplot undermines the satire. Firstly, if one of *Looking Glass*'s main criticisms of the Department as state is its elite social composition, as per Anderson's critique, then the class composition of this alternate state is not so different to the Department's. Efficient Smiley is of the same generation and amateur class as inept Leclerc. Smiley was an Oxford contemporary of Haldane's: Haldane's health prevented him from joining the Circus (p. 61), so Smiley is effectively a morally healthier Haldane. Smiley is also a member of a rather better gentleman's club than Leclerc (p. 139), a location Smiley continues to choose for his work meetings in this modern democratic moment of the Swinging Sixties (pp. 140-144). Control's membership of the amateur class was established by *The Spy*, but is affirmed here by his gentlemanly distaste for the 'modern' telephone (p. 249)[364] and consolidated in his criticism of Leclerc not at the level of morality but at the level of *manners* ("'Leclerc's so *vulgar*. I admit, I find him vulgar [...] What a *silly* man. Silly, vulgar man'" (p. 249). In this respect Control is just as much of an anti-Wilsonian anachronism as Leclerc (or indeed Home): Control is a figure of the

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[362] *JLC1, The Looking Glass War,* le Carré Archive, Bodleian Library, Oxford. In a revised complete draft, *JLC2,* there is rivalry with but not deceit of the Circus; Smiley only makes two appearances; Control is entirely absent; Smiley does not shut down the operation: it founders solely on Leiser's slowness of transmission. What's more, it is made clear that the Department itself was responsible for its own relegation to 'research' (JLC 2, p. 74).

[363] "I should not, as I see it now, have bothered with the Circus or George Smiley at all [...] I should not have pulled my punches [...] I should have let the Department exist where [...] Britain herself existed [...] in a vapour of self-delusion and class arrogance, in a gung-ho world of we've-never-had-it-so-good'", 'Foreword', Lamplighter, *Looking Glass,* p. viii.

[364] "A dislike of certain comparatively modern inventions such as the telephone, the cinema, and the wireless, are still perhaps marks of the upper class" Alan S. C. Ross, 'U and Non-U: An Essay in Sociological Linguistics', in *Noblesse Oblige,* edited by Nancy Mitford (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1956), p. 13.

old world not "modernity Britain".[365] In this way, even the limited satire of the state's class composition collapses. Secondly, the Circus is more *efficient* than the Department: Smiley's wise spycraft is regularly contrasted to the ineptitude of Leclerc, Taylor, Avery and Leiser. Control is one step ahead of the Department throughout, handicapping, possibly even sabotaging the operation (*Looking Glass*, p. 251), certainly ultimately ensuring that it is wound up.

Thirdly, the novel's sharper critique, of bureaucratic instrumentalism, is also blunted by the Circus subplot. Smiley's function in his limited role in *Looking Glass* is to repeatedly warn the Department against the dangers of "technique": Smiley does this to Avery (p. 6), to Leclerc (p. 141) and finally to Haldane: "'you're a very good *technician* [...] You've made technique a way of life...like a whore, technique replacing love'" (p. 264, my emphasis). 'Technique' has caused some critical confusion,[366] but is clearly abstract planning, bureaucracy that expediently prizes results over human needs. "Love" then is bureaucratic instrumentalism's compassionate other: if Haldane is a whore, then Smiley is a lover. And, we already know, a faithful one in the face of his wife's inconstancy. From this we can deduce then that Smiley represents the gentle state,[367] a Marcusian embrace of the maternal and the erotic. But Smiley is only the deputy chief of the Circus, he is complemented by – and crucially checks – Control's ruthless efficiency and expedient morality (p. 251). So when Smiley is sent to Germany on Control's orders, essentially to kill off the Department, "there was nothing in his face but compassion" (p. 261). Thus Smiley somewhat counterbalances the less palatable fact that Control's orders abandon Leiser in the field and condemn him to death. Smiley and Control combined, therefore make up the liberal state: ruthless efficiency and capitalistic dynamism (Control) complemented and balanced by compassion and decency (Smiley). However, in *Looking*

[365] See: David Kynaston, *Modernity Britain*, Book Two: *A Shake of the Dice,* 1959-62 (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).
[366] See: Monaghan, p. 38-39; Neuse, p. 301-2; Barley, p. 60.
[367] Smiley is the "organization man [who] is capable of superimposing a holistic philosophy of life upon the fragmentation of his twentieth century specialization" (Ambrosetti, p. 96).

Glass, the Circus is only one competing *version* of the state. But it is a counterargument to the depiction of the Department, and whatever satire was intended is lost inside these competing, contradicting state synecdoches, while somewhere out of sight, the abstract state remains abstract.

These competing accounts of the state then are faultlines that indicate unresolvable contradictions in liberal thinking. As with *The Spy* unease with the class-system produces what appears to be a satire of the state, but unease about the alternative creates a failure of nerve. So *Looking Glass*'s treatment of the state transpires to be remarkably similar to that of *Call* and *The Spy*. Again a facet of the state is decried and disavowed via Operation Margarine – in this case the amateur class, for its social insularity, its coagulated traditionalism and its bureaucratic instrumental rationality. But by negative focus on this "contingent evil" (Barthes, *Mythologies*, p. 41), and the insertion of a competing synecdoche of the state, the deep structures of the state disappear from view and are left unchallenged and thus effectively endorsed. So again we see how le Carré's anti-establishment theme actually upholds the establishment, how satire, via a convoluted strategy, actually scaffolds the state.

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2. "The Mystery of England": the British Nation

While working as a teacher at Eton during the 1956 Suez crisis, le Carré claims an old school servant said: "'wonderful to see the old country on the march again'".[368] These are the exact words le Carré puts in the mouth of Department factotum, Pine, regarding the Leiser operation – but with "Department" significantly substituted for "country" (*Looking Glass*, p. 34). With British colonies still haemorrhaging annually (this year, Rhodesia; next year Guyana and Barbados) British decline was an increasingly unavoidable issue for British citizens, governments, and novelists alike.[369] *Looking Glass* is then pondering national identity for a citizenry adjusting to a changing Britain on the world stage but also a changing Britain on the home front, a time of – at least attempted – social reconstruction under Wilson. *Looking Glass* is thus a condition of England novel,[370] a "national allegory" pondering the nature and extent of British power in that Cold War and positing who, where and what is being defended in that war.

The Department and the British Nation

The Department functions as a national allegory, with the connection between the Department and 'England' made repeatedly, if enigmatically: "[The Department's] survival was like the mystery of England" (*Looking Glass*, p. 24); "Their faith in the Department burnt in some separate chapel and they called it patriotism" (p. 72). The Department building is "a crabbed, sooty villa", "a house eternally for sale", of "controlled dilapidation", its "façade stained black" with "grimy windows" (p. 24). The imagery is suggestive of debt-ridden, US-dependent Britain in the post-war period, near bankrupted by the war, exacerbated by the strain of hanging onto colonial possessions on one hand, and loss of colonial revenues on the other. So when Leclerc emphasises the threat the

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[368] John le Carré, *South Bank Show* interview 1983, quoted in Lewis (p. 94).
[369] Even Fleming felt compelled to address national decline at this time. In *You Only Live Twice* Bond's completion of the assignment is equated with disproving Britain's "impotence" – loss of Empire, Suez "bungle", plus "debilitating" Welfare State and Trade Unions. *You Only Live Twice* (1964), in *The Blofeld Trilogy* (London: Penguin Classics, 2009), p. 491.
[370] "As much a 'condition of England' novel as an example of spy fiction" (Lewis, p. 81).

putative GDR rockets pose to Britain, the blurring between Department and Britain is found in the plucky phrase, "we still have one or two teeth of our own" (p. 56). Near the Department, "there are warehouses with barbed wire across their gates, and factories which produce nothing" (p. 107) evoking an enervated British capitalism that can't compete with its former enemies, Japan and Germany. No wonder the Department seems confused about who the enemy is, e.g.: "'We're having a spot of trouble with the Germans'" (p. 48); they are going to "'take another crack at the Jerries'" (p. 95). This returns to the idea of the 'lost' war, a Britain that won the war but lost its international standing.

In this context, the Department's operation is a mirror-image of Wilson's modernisation, a project to reverse the Department's/nation's decline but by looking to the amateur past rather than the Wilsonian technocratic future.[371] Just as the Department recalls the Macmillan/Home era's aristocratic manners, patrician attitudes and traditional hierarchies, so the Department rejects 'modern' and Wilsonian technological solutions. The Department's emphasis on "putting a man in" to the GDR emphasises the human over the technological, and we see throughout *Looking Glass*'s plot the *failure* of technology – fuzzy photographs, botched aeroplane overflights, car accidents, malfunctioning Morse-coding machines, cutting-out radios. In ignoring Britain's cultural vitality and the early promise of Wilson, le Carré was suggesting more sympathy with the Department's anti-modernising nostalgia than the straightforward satire of the Department he claimed and that most critics perceive.

London and the British Nation

Lest we get too preoccupied with the Department-as-Britain allegory, the Department is only one in a series of dilapidated London landscapes. Leiser's neighbourhood is "like a row of pink graves in a field of grey", "dying without violence and living without success"

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[371] Frank Pierson inserted a speech into his 1969 film adaptation of *Looking Glass* where Avery (Antony Hopkins) says: "We're fighting a very lonely battle. We're in the dark. Nobody thanks us for it, but my God, they sleep at night, don't they? That's pretty bloody unswinging, isn't it?"

(*Looking Glass*, p. 99); the grass is like "grass on a grave" (p. 100). The trouble with allegory is that it appears to suggest that decline is simply symbolic, metaphorical, a matter of geopolitical prestige and diplomatic power, rather than being rooted in the economy, in declining wages, unemployment, cheap prefab housing, the price of bread. This is precisely the mistake that most critics make, e.g. "Descriptions of London [...] define the social and spiritual malaise of a nation experiencing its decline and fall" (Lewis, p. 91).[372] Critics also fail to notice that all of these are firstly, only *London* landscapes, including the Blackfriars domicile of the Department, and secondly, working-class areas, of the kind little seen in the elite England of *Call*. Let us now analyse one key scene of London dilapidation, as it tells us much about *Looking Glass*'s presentation of the British nation.

When Avery and Leclerc go to break the news of Taylor's death to Taylor's wife, in working-class Kennington, they are disconcerted by the bleak working-class environment of the aspirational, 'classless', Taylor.

They stood at the top of a rise. It was a wretched place. The road led downward into a line of dingy, eyeless houses; above them rose a single block of flats [...] A string of lights shone on to the glazed tiles, dividing and redividing the whole structure into cells. It was a large building, very ugly in its way, the beginning of a new world, and at its feet lay the black rubble of the old (*Looking Glass*, p. 38).[373]

This "new world" is democratised post-war Britain, modernist flats newly built to replace bomb-damaged property and house the urban poor, a utopian scheme of Wilsonian "technocratic optimism" (Hatherley, p. 36). Hatherley asserts this project's relationship

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[372] See also: "Britain [...] is filled with decaying [...] broken [...] and disintegrating [...] objects and buildings" (p. 46) which "provide visual equivalents of [Britain's] spiritual and moral condition" (Monaghan, p. 48). "The particular smell of national decline [...] equivalence between secret service and the health of the society as a whole" (Homberger, p. 58).

[373] Leclerc and Avery literally *looking down* on the working classes, is reminiscent of Wyndham Lewis's obituary of architect, Edward Wadsworth: "we arrived on a hill above Halifax [...] and gazed down into its industrial labyrinth. [...] 'It's like Hell, isn't it' he said enthusiastically'" (Hatherley, p. 19).

both to the Welfare State (p. 40) and to 'classlessness' (p. 30), creating "little palaces" for the working classes. Taylor's building is a combination of the artificially modern (Bakelite numbers, *Looking Glass*, p. 39); and the municipal ("the smell of that liquid soap [...] in railway lavatories" p. 39). Hatherley claims such buildings are the British landscape's "the most persistent reminder of British socialism", of the kind of collectivism and planning to which the traditionalist amateur class was opposed: the rapid dilapidation of the buildings would soon enough give licence to the anti-utopians. However, such projects only had limited validity: architecture does not solve poverty, a point *Looking Glass* muddies by blurring the ugliness of the architecture with the ugliness of poverty. The shops are filled with "the sad muddle of useless things which only the poor will buy" (p. 39), while "cell" as a description of the block, suggests a prison, invoking working class criminality as much as repression. Again subject and object get conflated when it comes to the 'mass'.

As Leclerc examines Taylor's neighbourhood, he is focalised by Avery as feeling: "*This* was not the society they protected, these slums with their Babel's Tower: they had no place in Leclerc's scheme of things" (*Looking Glass*, p. 38). This is unusually specific: Leclerc is presented as rejecting the working class (and via that Babel reference, immigrants) from the Britain his Department is defending. Leclerc's reaction to the estate is a rejection of the working class and also of the planning of modernising Wilsonian Socialism. After visiting Taylor's flat, Avery sees in Leclerc "a deep sadness, like the bewilderment of a man betrayed" (p. 42). This is the "betrayal" of the amateur gentlemanly class through loss of prestige at home via post-war meritocracy, and loss of prestige abroad, via the crumbling of the Empire they were raised to administrate. The Department experiences both. Avery's focalisation of Leclerc is sympathetic: "Somebody had been there, and gone; perhaps a whole world, a generation; somebody had made him and disowned him" (p. 37). In this respect Taylor's estate functions not as a condemnation of British class inequality but as an image of declining British geopolitical prestige. This was a contemporary conservative view, the aforementioned Larkin, for instance, blaming the

Welfare State for the collapse of British international power.[374]

As the Long Boom had not properly ended, however, and the economic recession not properly commenced, there was a contemporary optimism about Harold Wilson's modernising new government, and so this is a *rhetorically* gloomy portrait of Britain. True, Britain had once been the world's largest economy, but it remained *one* of the world's six largest national economies. The Welfare State, meanwhile, had achieved some reduction in inequality and poverty. So it is also striking that in *Looking Glass* there is no hint that London might be swinging, that the Beatles were at number one, that *The Avengers* was spicing up monochrome British television with sex and spying, or that Mary Quant and Twiggy were setting the international fashion agenda. There is only gloom.

If this manipulation's purpose is to enact the national allegory of British decline, then why the novel's competing, contradictory, and positive presentation of Oxford? If the London scenes make the link: British decline-London-working class-modernity, what is the impact of the Oxford scenes?

Oxford and the British Nation

Paralleling the way the introduction of the Circus rendered the novel's apparent class and bureaucratic instrumentalist critique of the state more equivocal, a faultline, so does the introduction of Oxford one-third of the way through the book trouble an understanding of *Looking Glass* as depiction of British decline via a competing alternative.[375] It also provides a pointed contrast to the class associations of the London scenes, and offers a competing vision of what constitutes Britain, of what is being defended in the Cold War.

The Department's choice of Oxford for their safe house for Leiser's training is indicative of their veneration of traditionalism over modernism. "It was a place they could understand" (*Looking Glass*, p. 134), as several Department members attended Oxford

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[374] Graham MacPhee, *Postwar British Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: University Press, 2011), p. 56.
[375] Monaghan, Lewis and Homberger all miss this contrasting depiction of Oxford as against London.

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University. As such, "Oxford represents the privilege of the governing elite, reinforcing links between the spy and the preservation of British power," (Goodman p. 69). Key here, however, is a wistfulness that critics miss: "Leiser was pleased when he heard it was Oxford" (*Looking Glass*, p. 134). Leiser is a working class Pole who wishes to be British: yet the aspirational Britishness he craves is specifically represented by Oxford, crucible of the ruling class (p. 174). For Avery, "It was a world he had known about once; for a time he had almost fancied he was part of it; but that was long ago" (p. 138). A few rungs below the gentlemanly class, Avery has never quite fitted in. The 'lack' essential to desire recalls Lacan's gloss on Freud's *Group Psychology*. Oxford is something the Department *aspires* to – a particular version of Britishness that is heavily class-imbued with the amateur, gentlemanly tradition. It is not open to new applicants.

The text lingers over descriptions of Oxford interiors, itemising potpourri, chandeliers, bible table, Cupid statue, and fireplace blackamoors (*Looking Glass*, p. 199). This is the gentlemanly bourgeois' ideal home, replete with imperial booty. From the street, Avery "glimpsed grey-haired figures moving across the lighted windows, velvet-covered chairs trimmed with lace, Chinese screens, music stands and a bridge four sitting like bewitched courtiers in a castle" (p. 138). "Bewitched" is magical, mythic. The sheer volume of detail ("first lace and then brocade" p. 146) overwhelms any satire: "The houses were of a modest stateliness; romantic hulls re-decked, each according to a different legend. Here the turrets of Avalon […] between them the monkey-puzzle trees" (p. 146). The gentler tone deployed for the Oxford locations compared to the dreariness and sarcasm in the London locations suggests that traditionalism here is being endorsed. In Oxford is "the mystery of England" realised. "[Leiser's] eye ran fondly over the heavy furniture, the tallboy elaborated with fretwork…" (p. 174). "The whole house gently asserted an air of old age" (p. 139). Consequently, the recurring twilight imagery offers a soft-focus rather than gloomy perspective. *This* is the society that the Department is defending. Walter Benjamin here is apposite on the home of the bourgeois: "the traces that his relatives had

left in photos, and that his possessions had left in linings and etuis and that sometimes made these rooms look as overcrowded as halls full of funerary urns".[376] The pictures and *bric-a-brac* are anti-modernist, what Hatherley calls the "stifling pile-up of historicist detritus that made up the bourgeois aesthetic" (Hatherley, p. 3). This is the 'heritage culture' of Oxford that would be posited against British decline in 1970s and 80s films and television (*Chariots of Fire, Brideshead Revisited, Maurice, Tinker* miniseries) (Oldham, p. 740). Wilson, by contrast, was "hostile to heritage" (Hatherley, p. 5).

In contrast then to the London scenes' nexus of British decline-London-working class-modernity, here is an association of British potency-Oxford-ruling class-tradition. Oxford is being offered as both the *where* of the British nation and, as landscape is always political, this embraces a *who* – the English upper middle classes; the establishment. By this strategy is implicitly declared *what* is Britain: an older Britain of empire, tradition and high culture. This is a contradictory, conservative rejection of the reality of British decline based on a dead, venerated past rather than a living, despised present. We see a similar strategy at work in the Department's preoccupation with the War.

The War and the British Nation

The Department's members constantly refer back to its glory days in World War II. This was a live issue in British culture: those who had and had not experienced the War created the opposing sides of the 1960s Generation Gap, a clash between traditional conservative conformist currents and modern radical countercultural currents. Leftist views of the War as a democratic moment get elided in this discourse. Moreover, for a nation experiencing a now impossible-to-ignore geopolitical decline, the War represented the apotheosis of British world power, something for which an older generation – and a particular class – represented by the Department, felt an inevitable nostalgia. This is actualised neatly in the

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[376] Walter Benjamin, 'Short Shadows', in *Selected Writings Volume 2, Part 2, 1931-34* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1999), p. 701.

novel by the Department's *own* glory days having been left behind with the War.[377]

However, even the historically minded Goodman never quite posits nostalgia for the War as nostalgia for British imperial *power* (Goodman, pp. 60-61).

So Leclerc has a cigarette case given by a dead war comrade (*Looking Glass*, p. 26), war photographs dominate his office (pp. 27-28) and he recalls informing relatives of wartime deaths (p. 38). Haldane, who served with Leclerc, recalls the Department's glory days of being "operational" not administrative (field not desk): "'Rubber boats on a moonless night; a captured enemy plane'" (p. 67). Haldane notes that via the Leiser operation, Leclerc hopes to repeat Britain's discovery of V2 installations at Peenemunde in World War II (p. 69). Indeed the whole Leiser operation has an air of War re-run about it: Leiser is a wartime colleague; he is trained by both Leclerc's wartime combat specialist and wartime wireless operator; Leiser is even given war-era equipment. The aim is to regain the Department's wartime prestige – with a ready translation to "Britain's wartime prestige". In fact all these wartime throwbacks will prove the operation's undoing: Leiser himself (too old), the radio system (too cumbersome), even the hierarchy (no one challenges Leclerc's gentlemanly disinterest in detail). This is key to how the Department's version of War memorialising does not just reassert British political potency, it also defines, again, which class was being fought for.

If critics are imprecise about the geopolitical meaning of *Looking Glass*'s War invocations, they are utterly silent about their social meaning. Following the democratisation of the War, wherein, for instance, the Officer class was dislodged during the North African campaign, the post-war Labour government attempted to create a more democratic, meritocratic society. Thus the War is a faultline. All the Department's members, even Avery (too young for the War), and Woodford (lower middle class), are

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[377] Critics are incredibly imprecise about the relationship of the War to national decline: "The betrayal felt by the World War II generation, that they have been bypassed and forgotten" (Aronoff, p. 42); "a country living not in the present but in its collective memory of greatness" (Lewis, pp. 90-91); "[the war] brought together elements of male camaraderie, risk, a clearly defined sense of purpose and acclaimed success" (Bennett, p. 49). *Looking Glass* "provides ample evidence, for the psychological effect of acting without a substantial or satisfactory philosophy" (Barley, p. 60).

nostalgic for the social hierarchy that existed before the post-war. Woodford relishes the Department's actualisation of that hierarchy, whose "custom dated from the war" (*Looking Glass*, p. 86). When Woodford visits the Alias club where Department war veterans congregate, it is revealed that officer-class Leclerc never visits the club (p. 96). Also, despite Woodford's enthusiasm that "'The Department is working as [...] one man [...] And what a spirit [...]! And no *rank* [...] We're just a single team'" (p. 184) evoking the common democratic image of the war, Woodford's own lower social status (p. 42) is emphasised when Haldane pulls rank won't let Woodford meet Leiser (p. 185). There isn't much sense of the "people's war" here: the War-memorialising reasserts a traditional class hierarchy:[378] Oxford fought for by London.

However, although Leclerc excludes the "other ranks" (*Looking Glass*, p. 28) from the Britain that is being fought *for*, it is clear, as it was in *The Spy*, who the ruling class, emblematised by Leclerc, expect to do the actual *fighting*. Goodman usefully suggests that Leclerc memorialises the war in terms of sacrifice (Goodman, p. 67), but fails to specify the class distribution of this sacrifice. Leclerc says, nostalgically of the War, "'You get instructions: find a man, put him in. So we did. And many *didn't* come back'" (*Looking Glass*, p. 114). On his way to memorialise the Cold War sacrifice of Taylor, Leclerc says, with chilling wistfulness, "'It was simpler in those days [...] we could say they'd died for their country'" (p. 38). Even in the People's War, there was a bureaucratic accounting logic at work that relied on the 'people', the working class, laying down their lives for a 'greater good'. Leclerc nevertheless persists in trying to live out his World War II fantasy, returning to see Mrs Taylor and suggesting her husband was just such a national sacrifice. Mrs Taylor responds abrasively, "'What do you mean [died] gallantly? [...] We're not fighting a war. That's finished, all that fancy talk. He's dead'" (p. 73). Thus the working class reject the ruling class's apportioning of their sacrificial role. Mrs Taylor's is a key

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[378] Le Carré later wrote of MI6 in similar terms: "The Empire may be crumbling; but within our secret elite, the clean-limbed tradition of English power would survive. We believe in nothing but ourselves'" (*Philby*, p. 36).

punturing of this class claim on Britishness, suggesting that the Department's attitude is being satirised. Nevertheless, such is the centrality and vividness of Leclerc that the Department's attitudes are never entirely distanced (just as Peter Cook's caricature of Macmillan was as affectionate as it was satirical). To examine one final instance of national identity, let us see how Leclerc manages to enact a "ritual sacrifice" (*Looking Glass* Letter, p. 2) from working class, foreign Leiser.[379]

Leiser and the British Nation

Leiser is a middle-aged Polish immigrant garage owner who fought with the Department in the War.[380] Leiser is twice removed from the Department's gentlemanly elite by being foreign as well as working class. It is *Leiser* not Leclerc who is "a man excluded; a man without a card" (*Looking Glass*, p. 32) (recalling the 'pass' that Fawley reminds working-class Leamas he doesn't have). In order to "put a man in" to investigate the putative rocket installations in the GDR, the Department persuades Leiser to give up his garage, train in intensive physical combat and radio transmission, without contacting friends or family for a month; then risk his life to go into East Germany. Where Leamas accepts a similar mission from a naturalised ideology he accepts as his British 'duty', Leiser, who "'considers himself integrated, naturalised British'" (p. 131), accepts the mission because he apparently wants *others* to accept him as British:

> "Expressions like 'not to worry', 'don't rock the boat' [...] came to [Leiser]
> continually, as if he were aspiring after a *way of life* which he only imperfectly
> understood, and these were the offerings that would buy him in" (p. 165; my
> emphasis).

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[379] *Looking Glass* Letter, p. 2.
[380] Historically, many Poles volunteered to help Britain fight the Nazis. Wendy Webster, 'Ethnicity in Second World War Britain', forthcoming 2016.

The text makes it clear, however, that this acceptance will never occur. Particularly not from an elite that regards itself as the essence of Britain, from which, as we have seen, the working class, let alone the immigrant, is excluded. Haldane can hardly bear to be in the same room as Leiser, calling him, "'common, in a Slav way […] He dresses like a bookie, but I suppose they all do that'" (p. 131). So Avery's words to Leiser flatter to deceive: "'You're one of us, Fred. You always were'" (p. 218), while Haldane's "'remember he's British: British to the core'" (p. 148) is either manipulative or simply sarcastic.

So it is a piquant irony that Leiser harbours an even more impossible desire: not just to be English, but to be an English gentleman – like Haldane and Leclerc. In another telling scene, the four strands of the nation traced in this chapter come together: the North Oxford house representing the gentlemanly tradition, and Leiser combining the other three - the working class, the immigrant and the War:

> Lovingly [Leiser] revisited the handsome women at croquet, handsome men at war, disdainful boys in boaters, girls at Cheltenham; a whole long history of discomfort and not a breath of passion (*Looking Glass*, p. 174).

Not only will Leiser never achieve this dream, its pursuit destroys him: far from being accepted by the Department, he is exploited by them: like Leamas, the role of the working class – and the immigrant – is, via sacrifice, to sustain and secure the ruling class, in this case by restoring the fading fortunes of the Department.

As Inglis says, "an ideological struggle over national identity, in Britain, is inseparable from the struggle over class identity" (p. 202). Class informs all *Looking Glass*'s representations of the British nation: Leclerc's association of the London working class with British decline; upper-middle-class Oxford asserted as emblematic of a decline-refuting Britishness; War memorialisation as nostalgia for traditional class hierarchies, and finally, immigrant Leiser's inclusion in the Department's Britain only as working class

cannon-fodder, the "poor bloody infantry of the Cold War" personified. As national allegories go, this is not a pretty picture of Britain, but it is ambiguous whether or not it is satirised. With the working class characters held at a distance – Leiser barely comes alive as a character before he is killed – and the ruling class characters' manners and voices depicted with such loving detail, at the very least, sympathy competes with satire in *Looking Glass War*'s presentation of the Department's narratives of nation.

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4. "A Sort of Cuba Situation": Political Enemy in the *Looking Glass War*

The political enemy in *Looking Glass* could be seen as the West's own paranoid reflection: no Communist plot is ever revealed; no Communist rockets are ever proved to exist at the border; while far from Communism being the aggressor, it is the West who 'invade' the East and the 'Western' Leiser who kills the Eastern border guard. For good measure, Communism isn't even mentioned throughout the novel's 273 pages. This would be a fairly radical stance for a Cold-War novel, overturning both *Call* and *The Spy*'s assertions of a clear and present Communist threat, and chiming with contemporary revisionist historians' claim of Western misconception of Eastern aggressive intent. However, just as *Looking Glass*'s satire of the establishment is undermined by the Circus subplot and Oxford/London binary, so is its satire of Cold War paranoia undermined by, first, an empirical depoliticisation and, second, an upheld Cold-War consensus prejudice.[381]

Let us examine this idea of enemy as reflection. This can be seen as the obverse of nationalism: just as Britain creates its imagined community, so it creates an imagined enemy. Buzard suggests how such imagined enemies fulfil a 'national' need: "[The Rostock photograph] is for Leclerc a dialectical guarantee of the Department's continuing importance: the photos must be seen to show the efforts of a 'live enemy' in order to support this Western collective subject".[382] The evidence of the enemy's threat is flimsy. There is no *real* evidence that Taylor was killed; his death may have been a drunken traffic accident, as le Carré himself later claimed (*Looking Glass* Letter, p. 6). Towards the book's end Haldane discovers possible proof that the rocket-launcher story is fake (*Looking-Glass*, p. 192), but keeps it to himself, being too heavily invested in the *idea* of the enemy which, as Buzard suggests, confirms the Department's importance. "Britain" here readily substitutes for "Department" as needing the "dialectical guarantee" both of its importance and, one might say, of the *point* of its engagement in an ongoing Cold War.

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[381] Le Carré's next novel, *A Small Town in Germany* (1968) would take this idea further, reversing the trajectory of *Call for the Dead*: what appears to be a case of Cold War espionage actually turns out to be related to World War II.

[382] Buzard, in Downing and Bazargan, p. 161.

But Buzard does not pursue this political analogy: ultimately he presents the book as concerning private psychologies rather than public politics,[383] in effect Freud trumping Marx (Jameson, 'Third World', p. 69). Yet *Looking Glass* isn't *incidentally* set in a Cold-War context, the Cold War is the book's – and Department's – *raison d'etre*. This approach risks reducing geopolitical conflict, casualties and all, to private psychological dramas. This is an approach that Schaub highlights as typical of liberal retreat from the political to the personal in the post-war period (Schaub, p. 21). As the Cold War was as much about ideology as combat, counterintelligence as intelligence, disinformation as information, even a fantasy is a *political* fantasy, even paranoia is political paranoia – and as the Cuban Missile and Berlin crises demonstrated, can still be extremely dangerous.

In fact, the invocation of missiles poised at the East/West German border offers a fairly precise Eastern reflection of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Leclerc says:

'The Ministry believes it is conceivable we are dealing with Soviet missiles under East German control…if they are right [...] we would have on our hands [...] a sort of Cuba situation all over again, only [...] more dangerous' (*Looking Glass*, p. 54).

The Ministerial Under-Secretary correctly declares, the existence of the rockets "alters [Britain's] entire defence position" (p. 79).[384] The book's government officials' readiness to believe the flimsy evidence of Leclerc's "dodgy dossier" is entirely credible, having some notable contemporary analogues, but, in the context of the Cold War, the Western conviction that the Soviets had aggressive intent was a pseudo-empirical given, lent 'properly' empirical illustration by the Cuban missile crisis. Belief or paraded belief in a Communist threat also had side-benefits for Britain, a useful cover story for its informal

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[383] An approach echoed by Bennett (p. 48).
[384] Both Lewis (p. 84) and Noland (p. 60) cite the Cuban Missile Crisis connection, while Aronoff cites the Bay of Pigs (Aronoff, p. 65).

imperialism through exploitation of former colonies in tandem with its Cold Warrior partner, the US.[385]

Another Cuban political connection,[386] the CIA's Bay of Pigs invasion bears some similarity to the action of *Looking Glass*: government agency mounts covert operation using anti-Communist exiles (Polish Leiser has voted with his feet against the Eastern Bloc), ending in fiasco and government embarrassment and denial. Le Carré later declared: "the Bay of Pigs [...] really was the result of men who had generated a collective perception of their own heroism and, drawing from that romantic past, were engaging in something that was almost fantasy."[387] Compare this to his description of *Looking Glass*, ""committed" men who are committed to nothing but one another and the dreams they collectively invoke" (*Looking Glass* Letter, p. 7).

Despite this link to reality, le Carré's framing in the Letter serves, like Buzard and Bennett's analyses, to depoliticise both *Looking Glass and* the Cold War. Might one not perceive quite a strong ideological component to the Bay of Pigs: a virulent anti-Communism? To suggest that *Looking Glass* reveals a self-serving readiness to believe in the Communist threat is not the same as suggesting there is no ideological dimension to the Cold-War; that its proponents are simply obeying the imperatives of entirely private psychologies. To repeat Marcuse's line, "The sickness of the individual is ultimately caused and sustained by the sickness of his civilization". The sickness here is the anti-Communism of the Western "collective mind", and le Carré is essentially denying its existence – in his book, in the West.

A second point here regards the Western Cold-War consensus. For once we examine the depiction of the GDR in *Looking Glass,* the fact that the rockets may not be real becomes merely a minor point in a typically anti-Communist exegesis. As Leiser watches

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[385] Mark Curtis, *Web of Deceit: Britain's Real Role in the World* (London: Vintage, 2003), p. 243.
[386] *Looking Glass*'s grounding in history is not confined to Cuba: the Department's of espionage overflights into the USSR, strafed by MIGS, echoed the US's Gary Powers' U2 spy-plane being shot down by the Russians in 1960, which rocked US-USSR relations.
[387] David Streitfeld, 'Debriefing le Carré', *Book World*, 8 November 1992, p. 15.

from the border, prior to entering the GDR, "the East German guards seemed to fear that one of their own number might slip away unseen" (*Looking Glass*, p. 207): here again the idea of a regime maintained under coercion. Next, an apparently balanced set of images of the opposing sides at the GDR border is subtly biased. Although "those who look eagerly for dragon's teeth and substantial fortifications will be disappointed" (p. 211) by the Eastern side, the image of the Western side suggests détente as defeat: "adorned with the grotesque statuary of political *impotence*: a plywood model of the Brandenburg Gate, the screws rusting in their sockets" (p. 211; my emphasis).

Once inside the GDR, the imagery is uniformly bleak, as per standard Western presentations of the Communist East. The villages are all "empty of life" (p. 225); a block of flats has no name (p. 268); the inn is unstaffed, with no customers (p. 233). Leiser's hotel room is "large and bare" (p. 238) although "damp had spread [...] in dark shadows" (p. 239). The entire country is deserted, neglected, unloved:

> There were no signposts and no new buildings [...] that was where the peace came from, it was the peace of no innovation – it might have been fifty years ago, a hundred [...] There were no street lights, no gaudy signs on the pubs or shops. It was the darkness of indifference (p. 225).

This is an interesting passage, given that its list could be interpreted as *positive* facets of a non-corporate society: no "gaudy signs" (Smiley's "relentless persuasion") for capitalism's endless "innovation" – the constant creation of new products. The fact is that empty bars and hotels are empty businesses. Yet that final "indifference" nails the negative judgement. The indifference comes from above, the functional expedience of a monolithic state; but it also comes from below, a system in which no one has any investment and thus a country unloved by its citizens.

The citizenry has ironically withdrawn from the social, collective sphere of Communism and retreated into (capitalist) privacy. This has a clear link with the fear that pervades all conversations Leiser has with GDR citizens – the social is dangerous. There is the fearful old man who gives Leiser food (p. 229), a suspicious railway official (p. 230), an elderly guard who informs on Leiser (p. 232); the "frightened" girl (p. 235) with "deceitful eyes" (p. 238) at the inn: "he knew she suspected him" (p. 235). Repeatedly Leiser's – presumably "Western" – speech and manners provoke a negative reaction. An elderly train guard tells him he is mad (p. 232); the girl says "don't you know it's forbidden to ask that?" (p. 234); the old woman at the workers' hostel says, "Don't you know it's forbidden, staying in a town and not reporting your presence to the police?" (p. 252). An official tells Leiser "the granting of lifts is forbidden" (p. 230). Individual speech and behaviour are regulated, repressed. By the last few pages, there are Russian soldiers and tanks everywhere in the town, inevitably reminiscent of the news photographs of Soviet invasions of Poland and Hungary (1956) and an anticipation of the crushing of the Czech Prague Spring (1968).

The Looking Glass War then may not depict quite such an active Communist threat as either *Call* or *The Spy*: indeed it even tentatively suggests the threat may be over-stated. However this deviation from the Western anti-Communist consensus is rapidly overwhelmed by the depiction of the 'reality' of East Germany, wherein we witness a fearful, joyless regime, maintained under military coercion, in which the populace has no investment.

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5. Upon Reflection: Conclusion

Looking Glass focuses more than ever on the workings of the state, now encompassing both the new Department, and the established Circus. In doing so, *Looking Glass* evinces apparently anti-establishment sentiments, satirising the Department's gentlemanly ruling class as anachronistic, whilst a British totalitarianism is suggested via a bureaucratic instrumentality that sends Leiser, without adequate training or equipment, into the GDR. However this anti-establishment theme is not ultimately anti-state, being undermined by the Circus sub-plot, wherein the Circus is seemingly a preferable version of the state, and also affirms the existing social structure.

In terms of the nation, a whole series of textual strategies serve to affirm the Department/ruling class as the heart of Britain, whilst excluding the working class: this is enshrined in the contrast between a dreary, dilapidated, social-housing dominated London, and private, affluent, cultured Oxford.[388] Working class Leiser is exploited as Cold-War cannon fodder to secure the ruling class's position. The Department's nostalgia is, like Smiley's in *Call*, a nostalgia for an elite, pre-war, un-democratic world, a world in which British (imperial) power still existed, a world that the Department attempt to recreate.

The political enemy is considerably de-prioritised in *Looking Glass*, but this does not justify reading the novel as unconnected to the Cold War, or as a refutation of the reality of the Communist enemy. In fact, the presentation of GDR society, however cursory, is, once again, an articulate condemnation of the Soviet Communist system.

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[388] "From Plato to Nato", the West posited itself in the Cold War as the source of humanism and culture.

Chapter 4: *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*

1. Cambridge Companion to le Carré: *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* in Context

Published in June 1974, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* brought le Carré back to the Cold War

and to public popularity. A non-Cold War 'political' novel, *A Small Town in Germany*

(1968), followed by a venture into literary romance, *The Naïve and Sentimental Lover*

(1971), had received poor reviews, while his sales had been in – relative – decline since

The Spy. Tellingly, *Tinker* reimagines a case from *The Spy* era, the long-term penetration

of British intelligence by Soviet agent Kim Philby, but eclipsed *The Spy* in terms of

sales,[389] and ultimately in terms of profile, via successful television and film versions.

Upper-class Philby rose to head of British counter-intelligence, came under suspicion

when his friends Burgess and Maclean defected to the Soviet Union in 1951, but with MI5

unable to make charges stick, Philby was publicly cleared by Foreign Secretary,

Macmillan, in 1955. Kim Philby, O.B.E. finally defected to the Soviet Union in 1963, to

acute British embarrassment. If, *as Tinker*'s Philby character, Bill Haydon, tells Smiley,

"secret services [a]re the only real measure of a nation's political health, the only real

expression of its subconscious"[390] (*Tinker*, p. 379) then MI5's tail-chewing late 60s and

early 70s investigations into a "fourth man" indicated how the Cambridge spies haunted

the British political unconscious.[391] Novels too are an expression of a nation's

unconscious:[392] le Carré had already written a 1968 essay and a 1970 teleplay about

Philby,[393] while *Tinker* was not the only Philby-related work to arrive at this moment;[394]

nor was it the last.[395] Why did such an ancient case have such contemporary currency?

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[389] *The Spy* hit no. 1 on the US bestseller lists; *Small Town* managed 7; *Tinker* was 4 (Sauerberg 'Popularity', pp. 102-103).

[390] John le Carré, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* [1974] (London: Sceptre, 1999). Future references in parentheses.

[391] Wolfe erroneously references, "Sir Roger Hollis, the Kremlin spy who served as Director General of MI5" (Wolfe, p. 188): indicative of how Communist mud stuck in the Cold War. Former MI5 D.G. Roger Hollis and his former deputy Graham Mitchell were investigated and cleared.

[392] See: Jameson, *Political Unconscious*.

[393] *End of the Line*, BBC2 *Armchair Theatre*, broadcast 29 June 1970.

[394] Joseph Hone, *The Private Sector* (June 1971); Dennis Potter, *Traitor* (BBC *Play for Today*, October 1971, John le Mesurier winning a BAFTA); Alan Williams, *Gentleman Traitor* (January 1974).

[395] Dorothea Bennett, *The Jigsaw Man* (1977); Graham Greene, *The Human Factor* (1978), which Philby hated (Hoffman, p. 127); Julian Rathbone, *A Spy of the Old School* (1982); Frederick Forsyth *The Fourth*

Since *Looking Glass War* in 1965, the crisis in British capitalism appeared to have broadened into a world capitalist crisis. The US ending the Bretton Woods gold standard, aggravated by the Arab-Israeli war, triggered the 1973 oil crisis, which engendered a worldwide recession. Right-wing regimes fell in Portugal, Greece (both 1974) and Spain (1975), while Communist nationalist movements flourished worldwide, and in Britain the left was in ascendance, with trade unions and the energy crisis bringing down the Heath government. Left-winger Tony Benn took control of Trade and Industry in the new Labour government from March 1974, and a panicked MI5 investigated returning premier, Harold Wilson, as a possible Communist 'mole'.[396] The tale of a Communist plot penetrating the heart of British government then has numerous resonances with contemporary events – fear of the socialist 'enemy within'; fingering the Communism enemy without for the capitalist crisis – whilst the *resolution* of a Communist plot against Britain was clearly an reassuring device at a time of acute public anxiety.

The Bodleian MSS reveal that le Carré spent a year working on *Tinker* with different protagonists,[397] before deciding Smiley was a "consoling" guide through its plot's complexity (Gross, p. 35), though we might substitute contemporary politics' complexity. So to hugely oversimplify that plot: cabinet linkman, Oliver Lacon, brings Smiley out of retirement to investigate which of a Circus cabal of four – Percy Alleline (codename: Tinker), Toby Esterhase (Tailor), Roy Bland (Soldier) and Bill Haydon (Sailor) – is a longstanding Soviet 'mole' or penetration agent. Smiley has to operate secretly, outside the Circus, reading files, conducting interviews, before ensnaring the mole, Haydon, who is arrested and interrogated. In a subplot, Haydon's friend and colleague Jim Prideaux has been invalided out of the Circus after the mole compromised a Czech mission. When Prideaux, now a prep-school teacher, discovers the mole is Haydon, he tracks him down and kills him.

Protocol (1984). See: Margaret Scanlan, 'Philby and his Fictions', *Dalhousie Review*, 62 (1982), 533-553; Jeanne F. Bedell, 'The Fictional Kim Philby', *Armchair Detective,* 26:4 (1993), 22-29.
[396] Wright says MI5 planned a coup against Wilson (Wright, *Spycatcher*, pp. 369-70).
[397] The MSS begin in Sept 1971 (*JLC 23*); Smiley's first appearance is *JLC 18,* 13-15 September 1972.

Contemporary Reception of *Tinker*.

Despite *Tinker*'s subsequent reputation, its initial press reception was mixed. Both Graham Lord[398] and Julian Symons deemed it "a sad disappointment".[399] Typical of many complaints of complexity and length,[400] Maurice Richardson called it "far too long [...] hard to follow," with Roger Sale declaring it, "Really dull and really pretentious [...] plodding and gloomy."[401] This negative reaction connects to the widespread approbation expressed at le Carré's return to what Peter Prescott called "straight [...] entertainment".[402] Benjamin Stein called *Tinker* a comforting "cocoon" against the "real world",[403] while Pearl K. Bell dismissed the idea le Carré's novels had any relationship to "Larger Issues".[404] This then was the established Leavisite separation of the political and the literary, with the 'genre' novel still seen as an enduringly escapist, trivial form.

Even so, the lack of *any* reference to Philby in *sixteen* British reviews of *Tinker* and twelve American reviews is still arresting.[405] Anthony Troon's positive review called a mole "the bad and entirely possible nightmare of politicians and espionage agencies [...] the damage such an agent could wreak would be phenomenal". Troon was seemingly unaware that just such a "nightmare" had already occurred.[406] In fact the novel's descriptions of Haydon as a promiscuous, aristocratic, Middle East and Sovietologist T.E. Lawrence figure (*Tinker,* pp. 28/140/166) gave 'whodunit' away early on for anyone with

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[398] Graham Lord, *Sunday Express*, 30 June 1974, p. 6.

[399] Julian Symons, *New Review,* 4 July 1974, pp. 60-62.

[400] Maurice Richardson, 'The Spy Circus', *Observer,* 30 June 1974; Maurice Edelman, 'Spy Gone Cold', *Sunday Telegraph*, 30 June 1974, p. 14; Edmund Crispin, 'Moling Away', *Sunday Times,* 30 June 1974, p. 41; Michael Maxwell Scott, *Daily Telegraph*, 4 July 1974, p. 9; C.P. Snow, 'Smiley Comes Back' *Financial Times*, 19 July 1974 p. 19; Derek Mahon, 'Dolls within Dolls', *Listener*, 4 July 1974, p. 30; N.N., 'Hunt the Sleeper', *Times Literary Supplement*. 19 July 1974, p. 10; Symons; John R. Coyne Jnr, 'Twentieth Century Heroes', *National Review,* August, 1974, p. 880; William B. Hill, *America* 16, 1974, p. 300.

[401] Roger Sale, *Hudson Review*, Winter 1974–75, p. 626.

[402] Peter Prescott, 'Smiley vs. the Mole', *Newsweek*, 17 June 1974, p. 104. On genre, see also: N.N., 'Crime Compendium', *Spectator*, 5 July 1974, p. 21.

[403] Benjamin Stein, 'Fireside, Armchair, Secrets, Smiles' *American Spectator,* January 1975, p. 21.

[404] Pearl K. Bell, 'Coming in from the Cold War', *New Leader*, June 1974, pp. 15-16.

[405] No mention of Philby in Crispin; *TLS;* Maxwell-Scott; Edelman; Lord; Coady; *Spectator*; Symons; H.R.F. Keating, 'Life Without Roots', *The Times*, 4 July 1974, p. 10; Prior; Timothy Mo, 'The Human Spy', *New Statesman,* 12 July 1974, p. 52; Andrew Hope, *Evening Standard,* 3 July 1974, p. 25; John Robbins, 'I spy...a red herring', *Evening News,* 4 July 1974, p. 5; George Thaw, 'A Winner from the Spy Master', *Daily Mirror,* July 4 1974, p. 23; Mark Kahn, 'Le Carré's on the Spy Trail Again', *Sunday Mirror,* 30 June 1974, p. 27; N.N. 'Books, Briefly Noted', *New Yorker*, 22 July 1974, p. 83; N.N., *Kirkus*, 1 June 1974; Dick Datchery *Critic*, October 1974, p. 91.

[406] Anthony Troon, 'Gathering of the Spies', *Scotsman*, 29 June 1974, p. 3.

any historical knowledge. There are also clear connections between the novel's Irina episode, which launches the mole-hunt (pp. 45-76) and the real-life Volkov incident, where Philby stalling over a Soviet defector incriminated him. *Tinker*'s image of bandaged and sedated would-be defectors (p. 62), stretchered onto a plane by KGB 'nurses' is drawn direct from Cold-War history (Andrew, pp. 344-345).

Amongst the small minority of reviewers who *did* cite the Philby connection,[407] its relevance to contemporary events was dismissed,[408] with Allan Prior's negative notice's complaint that "as far as our Intelligence Services are concerned [...] the Cold War is still on" widely echoed.[409] Reviewers saw *Tinker* reducing high politics to office politics. Matthew Coady claimed *Tinker* was "a portrait of the secret agent as bureaucratic man [...] the power battles, the detailed organization and the tedium", and this was a popular view.[410] Crispin claimed *Tinker*'s spies were, "less concerned with defeating the Kremlin than with interdepartmental bickering", while the conservative *National Review*'s John Coyne observed: "structure with no centre. There seems to be no real reason for espionage and no one cares what the Russians know or don't know, except [...] that knowledge affects one's place in the hierarchy."[411]

There was now a muted recognition of the theme of British decline amongst British reviewers: Derek Mahon perceived in *Tinker* a nostalgia for empire: "to shut up shop would be to concede victory in the power game to the United States or the Soviet

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[407] Philby cited by four UK reviewers: Snow; Mahon, Gadney and Richardson (implicated in the Cambridge Spy Ring). Philby cited by five US reviewers: Miller; Locke, N.N. *Atlantic*, August, 1974, p. 88; *Washington Post*, 8 December 1974, p. 1; Burke Wilkinson, 'Turncloak in the Dark', *Christian Science Monitor*, 3 July 1974, p. 11.

[408] For Cold War and Philby's irrelevance to 1974, see also: Snow; Edelmann ("the Cold War spy story [...] is really old literary stuff");

[409] Allan Prior 'When Mr Le Carré Came in From the Cold', *Daily Mail*, 4 July 1974, p. 7; George Grella, 'Murder and Loyalty', *New Republic*, 31 July 1976, pp. 23-25; Reg Gadney, 'Triple Agents', *London Magazine*, October/November 1974, pp. 73-77. Ironically, Gadney would invoke Philby in his 1987 novel, *Nightshade*.

[410] Matthew Coady, 'Our Sort', *Guardian*, 4 July 1974, p. 9. On office politics, see also: *TLS*, "the internal struggles in the office rather than power politics at large"; Lord; Symons; Timothy Foote, 'Playing Tigers', *Time*, 24 June 1974, p. 108; Prescott; Helen R. Stephenson, 'Betrayal at the Foreign Office', *Wall Street Journal*, 24 July 1974, p. 10.

[411] John R. Coyne Jnr, 'Twentieth Century Heroes', *National Review*, August 1974, p. 880.

Union";[412] *Spectator* noted Smiley's "hatred of his country's decline" and a Buchan-esque patriotism. Karl Miller also made a link with imperial spy fiction: "as Ian Fleming's ebullient Bondage once did, le Carré's tales, for all their disenchantment, seem to be trying to make Britain great again by feigning a situation in which she still has secrets that the world covets."[413] American reviewers addressed British decline more bluntly: "any illusions of greatness and glory, for England and the Circus have disappeared," declared Stephenson, while Locke claimed, "[Smiley] is the sorry witness of national decline [...] the glamour of the Empire has faded". However, echoing the imperial spy fiction theme, Locke saw Smiley as "a somewhat reduced and saddened but good old British Daddy," rebutting decline.[414]

By contrast to reviewers, most of le Carré's subsequent literary critics cite the Philby connection.[415] Critics also focus on the anti-bureaucracy theme: "Bureaucracy is, in [Le Carré's] view, the reification of endless inaction" (Woods, p. 129); bureaucracies "enslave and neuter the human spirit" (Panek, p. 253).[416] Critics tend to reproduce *Tinker*'s suggestion that Haydon is "as much betrayed by England as he has betrayed England" (Noland, pp. 64-65),[417] generally dismissing Haydon as a Communist.[418] As ever, these views have tended to 'fix' readings of the novel and this chapter will consequently, firstly, challenge le Carré's contradictorily conservative presentation of bureaucracy. Secondly, the chapter will challenge critics' acceptance of le Carré's equally unstable theme of British national "decency" as invested in Smiley. Thirdly, the chapter will draw out the textually submerged – and critically elided – characterisation of Communism in the book.

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[412] Le Carré himself claimed he wrote of "British nostalgia for power", Michael Dean, 'John le Carré: the Writer Who Came in from the Cold', *Listener,* 5 September 1974, p. 306.

[413] Karl Miller, 'Gothic Guesswork', *New York Review of Books,* 18 July 1974, 24-27, p. 25.

[414] See also: Prescott; Foote; *Atlantic*; Grella (*Murder*, p. 25).

[415] Philby is *not* mentioned by Noland, Everett, Hughes, or Crispin Jackson (*Book & Magazine Collector,* 115, 1993), but Bennett, (p. 62), Halperin (p. 230) and Hoffman (p, 135) even cite the Volkov connection.

[416] See also: Sauerberg, p. 172; Holtmann, pp. 66-67.

[417] See also: Masters; Bennett (p. 25); Lewis (p. 134); Holly Beth King, 'Child's Play in John le Carré 's *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*', in H. Bloom, p. 69.

[418] Lasseter (p. 109); Beene (p. 91); Rothberg (p. 57); Cobbs (p. 119). Furthermore, Sauerberg (p. 59), Rutherford (p. 21), Beene (p. 89), all impute Haydon's motivation to "evil".

2. "The Vast Army of Bureaucrats": State as Faultline

Bureaucratisation, as we saw in *Call* and *Looking Glass*, was a key facet of the post-war professionalisation of the British state. However the presentation of bureaucracy in *Tinker* is riven with contradictions. First, the implication of *Tinker*'s plot is that bureaucracy's specialisation means detail eclipses whole; wood not seen for trees. Thus, rather than merely being oblivious to treachery, as in *Call*, bureaucracy now *produces* treachery. Circus chief, Percy Alleline's bureaucratic cabal, which ousted Control and his deputy, Smiley, is centred upon Bill Haydon, and thus the mole, because the secret information Haydon possesses (the bogus *Witchcraft* material) impresses the state hierarchy. Treachery, bureaucracy and British decline are thus linked. As in *Call*, therefore, Smiley has to operate outside the treacherous, discredited bureaucracy, overtly outside the toxic state, in order, contradictorily, to *save* the state from the mole *and* from bureaucracy. Smiley's solving of the case and culminating ascent to power is textual flagged as a reassertion of British greatness.

Paul Hoggett suggests that bureaucracy is where the public stores its anxieties, connecting to Haydon's remark about secret services as their nation's subconscious and accounting for the antipathy the public feels to bureaucracy.[419] This chimes with Marx's "the bureaucracy has the [...] spiritual essence of society in thrall, as its *private property*". Marx highlights this in the notion of the *secret*, which is "the universal spirit of bureaucracy", and "secures internally by its hierarchy".[420] This is the *Witchcraft* material again. But the repressed – secrets, anxieties – must make their return. This, in *Tinker*, is the function of Smiley, in his recurring guise as the Great Detective: Smiley exposes the secrets, analyses the clues offered by tiny, psychologically revealing details, dogs that don't bark. Somewhat quixotically, amateurism is again presented, via the reassuring figure of Smiley, as the 'better' professionalism, as opposed to bureaucratisation. For

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[419] Hoggett in Du Gay, *Values*, pp. 179-80.
[420] Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of State* (in *Early Writings*), p. 108.

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despite his bureaucratic focus on detail, searching for anomalies in the bureaucrats' files, Smiley, unlike the standard bureaucrat, also sees the big picture.

Smiley's position outside the state bureaucracy is carefully presented from the novel's start: we find him first in uneasy retirement, running into Whitehall gossip, Roddy Martindale, who describes Alleline's secretive, bureaucratic regime of "'Little reading rooms at the Admiralty, little committees popping up with funny names'" (p. 28). When Smiley's former colleague, Peter Guillam, takes up the story, Guillam reveals the cabal's bureaucratic jargon: "lateralism" (p. 38), a consolidation of departments which shores up the cabal's power and unaccountability, particularly Haydon's as Head of "London Station". "'They're a service within a service,'" says Guillam, "'they share their own secrets and don't mix with the proles'" (p. 28). Alleline is a Maston protégée (p. 140), thus in le Carré negative terms, a natural bureaucrat (Panek, p. 249) and an *un*natural spy. A "striver" in contrast to Smiley's inspiration, Control says of him: "'Percy Alleline would sell his mother for a knighthood and this service for a seat in the House of Lords'" (*Tinker*, p. 142). Alleline is gauchely frank about his ambition to sit at the "top table" (p. 142). Albeit from a different context, Marx's remark is pertinent, "as for the individual bureaucrat, the purpose of the state becomes [the bureaucrat's] private purpose, *a hunt for promotion, careerism*" (Marx, 'Hegel', *Early Writings,* p. 108). By contrast, Control and Smiley have the amateur ethos of 'disinterested' 'service': thus Smiley's regular resignations and all-hours work. Tellingly, Alleline is, away in the country – the aspirant aristocrat's affectation – when the novel's key Czech debacle occurs (pp. 245-6).[421] There is the implication here of bourgeois indolence, of complacency, compared to Smiley and Control's amateur engagement. Alleline is also, says Smiley, "'the Minister's man'" (*Tinker*, p. 80), a compromising executive branch chumminess, while the aristocratic Minister in question is also, fatally, a relative of Ann and Haydon's, defined by "lolling mendacity" (p. 359) and a concern to minimise "scandal" (p. 319).

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[421] This echoes the 1947 Albanian operation that was undermined by Philby, and the Venlo incident (1939), where SIS officers were lured into captivity by the promise of a defecting General.

Therefore, that the Alleline cabal's success, testified by Martindale (p. 28) and Lacon (p. 80), is with Whitehall (the executive) renders it suspect. Moreover, that it is the Witchcraft material that, in Guillam's fieldman perception, "account[s] for the Circus's inertia at working level and the esteem it enjoyed in Whitehall" (p. 90) puts the Alleline Circus on the negative side of the desk/field polarity. The bureaucratic Circus only passively *receives* intelligence (Witchcraft); it is not operational, working in the field, as in the Control/Smiley amateur regime's day. That the Witchcraft material is recognised by Smiley as "suspect" (p. 145) is indicative of his exemplary spread of skills: deskman, fieldman, and resolving 'caseman'.

The State and Class in *Tinker*

Heightening the amateur/professional class divide, Alleline, seemingly, like Maston, is no gentleman. "'Damn Caledonian street-merchant, no shadow of class'" (p. 169) says Haydon of Alleline, ventriloquising Control's gentleman amateur perspective. Control notably codenames Alleline 'Tinker'. Of the other members of the cabal, Bland (Soldier) is working class; Esterhase (Poorman) is working class *and* foreign.[422] Haydon, the mole, despite being from the gentlemanly class (Tailor), is the centre of this bureaucratic cabal: it is Haydon's 'chickenfeed' Witchcraft intelligence that has secured Alleline's regime. That Haydon is socially out of place in this company is the *point*: he is a spy. Like his amateur comrade Smiley, Haydon is the ideal combination of field *and* deskman: a caseman. "[Haydon] had a dazzling war [...] he was unorthodox and occasionally outrageous. He was probably heroic" (p. 166). Yet Haydon is head of bureaucratic London Station. That Control snobbishly favours Haydon is part of Haydon's 'cover' (*Tinker* p. 168), as is Haydon's membership of Ann's aristocratic 'set'. Le Carré elsewhere commented on the insulation provided by Philby's class credentials: "S.I.S. [*Secret Intelligence Service, MI6*] quite clearly identified class with loyalty" (*Philby*, p. 35), and asked, shortly after Philby's

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[422] "Redbrick Don" Bland's fieldwork resulted in a nervous breakdown, thus his seeking bureaucratic power ("'I've paid...I want some back'", p. 162).

exposure, "Do our security services believe that Etonians are a better risk than grammar school men?" ('Writer', p. 18) But this is a submerged theme in *Tinker* and arguably, class is seen as a better safeguard than merit in le Carré. For all that class connections produce a Haydon, they also produce a Smiley to neutralise him. Merit provides Mastons and Allelines, preoccupied with self-preservation and small-picture specialisation, who at best fails to witness and at worst nurture corruption. Significantly, bureaucrat Oliver Lacon, has to bring in an anti-bureaucratic amateur, Smiley, to solve the mole case.

Smiley as Anti-Bureaucrat

In *Tinker* we see a glimpse of the deep state, but it is still largely presented in terms of bureaucracy. Lacon is, crucially, the link to the state's legislative branch, but is seen always in terms of bureaucratic self-advancement (c.f. Alleline as "striver"). Smiley attributes to Lacon, "a sense of Christian ethic that promises him no reward except a knighthood, the respect to his peers, a fat pension and a couple of charitable directorships in the City" (p. 79). These sentiments are echoed by Sam Collins (p. 240). Smiley scorns Lacon's bureaucratic propriety: and Lacon's preoccupation with accounting ("[Lacon] made it clear he detested the irregularity" of 'borrowing' files overnight, p. 135); accountability (Lacon's horror at the suggestion that Smiley should read the Witchcraft files, p. 137; "'you're not family any more, you know'" p. 138). Thus Connie Sachs posits Lacon as the bureaucratic barbarian invading the inspired amateur world, asking Smiley, "'How could you let a *Lacon* in?'" (p. 108) (with a subliminal suggestion again of the bureaucrat as socially inferior). Again the emphasis is on bureaucratic functionaries, rather than the state itself.

Professionalism via ideological investment in bureaucratisation is thus denigrated. By contrast to both Alleline and Lacon, Smiley is *nationally* rather than career-motivated: Smiley, like Control, was alert to the possibility of a mole whilst Lacon was dismissing the idea (p. 77). Now Smiley's investigation is given its character and structure by its

avoidance of the state bureaucracy: Guillam photographing files (p. 90); Guillam stealing Circus files (pp. 179-186); Smiley and Guillam kidnapping bureaucrat Toby Esterhase (pp. 323-339). In the logic of the novel, this approach is so as not to frighten the horses (or the mole), but it also usefully functions to keep Smiley at arm's length from the taint of the bureaucracy or the state. Instead Smiley's investigation valorises amateurism, and he defeats the bureaucrats on two fronts – fooling the cabal to pursue the investigation; ousting the cabal at investigation's end. Critics, however, are rather too quick to accept bureaucracy as the guilty party and thus fail to detect the contradictions in *Tinker*'s presentation of bureaucracy.[423]

The major contradiction is Smiley being rewarded by Lacon with the reins of the very system Smiley supposedly disdains. The contradiction is captured in Smiley's "surge of resentment against the institutions he was supposed to be protecting" (p. 359), another rare hint of the deep state – what *are* these plural institutions? Superficially then Smiley's accession to power creates a resolution: Britain, has symbolically been rendered 'great' against the depredations of traitors and bureaucrats, by the triumph of this exemplar of Britishness. But how can Smiley command where previously he has always countered? Even in his most integrated state role, in *Looking Glass*, Smiley provided a moral brake to Control's expediency. In fact, Smiley's promotion simply highlights an extant contradiction: for all his avoidance of the hierarchy and his anti-state rhetoric, Smiley has been working for the state all along. Smiley is an employee of Lacon of the Cabinet Office, he has the endorsement of Lacon's Minister, and is all too willing use this as a weapon when required.[424] "'I have to report all this to Lacon, you see. He's being awfully pressing just at the moment. He seems to have the Minister on his back'" (*Tinker*, p. 332).[425] In

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[423] See: Anatole Broyard, 'Le Carré's People', review of *Quest for Karla*, *New York Times*, 29 August 1982, p. 23; "the reification of endless inaction" (Woods, p. 129); "in the Cold War novels the ultimate evil is the system, against which friendship stands out as a sacrificed ideal" (Paulson, p. 325).
[424] To Connie, p. 108; to Esterhase, p. 327; to Prideaux p. 291.
[425] Beene captures Smiley's in/out relationship with the state: "though uncomfortable with its ambiguous ethic, [Smiley] continues to hold himself out as his profession's proponent" (Beene, p. 93). She correctly calls it "his quest to revive the status quo" (Beene, p. 99).

mythic terms, the questing knight is rewarded with the control of the kingdom. The point of such myths are dissolution/sacrifice in order to regenerate. But the kingdom is essentially unchanged by the process. The ascendance of Smiley simply restores the state to its status quo ante bureaucratisation.

A second contradiction is that while le Carré may not regard Smiley as a bureaucrat, he is easily mistaken for one.[426] As Denning says, "Smiley's success comes from accumulating information" (Denning, p. 136). As within the Alleline cabal, so without: (secret) knowledge is bureaucratic power. We see Smiley wielding this power over Toby Esterhase, for instance (*Tinker*, pp. 324-338). Denning concludes that Smiley is: "on the one hand a throwback to an earlier notion of knowledge as the possession of an amateur who uses it to serve the Empire", but also "a figure for the collective activity of all those disconnected [...] bureaucrats [...] whose fragments of knowledge are unified by Smiley to bring forth the whole fantastic secret" (Denning, p. 137). The resolution of 'deskman' vs. 'fieldman' via Smiley as 'caseman' occludes the deeper problem of the 'state'.

Moreover, surveillance, a faultline in le Carré, as in Western liberal democracy, is key to Smiley's methodology, to his very ability to identify and ensnare the mole. "Bureaucracy involves forms of surveillance activity [...] Administrative power enters into the minutiae of daily life and the most intimate of personal actions and relationships" (Giddens, p. 309). Smiley thus is implicated in the very bureaucratic processes he purports to reject.

The third contradiction regarding the state is that figuring bureaucracy as locus of British problems highlights, in this post-war period of Keynesian consensus, an unwittingly reactionary nostalgia. In a 1977 article, le Carré decried:

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[426] E.g. Thomas J. Price, 'Spy Stories, Espionage and the Public in the Twentieth Century', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 30: 3 (Winter 1996), 81-89 (p. 86).

...a supposedly Socialist party cutting public spending[427] [...] while maintaining unchanged the vast army of bureaucrats who made these very services so costly in the first place. To rule the whole of India and a third of the world to boot, we never needed half of this impossible, self-consuming structure.[428]

Le Carré rather lets the cat out of the bag by linking Empire and anti-bureaucratism here. Not only does he channel traditional conservative suspicion of "big government", but he cites Empire as an unalloyed positive, and ultimately again suggests that bureaucracy 'caused' British decline.[429] However, Giddens shows that bureaucracies have tended to increase in tandem with social liberalisation (Giddens, p. 309). Administering the Welfare State vastly increased bureaucracy, which in turn increased social mobility. Given le Carré's critique of cutting public spending, presumably no rejection of the Welfare State or post-war democratisation is intended. But just such a view, with its class emphasis on Empire vs. welfare state, is a powerful implication in *Tinker*'s anti-bureaucratic theme.

We have seen then how Smiley is a fundamentally reassuring figure in *Tinker*: his inspired amateur brilliance defeats the bureaucrats, and ensnares the state-undermining mole, superficially 'resolving' British anxieties focused on the state. But Smiley is contradictorily disavowed as a state functionary, posited instead as a 'national' saviour, wherein his English decency is key. With the construct of character, as ever, revealing philosophical faultlines, let us now examine how Smiley's exemplarity of British national decency is contradictory.

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[427] I.e. James Callaghan's Labour government's economic meltdown.
[428] Le Carré, 'In England now', *New York Times Magazine,* 23 October 1977, p. 34; p. 86.
[429] The reality was that it was the very *imperial* bureaucracy le Carré commends that was proving to be cost ineffective.

3. National Decency and National Violence

A chapter might easily be filled with critical testimonials to the decency of George Smiley:[430] e.g. amongst *Tinker* reviews: "Smiley is one of the last English gentlemen [...] an honorable, decent fellow [...] humanity at its decent English best" (Locke). Smiley "provides a sense of a moral center [...] the embodiment of British decency" (Grella, 'Murder', p. 25). Amongst *Tinker*'s critics: "[Smiley's] deep sense of human decency [is] the product of the best in the liberal and individualistic tradition [and] English culture" (Sauerberg, p. 60). The crucial point is that this 'decency' of Smiley's is not simply personal: a semantic collapse usually occurs between Smiley's character and national character. Noland makes a link with Buchan: "Like Mr Standfast, [Smiley] is the spirit of England" (Noland, p. 63); Lewis sees Smiley as "national savior and rescuer of Britannia" (Lewis, p. 149). Rothberg claims, "le Carré wishes us to consider George Smiley the epitome of the best England has to offer" (Rothberg, p. 49). The invocation of imperial spy fiction here is revealing, reaffirming that, for all the vaunted le Carré ambiguities, Smiley is, at this stage in his career, an unambiguously affirmative emblem of the British nation.

Let us consider this notion of the nation again. Giddens, a Marxist *en route* to the political centre, describes nationalism as: "attachment to a homeland associated with *the creation and perpetuation of certain distinctive ideals and values*, traceable to certain historically given features of 'national' experience" (Giddens, p. 214, my emphasis). In this centrist liberal idea of nation – at odds with Benedict Anderson or Gellner's anti-idealist versions – it makes perfect sense that Smiley embodies and defends British "ideals and values": the more romantically for the sense that they are embattled. In a Freudian

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[430] "An intensely decent man who also happens to be a professional secret agent" (Ambrosetti, p. 99); "A man of conscience" with "a code of loyalty, of fidelity, of obligation" (Rutherford, pp. 24-25); "Compassion is the driving-force which activates Smiley" (Hughes, p. 278); "That emblem of British decency, probity and fairness, George Smiley" (Rothberg, p. 55); "stubbornly intelligent and unshakably moral, Smiley represents humanism" (Broyard); "The custodian for certain positive values" (Homberger, p. 83); "Amid tawdriness, he stands for honor, duty, and decency" (Wolfe, p. 67); "a moral exemplar, Smiley embodies the western respect for individuality" (Dobel, p. 209); "the sole figure of conscience in a culture [of] underlying corruption" (Tracy, p. 22); "Loyalty [...] idealism [...] honesty and compassion" (Lasseter, p. 107); "Reconciles the ideological fight for the more humane system with his personal fight for decency" (Holtmann p. 66); "intense compassion for decency, patriotism and humanity" (Beene, p. 90); "Decency, integrity, kindness, sympathy, and compassion are Smiley's [...] character traits" (Aronoff, pp. 15-16).

fort/da common to imperial spy fiction, the reader gets to be horrified by the gloomy picture of a treachery-riddled, declining Britain, but then relieved and reassured as Smiley, through his nationally decent methods, restores order, and symbolically reverses national British decline. Let us now explore this notion of British decency.

The Public School Ethos

Public schools played an integral ideological role in the dominant version of British – properly 'English' – nationalism. All the major characters in *Tinker* attended public schools, including Smiley. A prep school – ruling class antechamber to public schools and public life – is a major setting in *Tinker*. It is where the novel *begins*; it establishes what follows.[431] Public schools blossomed in tandem with the British Empire (Hobsbawm, *Empire*, p. 73). The nine public schools established as "nurseries of the nobility and gentry" expanded by the early 1900s to 160 public schools "deliberately training their pupils as members of a ruling class" (Hobsbawm, *Empire*, p. 178), and designed to produce imperial and government administrators.[432] Public schools were thus integral to an elite, ruling class vision of British national character, which Denning sketches as "Newbolt man,[433] with his mystical loyalty to school, nation and Empire" (Denning, p. 33). By taking the "celebrated playing fields of Eton as a figure for social life" the public school ethic suggested, "social and political conflict was a game, to be played in a sprit of fairness, amateurism and manliness" (Denning, p. 33). British national "decency" and national "service" are thus intertwined, underlying imperialist spy fiction, mildly satirised in Maugham,[434] but also imbued in Smiley. It is worth repeating that le Carré had taught at

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[431] In the multitude of drafts in the Bodleian MSS, *Tinker* always commences at the school, with Prideaux as lead character. Linking spy establishment and public schools, one character says to Jim, "Trust you to swap one crummy English institution for another" *JLC 24*, 4 December 1971, p. 5.

[432] David Powell, *Nationhood & Identity: The British State Since 1800* (London: Tauris, 2002), p. 113.

[433] Henry Newbolt's poem 'Vitae Lampada' (1897) relates sportsmanship to imperial duty "The river of death has brimmed his banks/And England's far, and Honour a name/But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks:/"Play up! play up! and play the game!""

[434] Ashenden's boss says, "He hasn't the advantages of a public school education. His ideas of playing the game are not quite the same as your or mine," Somerset Maugham, *Ashenden*, [1928] (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 56.

Eton, citing his "ambivalence towards the institutions of the establishment, loving them and criticizing them simultaneously".[435]

Thursgood's prep school is, ostensibly a comfort-zone refuge for former public schoolboy, refugee spy and Buchan-eer Jim Prideaux, the place where Prideaux escapes the knowledge that his friend Bill Haydon is a Communist spy: a kind of national unconscious. Prideaux is an inveterate denier – of British decline, of the collapse of the public school code, of his 'knowledge' of his friend Haydon's treachery, all of which are thus linked throughout.[436] Prideaux compares himself to Rip Van Winkle (p. 13), recalling le Carré's phrase "the thousand year sleep of Eden and Macmillan", satirising both gentlemanly dreams of past national glories and unfounded complacency about Communist penetration (*Philby*, p. 41). There is something defensive then in Prideaux's inculcation of his "passionate Englishness" into his pupils: "'Best place in the whole damn world' he bellowed" (*Tinker*, p. 17), reading them Biggles, Percy Westerman (p. 18) and Buchan (p. 286), the hegemonic propaganda of British empire, of British greatness. The private school as a redoubt of secure gentlemanly traditions of fair play and British power is thus insecure, as both Prideaux having been shot *in the back,* and Thursgood's economic depredations reveal: the Dip where Prideaux parks his caravan was dug for a planned swimming pool before the school ran out of money (p. 11). Pursuing this idea of the school as a national unconscious, the Dip is below ground, and is a focus of mythologising amongst the schoolboys (p. 11): buried, hidden, repressed. Prideaux also buries his gun in this Dip, a gun which observing schoolboy Bill Roach will in the novel's final sentence decide was a dream (p. 282). Prideaux's caravan is out of true, with Prideaux working hard to level it, another image of correcting, fixing, denying, with ready national overtones. Moreover, Prideaux drives a barely-functioning, out-of-production British Alvis car, a nice distillation of nostalgic, inefficient, reality-denying Britishness. Goodman certainly sees all

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[435] Letter to Ann Sharp, August 1957, (Sisman NP).

[436] "Neither Control's warning that there is a traitor in the ranks of the Circus nor the evidence of betrayal provided by [Prideaux's] own capture during Operation Testify, does anything to lessen his faith in British decency" (Monaghan, p 18).

this in terms of British decline, "The reference to the red of the car, the blue of the caravan and the white steam in the rain is an alignment of the image with the Union flag, here apparently coming apart at the seams" (Goodman, p. 206).[437] Certainly the sense of repression is strong in the text: "Sometimes [Jim] thought of the wound as a memory he couldn't keep down. He tried his damnedest to patch over and forget it" (p. 282). This ostensibly refers to Jim's unconscious knowledge that Haydon is the mole, but with this knowledge linked to Britain's greatness, the repression also has a national function. In line with Hoggett's idea of the national unconscious as cache of cultural anxieties, it is Smiley, bureaucratic bearer of unwelcome secret knowledge, who suddenly appears at the school to materialise Jim's unconscious fears (p. 286). We might however link this to Gilroy's more recent analysis of "postimperial melancholia" (Gilroy, p. 98), whereby the traumatic loss of power is accompanied by an amnesia, a repression of what that power was founded on, the brutal history of imperialism (Gilroy, p. 108). We will return to this.

Let us now however explore that link between Circus penetration and national health. Haydon is a supposedly exemplary product of this public school ethos. The T.E. Lawrence citation suggests Haydon, like Philby, epitomised two strands of the aristocratic gentlemanly ideal: the muscular Christian athlete and the aesthete.[438] Consequently Haydon betrays not just state but *national* (but specifically elite) interests. Haydon's unmasking troubles all these established, traditional associations of public school, imperialism and decency; what Grella calls an "almost tribal sense of aristocratic fellowship" (Grella, p. 87). Haydon here is a Buchan character to kill the Buchan character. The violence Haydon does to this public school/decency/Englishness ethos is ultimately what leads Prideaux (its exemplar) to kill Haydon.[439] Similarly Smiley's helper, another Buchan character, Peter Guillam's adherence to "plain, heroic standards" (*Tinker,*

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[437] In one MS Roach sees Prideaux's nickname 'Rhino' as testament to "the dignity of a dying breed" *JLC 24*, 8 February 1972.

[438] Berberich, *English Gentleman,* p. 122.

[439] Schwarz reveals how Buchan's ethos has a surprisingly enduring afterlife, Buchan's reputation relatively unsullied by its colonial connotations. Bill Schwarz, *Memories of Empire. Volume 1: The White Man's World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 213.

p. 360) and "a notion of English calling" (p. 361) are both invoked immediately after Haydon's unmasking. As a result, Guillam feels "orphaned", because Haydon is "of his own kind" (p. 365). Guillam's is a class anger that Haydon has betrayed and thus destroyed the public school English gentlemanly ethos, couched as a national anger,[440] and that Haydon has in effect, metaphorically 'caused' British decline. Thus is Communism subtly blamed for economic problems that were of British capitalism's creation. So in the novel, even a prep school is an uneasy refuge, where Smiley or guns may resurface as reminders of the repressed reality; venerable Oxford University is the very site of Haydon's recruiting; socially unacceptable Martindale invades Smiley's Manchester Square gentleman's club; while Haydon wrecks the beloved Circus. However all this only intensifies the wistfulness with which these establishment institutions are depicted.

That wistfulness permeates Smiley's former colleague, Connie Sachs', absolutely key speech about the state of the nation: "'Poor loves. Trained to Empire, trained to rule the waves. All gone. All taken away. Bye-bye world'" (*Tinker*, p. 122). Denning characterises the post-imperial class as: "Rulers with nothing to rule, servants with nothing to serve" (Denning, p. 130). Connie speaks nostalgically of a time "'before Empire became a dirty word'" and "'when Englishmen could be proud'". Now "'all over the world beastly people are making our time into nothing'" (p. 121). Moreover, Connie connects all this, a la *Brideshead Revisited*, with the destruction of her childhood home, Millponds, for a motorway (p. 122): the democratic modern world destroying the institutions of a past imperial, aristocratic Arcadia. Why do critics not challenge Connie on this, rather than uncritically recycling this nostalgia for an imperial, elite society?[441] "Poor loves", deprived of the aphrodisiac of power, of the ability to exploit 'lesser' peoples, of the booty upon which stately homes like Millponds were built. "Beastly people" are either leftists or post-colonial rebels: another return of the repressed (as rights-less "beasts"). This is Gilroy's

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[440] Brady sees Haydon/Philby as "the death of the gentleman" (Brady, p. 291); "This is what Philby desecrated: the sense of decency" (Hoffman, p. 113).

[441] E.g. "A way of life based on Empire, a functioning class system and a creed of service, which seemed so secure before the Second World War, has been swept away" (Monaghan, p. 4).

"postimperial melancholia": "the morbid culture of a once-imperial nation that has not been able to accept its inevitable loss of prestige in a determinedly postcolonial world" (p. 117). We see a similar trope in late 1970s/early 80s heritage drama: nostalgia for a class-riddled, elite, imperial England even as that England's death rites are apparently read. The 1979 televisation of *Tinker*, with its obsessive focus upon Oxford via each episode's end-credits, is an early example of this heritage trend (Oldham, p. 740).[442]

However, this nostalgic strain in the novel and in British culture can also be deceptive. For if the British ruling class was shaken by the Philby affair, it soon reasserted itself. Prep school, public school and Oxbridge remain the antechambers to the intelligence services, to the state, to power, to this day. What's more, in the novel Smiley emerges from this very class background to *save* Britain (Connie links Smiley and Haydon overtly, "'You're the last, George, you and Bill'" (*Tinker*, p. 122), while the very same class's Prideaux 'solves' the problem of both mole and British decline in muscular Christian manner, by killing Haydon. The public school/Oxbridge ethos is clearly alive, well and indeed valorised in *Tinker*. Equally, if Britain had shrunk from its former domination of the world,[443] it was still amongst the world's richest countries, and informal empire continued via a reorganising global capitalism which responded aggressively to the left and anti-imperialist movements of the 1970s.[444] It is to this theme of Empire that we shall now turn.

"I Won't Have Bloodshed": National Violence as Faultline in *Tinker*

The British Empire, submerged in le Carré's 1960s fiction, but still underlying it, asserts itself in *Tinker*, ironically as an *absence* (both literal and figurative), before moving centre-stage in *Honourable Schoolboy* (1977). Although the Empire is barely mentioned as such,

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[442] *Tinker*'s BBC producers' original choice, *Brideshead Revisited*, was pipped by Granada's pioneering production (1979), where the heritage theme was overt in the original text.
[443] Under Wilson's previous administration the British Empire had supposedly withdrawn "East of Suez" (another Kipling reference).
[444] Ernest Mandel: *Late Capitalism* [1972] (London: Verso, 1980).

alongside the imperial associations of the public school ethos, the novel's mood of postimperial melancholy (Gilroy), and *Tinker*'s multiple references to imperial spy fiction, the novel ranges between several former or current British colonies – Malaya, Hong Kong and India. But this imperial invocation also exposes a faultline within both the public school ethos and the ideology of English decency: the base violence that undergirds the imperial superstructure. The repressed returns again.

David Powell writes, "the idea that Britain, because of its own inherent qualities, had a unique, civilizing, imperial mission carried genuine conviction in many Victorian minds irrespective of any more rapacious economic reality" (*Nation,* p. 105). Indeed, ideologies of Empire used the 'superior' civilisation of Britain as justification for colonising less 'civilised' peoples. Imperial ideologue, Joseph Chamberlain, declared England "the predominant force in the future history and civilization of the world" (in Schwarz, p. 89), linking it to "national character" (in Gilroy, p. 68). Lord Milner declared in 1903 that "the white man should rule" on 'the ground of superior civilisation" (in Schwarz, p. 98). Looking back, Graham MacPhee shows how, "the attributes of British civilisation were presented as the attributes of civilisation per se" (MacPhee, p. 30). Stanley Baldwin in 1924 gave this national 'civilisation' a specific moral character: "[the British] go overseas, and take with them what they have learned at home: love of justice, love of truth and the broad humanity that are so characteristic of English people" (in Schwarz, p. 101).[445] This 'disinterested' face of imperialism then is the "white man's burden" of Kipling, an imperial writer whose influence peppers *Tinker*. Le Carré recalls the same reading aloud of imperialist fiction at his own prep school as Prideaux performs in Thursgood's (*In England*, p. 34): training for future imperial administrators.

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[445] The imperial spy novel "satisfied a national need for justification. They invariably show the absolute victory of all traditional British beliefs, particularly the sentimental platitudes about the Briton's natural superiority" (Grella, p. 93).

However, Walter Benjamin claims: "there is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism,"[446] for the British Empire was a repressive and brutal regime. As Gilroy says, this was not due to unfortunate 'mistakes': it was written into the imperial system of "governmental terror creatively and legally applied as a mode of political administration and economic exploitation" (Gilroy, p. 51). For all the "ethnic mythology that projects empire as essentially a form of sport, [it is] necessarily a violent, dirty and immoral business" (Gilroy, p. 102). Joseph Chamberlain himself conceded the centrality of "the use of force" in "the cause of civilisation" (in Gilroy, p. 68). Looking back nostalgically to the Philby case via *Tinker* Britain could also look back at its brutal behaviour in Aden (1963-7), Malaya, or Borneo (1963), in the last two of which *Tinker's* Ricki Tarr was involved (*Tinker*, p. 42). Looking back to the 1930s, as the novel does – "all gone; all taken away" in Connie's words – Britain could look back at its brutal behaviour in India and the Arab world. Robert Young declares: "The trace of violence is the primary semiotic of the colonial apparatus, its means of communication".[447]

Like Empire then, Smiley as exemplar of British civilisation, of "British decency", stands astride a faultline of violence. This is almost entirely overlooked by critics, for whom Smiley remains nationally "decent", even saintly.[448] Let us then examine Smiley's use of violence as it is a metonym of that deeper national violence. The secret services, as part of the state, participate in the state's monopoly of violence, but there is perennially in liberal culture, a queasiness about this, every bit as deep as the queasiness about the state. So the liberal state's violence is occluded, as Foucault depicts in *Discipline and Punish,* in contrast to the overtly repressive feudal state. Thus the end to the stocks and public hangings and the substitution of the modern prison and 'objective' jury system. The 'decent' liberal *nation* fulfils its purpose here as the PR of the capitalist *state*, within which

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[446] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' in *Illuminations* (London: Fontana Collins, 1973) p. 258.

[447] Robert C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. 295.

[448] Sauerberg at least acknowledges the problem while justifying Smiley's actions: "Smiley is given absolution for his employment of foul means by reminding the reader constantly that English culture has values which make such sacrifices worthwhile" (p. 51).

bureaucracy, as Hoggett showed, compartmentalises tricky aspects of the social structure. In both real life and in spy fiction, spies subvert the bureaucratic structure and operate as jury *and* executioner: thus Bond's "license to kill". However, in *Tinker,* violence is distributed in deference to the Circus's (aka the state's) bureaucratic, hierarchical structure.[449] The lower-class, strong-arm Scalphunters, specialists in "murder and kidnapping and crash blackmail", are segregated in what Alleline calls "'hateful Brixton'" (p. 192), a working class – and immigrant black – area, out of sight from elite West End (Alleline's "'the Palace'" p. 192) and Whitehall, and disavowed by all: "There to handle the hit and run jobs that were too dirty or too risky for the residents abroad" (p. 38). Thus, the British state's upper echelons are structurally distanced from violence: so is Smiley, sustaining the appearance of British national decency.

Significantly, the initial information about the existence of the mole comes from a Scalphunter. Ricki Tarr, empire baby, lower-middle-class child of colonialism, patronised and brutalised by his British 'superiors', is likely another Kipling reference (*Ricki-Ticki-Tavi,* 1894). Protecting a British colonial family, Kipling's ultimate trusty retainer's protection is based on brutal violence to the threatening snakes (natives?). As befits this imperial heritage, and Tarr's carefully described involvement in British venality and violence in Malaya (pp. 41-42), Tarr is himself brutal in his defence of Britain against the mole. Smiley himself, significantly, inducted Tarr into British intelligence (p. 41). So Smiley letting out a "shudder' when he discovers Guillam is now head of the Scalphunters (significantly, a demotion, p. 37), is a kind of cosmetic liberal queasiness. Because the entire mole investigation is set upon the structure of Scalphunter violence and venality. So, in another return of the repressed, Tarr will turn that violence against his own aristocratic 'superior', Steve Mackelvore, in Paris (*Tinker,* pp. 342-3). Young attests that "the agent of violence becomes subjected to it as much as the violated recipient" (Young, p. 295). Again, this violence is at Smiley's behest, designed to flush out the mole. So while Tarr's

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[449] In 1976 le Carré acknowledged how policy becomes "two guys in grey flannel suits and they say, 'Shall we just cut his throat for you?'" Bragg, 'Things', *Listener,* p. 90.

violence both initiates and concludes the plot, Smiley relies upon it, but stays untainted by it - like the liberal state; like the 'decent' 'nation'.

So despite Smiley's avowed distaste for the Scalphunters, Smiley still avails himself of Guillam's intemperance and more significantly, Guillam's vicious Scalphunter, Fawn, on behalf of the nation. This distribution of violence means that when Tarr is insolent during Smiley's first interview, "Guillam, with an angry exclamation, rose to his feet. But Smiley seemed quite unbothered" (*Tinker*, p. 75). Smiley can afford to be "unbothered" with Guillam at his back and Fawn at the door. At the second Tarr interview, at an Essex safe house, "left to himself [Guillam] would have been tempted to beat the daylights out of Tarr" (p. 199) but Smiley twice talks Guillam down (p. 206). This asserts the hierarchic distribution of violence. But when Tarr later attacks Smiley, Guillam "selected Tarr's right arm and flung it into a lock against his back, bringing it very near to breaking" (p. 205). The serfs cannot attack the gentlemen.

Violence nevertheless is the mechanism upon which power rests, in *Tinker* as in the state. The role of Fawn, who lurks in the background of these interviews, is crucial. That Fawn is ironically named a "Babysitter "indicates the text's awareness of this violence faultline. Fawn is two hierarchical rungs removed from Smiley, and his violence is always creepily invisible. In the Essex safe house, Fawn appears "from nowhere" and how and when he hits Tarr is mysterious. "There was blood in [Tarr's] mouth, a lot of it, and Guillam realised Fawn must have hit him but he couldn't work out when" (p. 206). When Toby Esterhase, under suspicion as the mole, is held at gunpoint in a London safe house, Guillam's hostility erupts: "'for God's sake, let me sweat the bastard'" (p. 332). Smiley ignores him. Again he can afford to: with Fawn in the background Smiley's decency's undergirding of violence is clear: he is scrupulously polite to Esterhase throughout. In the mole-unmasking scene, in which Smiley significantly carries a gun (p. 359), Guillam again erupts: "Guillam had Haydon by the collar. With a single heave he lifted him straight out of his chair. He had thrown away his gun and was hurling Haydon from side to side,

shaking him like a dog, shouting" (p. 361). Mendel now restrains Guillam, whose anger is carefully framed as *national*, coming from the betrayal of the public school ethos of "English calling" (p. 360). Shortly afterwards Haydon's co-conspirator Polyakov abuses "Fawn for hitting him, heaven knows where, despite Mendel's vigilance" (p. 363). Fawn's invisible violence is again a bureaucratic distribution of violence: it has nothing to do with Smiley, but Smiley clearly relies upon it.

Similarly, Smiley and Lacon express disapproval of the violence visited upon Haydon at the Sarratt 'Nursery' – another country house – after his arrest, yet it is allowed to occur. In this most regimented situation, the Sarratt guards "professed mystification" (p. 369) at Haydon's bruises. Which brings us to the murder of Haydon. The text shows Smiley taking some trouble to set up an agent exchange with the Soviets (pp. 367-368) and worrying about Sarratt's security arrangements (p. 369). *How* then can Haydon be killed? This is an absolutely central contradiction in the novel and perhaps best understood via Macherey's "unconscious of the text". Critics, blinded by Smiley's decency, cannot quite articulate that *Smiley*, as representative of the nation, and stand-in for the (British) reader, unconsciously desires Haydon's death.[450] Let us examine this.

From his interview with Esterhase onwards, Smiley worries that he is being followed: he has a sense of a shadowy figure just beyond perception – an effective image for the unconscious. Smiley's language – "Peter, I want you to watch my back" (p. 338) – suggests unconscious knowledge of his follower's identity: Prideaux was shot in the back as result of Haydon's political treachery; moreover, when Haydon is held at Sarratt, Smiley will reflect, "Jim was watching your back for you right till the end" (p. 376). Guillam also unconsciously knows the follower is Prideaux: "not till days afterwards did he realise that

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[450] Scanlan claims, "Haydon's death provides the rough justice we want in our thrillers" (Scanlan, p. 540). Most claims Haydon's death satisfies "the reader's sense of justice [...] given the enormity of Haydon's betrayal"; adding that "for the English Service to kill Haydon would taint Smiley in a way le Carré is elsewhere at pains to avoid" (Most, in H. Bloom, p. 98). Wolfe suggests it is "nearly as if le Carré helped Prideaux kill Haydon by weakening the wall of security around him" (pp. 197-198).

the figure, or the shadow of it, had struck a chord of familiarity in his memory" (p. 339). Smiley thus unconsciously draws Prideaux to Sarratt.

In his final interview with Haydon, Smiley suddenly "had had enough, so he slipped out without bothering to say goodbye" (p. 378): then there is a lacuna, while Smiley kills time, and in which Prideaux kills Haydon. Lewis claims, "the obvious ease with which Prideaux gains access to Haydon without being detected is puzzling" (Lewis, p. 136). Perhaps not. Lacon is complacent about the security arrangements (p. 367); the "head of Nursery" is mysteriously "unavailable" when Smiley faint-heartedly follows up the deficiencies in Sarratt's security (p. 369). The Minister has already expressed doubts about how the government will look should Haydon in Moscow "leap on a soapbox and laugh his head off about all the people he's made fools of'" (p. 319). Indeed now we begin to see that the entire *state* unconsciously desires Haydon's death. Involving the (British) reader, we might say it is the entire *nation*'s unconscious desire: past and present, fictional and real world. Prideaux, emblem of a particular Britishness, acts as the nation's unconscious, the Establishment tidying up after itself. If burying his gun was repression, then his digging it back up is a return of the repressed. Prideaux's efficient, neat killing of Haydon, like the silent, invisible violence of Fawn, is hidden from sight in the manner Foucault described.

We could also come at this generically. The Great Detective genre does not traditionally depict the villain's punishment but ends with his unmasking or arrest (Porter, pp. 122-3). This has a clear relationship to capitalism's sublimation of violence in the Foucauldian sense and investment in English 'decency' (Porter, p. 124). That the American hardboiled detective genre *does* show the criminal's punishment (Porter, p. 122) is indicative of a more expedient US morality, of a nation that still has the death penalty, and is less invested in PR spins such as "decency". But not only is Haydon violently 'punished' (albeit offstage), we observe his corpse (*Tinker*, pp. 378-9), like a gruesome eruption of feudal "punishment-as-spectacle" (Giddens, p. 188) in the midst of a bourgeois country

house detective story. This is where the host of critics who see Prideaux's action as a purely *personal* revenge are misguided.[451] For Paulson, *Tinker* is "a thriller about geopolitical hostility that is in fact a story of friendship; where the 'mole' Bill Hayden (sic)'s real evil lies not in his betrayal of the British Empire but in his betrayal of his best friend" (Paulson, p. 324). The personal is irretrievably intertwined with the political in *Tinker*, patriotic 'characters' blur into 'national character' via the public school ethos of Britishness and decency (both qualities undergirded in the cases of Smiley, Guillam and particularly Prideaux, by violence). Moreover, a personalised reading is hardly upheld by the text's lack of interest in Haydon and Prideaux's friendship: even in flashback, we never actually see them together.

Subsequent events hardly trouble reading Haydon's death as the nation-state's unconscious desire. Neither Lacon nor the Minister seems perturbed by Haydon's death. No inquest is held, while Smiley declines to betray Prideaux as the killer (*Tinker*, p. 379).[452] So can it be coincidence that Prideaux, the British patriot, escapes punishment while Haydon, the British *traitor*, does not? Does a fictional betrayer of Britain not *need* to be punished, as Philby never was in real life? Unlike the book's Irina incident, the real-life Volkov case did *not* result in Philby's unmasking, it was an inept fudge. Despite general suspicion, Philby was *never* exposed by a clever colleague; instead, he was given an O.B.E. Philby was *not* caught in the act of selling Britain's secrets to Russia and arrested, as Haydon so satisfyingly is. Philby was shunted from MI6's highest echelons, but *continued* to have contact with both the Russians and MI5 and 6 until, at his leisure, he defected to the Soviet Union. Philby was not properly interrogated: back in the 50s he defeated MI5's real-life Smiley model, Jim Skardon (Andrew, p. 427); a week before he defected he fooled both Roger Hollis and SIS head Dick White, with a highly curtailed

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[451] See also: Scanlan (p. 541); Sauerberg (p. 198); Homberger (p. 83).
[452] Lewis claims Smiley does not accuse Prideaux of Haydon's murder because Smiley "recognises that justice, albeit of the rougher sort has been done" (Lewis, p. 126). In the BBC miniseries, Smiley tells Lacon, Guillam and the Alleline cabal, "We all need to account for our movements last night" after Haydon's murder, implicating them all implicitly, while later Smiley tells Ann he wanted to shoot Haydon.

'confession' (Andrew p. 436).[453] Unlike Haydon, Philby was never *silenced* but rather wrote his self-justifying memoirs *My Silent War* in Moscow. The Philby affair was a British failure, while *Tinker* is the story of a British *success*, plucked from failure, a restoration of "national" efficiency and dignity with Haydon's death the elegant apex of that resolution. The British nation-state thus gets to punish Haydon without getting blood on its hands: its representative Smiley can retain his role as exemplar of British decency. Only Stafford amongst all le Carré's critics recognises this.[454] But Stafford misses the extent to which Smiley – and the British nation – emerges with hands clean. However, the contradictions emerge, the repressed returns, and "unconscious of the text" reveals the faultline of national violence upon which the novel's vaunted national 'decency' rests.

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[453] Wrongly seeing Dick White as hero of the Philby affair, Halperin calls White the model for Smiley (p. 233).

[454] "[*Tinker*] with all its outward verisimilitude, constructs a potent and appealing myth for the class-ridden and post-imperial Angst of Britain the 1970s. [...] *Tinker* is a fantasy; George Smiley a myth" (Stafford, p. 206).

4. Fanaticism and "Mindless Treason": Political Enemy Characterisation

Character as a fictional construct reveals ideological faultlines, as we have seen. Let us now examine two key Communist characters in *Tinker*, first Karla, Head of Moscow Centre (le Carré's term for the KGB), mastermind of the mole plot; then the mole himself, Bill Haydon. Smiley's set-piece interviews with these characters are two of only a handful of direct East-West confrontations in le Carré's Cold-War fiction. We might regard them as Cold-War summits, but they are more correctly Cold War battles – there is not even any attempt at agreement. Previously, Dieter Frey's attractiveness and former friendship with Smiley were stressed in *Call*, but he was under-characterised, while Jens Fiedler was presented as personable in *The Spy*, if contradictorily characterised. Crucially, Fiedler was also given space to parlay a Communist philosophy, however parodic. *Looking Glass War* meanwhile even tentatively suggested that the Communist threat might be overstated.

Karla however is a reassertion of that Communist threat, and a return to Communist characters as straightforward villains in the imperial spy novel mode. Karla is given no personal details, we do not even know his real name, and he *never speaks* throughout the novel. Being thus characterised by actions, the brutality of Karla's methods and his grotesqueness (inhuman silence) make him a Communist villain not much distinct from Fleming's Rosa Klebb (*From Russia With Love*). Karla's Communism is thus synonymous with political brutality, not with political principle. Such political foreshortening results in an aesthetic foreshortening: as a character Karla is simply a cardboard device, a symbol not a character, and thus also a "breaking point" (*Faultlines*, p. 78).

If Haydon as a character is initially more personable (when perceived to be on "our" side), he becomes unsympathetic after his unmasking, while crucially again never espousing Communist principle. The welter of alternative explanations proffered for Haydon's treachery again suggests a faultline. Moreover, that both these Cold War encounters occur in a prison cell, with Smiley the interrogator, wielding the power, has strong political connotations.

Karla: Communism as Fanaticism

Smiley's interview with Karla, arrested by the Americans, about to be repatriated to the USSR, in a Delhi prison in 1951, can be seen as a symbolic enactment of the Cold War. Smiley even says, "'I felt that the entire responsibility for fighting the cold war had landed on my shoulders'" (pp. 216-217). Within this, the characterisation of Karla – mute, hostile, inhuman – suggests dialogue is not possible between the Cold Warring sides, that détente is naïve, thus briefing the reader for a successively more trenchant anti-Communism in every novel of the Karla trilogy, each returning to this interview.[455] If to view Karla as a 'symbol' of Soviet Communism is a crude device, then so is his one-dimensional characterisation.

Le Carré's supposed theme of moral equivalence is thus revealed again to be inaccurate. Smiley demands of Karla, "'Don't you think it's time to recognise there's as little worth on your side as there is on mine?'" (p. 221). Smiley clearly does not, as he is representing the British state and persuading Karla to defect to the West. Soon after, Western Cold War ideology reasserts itself more directly when Smiley suggests Karla should "question the integrity of a system that proposed cold-bloodedly to shoot him for misdemeanours he had never committed" (*Tinker*, p. 222). Smiley's opinion of Karla's likely fate is proved incorrect: instead Karla will ascend the Soviet hierarchy. Smiley urges Karla, "to consider whether […] faith in that system was honestly possible" (p. 222) based purely on self-preservation, insisting that Karla's "life […] was more important – morally […] than the sense of duty […] or commitment" (p. 222). How can Smiley be so blind to his *own* "sense of duty […] or commitment"? Smiley reflects later to Guillam:

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[455] The location has an interesting resonance – by the 1970s ex-colony India was firmly associated with the non-aligned movement, though since the 50s regarded as more inclined to the Soviet than the West, via a series of nationalisations.

'I believed, you see, that I had seen something in his face that was superior to mere dogma, not realising that it was my own reflection. I had convinced myself that [Karla] ultimately was accessible to ordinary human arguments' (*Tinker*, p. 221).

Smiley's "human" arguments are supposedly distinct from Karla's "dogma". But in suggesting that the financial blandishments of the West (p. 215) or individual self-preservation trump collective political principle, Smiley derogates Communism in post-war Western terms of fallen human nature. In denigrating "grand designs" (p. 222), Smiley is still proselytising for the unacknowledged Western grand design, the Western "system".

Much of this anti-Communism is achieved via disavowal, professions of political neutrality and apparent self-critique. This is Operation Margarine again: criticising something in order to uphold it. Smiley castigates his failure to persuade Karla to defect, he calls himself "'a soft fool. The very archetype of a flabby Western liberal'" (*Tinker*, p. 223) and mocks his having talked too much (p. 219) and sweating (p. 215) in the interview. However these "flaws" actually do propaganda work for the West in this Cold War confrontation. As Smiley, the moral exemplar, is overweight, flabbiness suggests the good living of the capitalist economy. Karla by contrast is "wiry", "priest" like (p. 214) "tiny" (p. 215) and has a "prison" look (p. 215), again invoking the Communist society-as-prison trope, complete with poor food. 'Flabbiness' is also the West's claimed lack of ideology: Smiley says "'I lacked philosophic repose. Lacked philosophy'" (p. 216). This is English empiricism: whereby even 'liberalism' is simply common-sense neutrality. By contrast, and to his discredit, Karla *has* philosophy: Communism. Smiley does not even need to conclude "'I would rather be my kind of fool than his for all that'" for the pro-Western textual judgement to be clear (p. 223). Also, Smiley talking too much surely represents the freedom of speech of an 'open' society, while Karla's silence is indicative of a closed system that prohibits free speech. Even Smiley's *sweating* can be seen to represent the expressive humanity of liberalism, seen again in Smiley inadvertently revealing to Karla

his human 'weakness': Ann, when he lends him a lighter inscribed by her. Karla by contrast, does not sweat (p. 215), faces down his physical needs (refusing the cigarettes Smiley proffers, p. 221) and reveals nothing of his own emotional attachments. Indeed Karla will later use Ann against Smiley (*Tinker*, pp. 213-223). The West/Smiley is weak, human, "soft", anchored in compassion; the East/Karla is strong, inhuman, hard "like a promontory of rock" (p. 216), anchored in 'ideology'. Karla then is the anti-Smiley, a negation: and this is really the extent of his characterisation.

When Karla opts to return to the USSR rather than defect, Smiley concludes that Karla is a "fanatic" (*Tinker*, p. 224) because "[Karla] would rather die than disown the political system to which he was committed'" (p. 222). However, Karla doesn't die, so this is a stretch on Smiley's part. "Karla is nothing more than his fanaticism", complains Homberger (p. 77): but lacking any other characteristics, Karla's fanaticism is opaque because, as Barley says, "le Carré can offer no explanation of fanaticism; it is "incomprehensible" (Barley p. 95). Barley misses that this opacity is contrived, because Karla's fanaticism is never defined politically. Because Karla never speaks, there is a huge gap where Karla's "ideology" should be. Sinfield follows Macherey in this: "Characters [...] fall silent at the moments when their speech could only undermine the [...] attempt at ideological coherence" (*Faultlines*, p. 74). Were Karla to speak he would, as "fanatic", articulate that political Communist "grand design" (Communist ends) as justification for his actions (Communist means). Thus would the text's conflation of means *as* ends, of power as Communism's only principle be destabilised. As it is, Karla – thus Soviet Communism – is defined as: conspiratorial (conceiving the mole operation); brutal (torturing Prideaux) and ruthless (murdering Prideaux's Czech networks). Karla is not a character: he is a political symbol. He is also, in this Delhi scene, morally defeated by Smiley, 'contained', as precursor to a more material defeat, when Smiley foils the mole plot. Let us see now whether Karla's protégée, the Communist mole, Bill Haydon, fares any better in his Cold-War confrontation with Smiley.

Bill Haydon: "Mindless Treason"[456]

Like the meeting with Karla, the second Cold War summit/confrontation of the novel occurs with the Communist character imprisoned, and so sees again the Communism/Eastern Europe-as-prison motif being subtly relayed. Bill Haydon is held captive at Sarratt, named the "Nursery" in the novel's ongoing play with its elision of Western violence. Smiley, as Western representative, is again reinforced by guards and the threat of violence in his interviews with Haydon. Haydon is a far more convincing character than Karla, at least when conforming to his initial Buchan/T. E. Lawrence type. But once exposed, Haydon's explanations of his treachery are half-hearted, contradictory, and simply too profuse. Smiley admits as much himself, "The more he tried to make sense of Haydon's rambling account, the more the contradictions become obvious" (*Tinker*, p. 380). There is here a "superfluity of meaning" in Sinfield's terms (*Faultlines*, p. 77). Let us examine each of these explanations of Haydon's motivation in turn.

The first explanation is Haydon's own reprise of Smiley's earlier suggestion that Haydon's treachery was a disappointed response to British political decline (p. 359): "The Suez adventure in fifty-six finally persuaded [Haydon] of the inanity of the British situation and of the British capacity to spike the advance of history while not being able to offer anything by way of contribution" (p. 374). Le Carré later made the same claim of Philby:

> [Born] as an Empire baby, to rule: and he entered a world where all his toys were being taken away by history. It seems to me that for that kind of Establishment person this is much more cogent motive for betrayal than any half-cock pro-Stalinist Marxism which could not be seriously sustained after University (Gross, p. 35).

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[456] "[Smiley] wondered whether there was mindless treason in the same way, supposedly, as there was mindless violence" (*Tinker*, p. 354).

Critics tend to affirm le Carré's interpretation here, that "the traitor is 'the other' of a faded imperialism" (Hempstead, p. 240).[457] However, this dismisses Communist ideology as a valid motivation in itself, as if a choice in favour of Communism were only comprehensible as a negative reaction to the collapse of that empirical positive: the British Empire. This is contradicted soon after, when Haydon declares a "lifelong relationship with Karla" (p. 373). If Haydon was recruited at university in the 1930s, like many of his class (p. 380), his relationship with the Soviets would predate significant British decline by a decade and Suez by two decades. A Communist explanation thus makes a brief return: "He tried at first to see Haydon in the romantic newspaper terms of a Thirties intellectual, for whom Moscow was the natural Mecca. 'Moscow was Bill's discipline,' he told himself. 'He needed the symmetry of an historical and economic solution." But Smiley finds this "too sparse" (p. 380) and moves on to psychological rather than political explanations.

This invocation of the 1930s is worth a pause however. Karla was in Britain in the 1930s for six months (*Tinker*, p. 210) when he recruited Haydon. The 1930s is always a point of return in liberal assessments of Communism. The rise of fascism and the Great Depression radicalised society at large, leading to the first, ill-fated Labour government of 1929-31. It also galvanised the upper classes, like the Auden Group, Orwell and Churchill's relative, Esmond Romilly, into fighting in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) in which Philby was a reporter. This moment also spawned the documentary movement of Humphrey Jennings et al. The *thinness* of that return in *Tinker* is interesting. Spain is a major feature of the early *Tinker* MSS, specifically claiming that the mole fought in Spain alongside Romilly. This is absent from the finished MS, possibly to prevent the protagonists being too elderly: the two references to Spain both now connect only to Karla. However, alongside Haydon's "eloquent silence" on this very subject and Smiley's lack of pursuit of the topic (p. 273), the end result is to strip Haydon – and thus British Communism – of 1930s historical context, removing any sense of principle or

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[457] See also: Noland (pp. 64-65)' Lewis (p. 134); Holly Beth King (in H. Bloom, p. 69); Bennett (p. 67); William Boyd, http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/sep/16/tinker-tailor-a-z-william-boyd:

'honour' from Haydon's Communism, and leaving it unconvincing.

The second proffered explanation for Haydon's betrayal is anti-Americanism. "[Haydon] spoke not of the decline of the West but of its death by greed and constipation. He hated America very deeply, he said and Smiley supposed he did" (p. 370). Note both the paraphrasing and Smiley's own intervention: Smiley is *mediating* Haydon's justifications throughout this Sarratt interview. We are rarely allowed Haydon's words in the raw, reminiscent of the British government edict in the 1980s that Irish Republican speech had to be voiced by actors. As it is, Haydon's account isn't so far away from his patriotic friend Prideaux's assessment of America: "full of greedy fools fouling up their inheritance" (p. 18) or indeed Control's: "[Control] like most of the Circus, despised [the Americans] and all their works, which he frequently sought to undermine" (p. 141). We should note, by contrast, that Alleline has a "fatal reverence for the Americans" (p. 140). This anti-American 'explanation' therefore is one to which Smiley can relate as a British nationalist, (implicitly) resenting the usurping power to which Britain is now lesser client. But a negative anti-American choice also elides a positive pro-*Communist* choice. Indeed Haydon explicitly claims the "East" is simply the lesser of two evils (p. 370). A minority of critics note this textual faultline of Haydon's Communism, including Hoffman: "Haydon never satisfies by confessing a resolute ideological creed [...] his is hardly an expression of ideological fervour" (Hoffman, p. 132). In doing so, Hoffman reveals his own prejudices: "Today more than ever, it is hard to accept that anyone engages in grand gestures for the sake of ideology, lofty visions of truth, or noble principles of human betterment" (Hoffman, p. 116).[458]

Even after Haydon's death, however, Smiley continues to rehearse different theories of Haydon's motivation, in what amounts to a lengthy, anxious (and ungeneric) postscript. As Sinfield claims, "When a part of our worldview threatens disruption by manifestly

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[458] "Haydon's contempt for Americans and his hurt Little England patriotism make for a strange comparison with the 30s spies" (Barley, p. 90). "Haydon's treachery derives not from mendacity or venality or even from a sense of commitment to any morality or ideology" (Cobbs, p. 102). "Haydon never mentions Communism; he's simply anti-American in the Cold War" (Denning, p. 128).

failing to cohere with the rest, then we reorganize and retell its story, trying to get it into shape" (*Faultlines* p. 46). Smiley posits several psychological explanations:[459] namely "the ghost of Bill's authoritarian father – Ann had called him simply the Monster". Le Carré would also later speak of Philby's "rather horrendous father" (Gross, p. 33) in the same vein. Smiley also "imagined Bill's Marxism making up for his inadequacy as an artist" (p. 380). But Smiley is not done yet. "Standing at the centre of a secret stage, playing world against world, hero and playwright in one: oh Bill had loved that all right" (p. 380).[460] Similarly, le Carré spoke of Philby's "overwhelming vanity" (Gross, p. 33). However, these psychological explanations contain a fundamental flaw: Haydon is not enough of a fictional character to *possess* a convincing psychology.[461] As such, Smiley, "distrustful as ever of the standard shapes of human motive" (*Tinker*, pp. 380-381) comes up with another of le Carré's motiveless crimes: "treason is very much a matter of habit," (p. 380). Most critics accept these textual contortions to avoid attributing political principle to Haydon, for example Lasseter: "We are not to mistake Haydon for an ideological hero" (Lasseter, p. 109).[462]

This has a very potent interplay with history. For le Carré had earlier declared, "I do not much believe in the political motive of Kim Philby" (*Philby*, p. 29). Yet, Philby himself refuted le Carré's statement in his memoirs,[463] and in interviews ("only a fool

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[459] "Le Carré carefully attributes Haydon's motives to psychology rather than to politics" (Lasseter, p. 109). Sauerberg makes much the same point "rather than a political offence [Haydon's betrayal] becomes the arena of a psychological struggle" (Sauerberg, p. 199).

[460] There is a connection to Soviet spy Richard Sorge here, of whom le Carré had written: "not the first spy to be recruited from the ranks of failed artists". He also attributes to Sorge the desire for a "stage", 'The Spy to End Spies', *Encounter*, November 1966.

[461] As Scanlan says "there is no attempt to portray [Haydon's] mental processes from the inside" (Scanlan, p. 540). Bennett rightly says: "the novel scarcely concerns itself with [Haydon's] personal history or the interior aspects of his character and motivations" (p. 63).

[462] "The nature of Bill Haydon's treason is defined [...] largely in terms of its personal implications" (Rutherford, p. 23). *Tinker* "translates the ideological treason of Philby into a story about the betrayal of personal relations" (Homberger, p. 74); Beene references, "Haydon's ideological excuses" (Beene, p. 91); Rothberg references, "Haydon's harangues [...] all sorts of excuses" (Rothberg, p. 57); "Haydon has only a collection of agitprop slogans and chic leftist jargon to offer when he finally tries to explain his empty ideology" (Cobbs, p. 119).

[463] Greene's introduction declared, "He was serving a cause and not himself", Kim Philby, *My Silent War* (St Alban's: Granada, 1969), p. 9.

would deny me my faith").[464] Moreover, le Carré's assertion of the lack of political principle in Philby's actions terminated le Carré's friendship with Graham Greene, who complained of "wild Philips Oppenheim speculations and the vulgar and untrue portrait of Philby" (Greene, *Moscow,* p. 282): another return to imperialist spy fiction. Indeed, in *Tinker*'s welter of explanations of Haydon's treachery, Communism is not mentioned: never by name, nor by any real discussion of its political content. Communism is the "not said" of the novel. Indeed the word "Communism" only appears twice throughout the book; "Marxism" three times.

In fact, the Communist 'explanation' *is* present in the text, but is easily missed, as it is not presented by Haydon or by Smiley, occurs very early in the book, and is abruptly and overtly 'silenced'. Tarr is reading aloud to Smiley and Guillam a letter from Soviet agent, Irina, the novel's first proof of the as-yet-unidentified mole's existence. Irina writes: "'Most of the English moles were recruited by Karla before the war [...] others, afterwards, disappointed that the War did not bring Socialism to the West...' It kind of dries up here'" says Tarr to Smiley (*Tinker*, p. 68). This sudden breaking off prevents any further exploration of "socialism". Macherey amplifies his notion of the "not said" in a way that is highly applicable here: "In its every particle, the work *manifests*, uncovers, what it cannot say. This silence gives it life" (Macherey, p. 84). In a way this is the very motor of *Tinker:* a silence on the subject of Communism in a book about a Soviet penetration agent during the Cold War.

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[464] Philip Knightley, *The Master Spy* (New York: Knopf, 1989), p. 257.

"Holding the World Together": Conclusion

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy possesses three major faultlines. Firstly, there is a faultline in the negative presentation of the British state, with bureaucracy effectively being blamed for the Communist 'mole'. This critique of the state however is troubled by Smiley working for and securing the state. When Smiley takes over the Circus/state and ousts the bureaucrats in turn, the deep cultural anxieties that the novel has invoked are resolved not by renewal or structural change, but by restoration of the state's *status quo ante*.

Secondly, there is a faultline in the presentation of the British nation as civilised and decent. This is located in the public school ethos, parlayed at length via the prep school subplot, and also invested in the characterisation of Smiley. However that this British 'decency' is based upon imperial verities and certainties, founded upon barbarous, 'indecent' imperial violence, is a faultline. We see this in the novel in Smiley's own reliance upon violence – delegated, distanced, disavowed – to defend and uphold Britain.

Thirdly, the treatment of the political enemy is a faultline because the construct of character is contradicted by the exigencies of politics, creating cardboard cutouts of a 'fanatical' Karla, while denying that fanatic his 'faith'. Similarly, Bill Haydon, in a confused, contradictory characterisation, is presented as a non-ideological villain, thus stripping the Cold War of definitional struggle between Communism and capitalism. Moreover, although Smiley presents his Delhi meeting with Karla as a defeat for himself, for Britain, not only does it stand as a *moral* victory in the book's overall context, whereby Karla's Haydon/mole plot is foiled by Smiley, but both Haydon and Karla are ultimately *defeated*. The ideological implication is clear: the West will triumph over the Communist East in the Cold War, while the novel also provides a symbolic resolution to British decline: Smiley's ascent to the head of the Circus/state. "One, fat, middle-aged spy is the only person capable of holding the world together" (*Tinker*, p. 83) as Smiley self-mockingly, but accurately says.

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Chapter 5: *The Honourable Schoolboy*

1. "There's a Book in the Middle, Actually": *Honourable Schoolboy* in Context.

The Honourable Schoolboy (1977) has a curious history: following *Tinker*, it was an instant bestseller, with le Carré granted the rare writer's accolade of a *Time* cover story,[465] yet the mixed reviews of this middle volume of *The Quest for Karla* prefigured its negative subsequent profile. Dismissed by literary critics, twice passed over for screen adaptation,[466] even le Carré has since appeared to apologise for *Schoolboy*. "Be warned. You are reading an historical novel, written on the hoof".[467] It is precisely the historical aspect le Carré disparages which makes *The Honourable Schoolboy* a key post-War text: its trans-Southeast Asian setting in the dying days of the Vietnam War addresses key postcolonial and Cold-War concerns as adroitly as Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* (1955) a generation before. *The Honourable Schoolboy*'s putative flaws are also significant: its sheer length and complexity suggest Sinfield's "When […] a key concept is structurally unstable, it produces endless textual work" (*Faultlines*, p. 74).[468] Indeed the novel enacts a constant pull-and-push between acknowledgment of and denial of British decline, and a push-and-pull between emphasis on postcolonial and Cold-War concerns.

Honourable Schoolboy recounts Operation Dolphin, Smiley's attempt to ensnare Soviet kingpin Karla's mole inside Red China, Nelson Ko. Smiley is now head of the Circus, masterminding the operation from London, whilst agent, Jerry Westerby, does the legwork from Hong Kong, across Southeast Asia. Inspired by love for Drake Ko's mistress, Lizzie Worthington, Westerby turns rogue and tries to help the Ko brothers escape: Westerby is shot and the American allies snatch Nelson away from the British.[469]

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[465] Stefan Kanfer, 'The Spy Who Came in for the Gold,' *Time*, 3 October 1977, pp. 48-53.

[466] The BBC serialised *Tinker* and *Smiley's People* but left out *Schoolboy*; Tomas Alfredsson directed *Tinker* (2011) and was reported to be filming *Smiley's People* (*Guardian,* above). This section's epigraph is Gary Oldman (who played Smiley) on the films, *Guardian,* 29 Nov 2011.

[467] Le Carré, 'Foreword to the Lamplighter Edition,' *The Honourable Schoolboy* (Sevenoaks: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), p. 7.

[468] As the 37 boxes of *Schoolboy* drafts at the Bodleian testify (*JLC 37-73*).

[469] Westerby, son of an ennobled newspaper magnate, is "the Honourable Gerald Westerby".

Contemporary Reception of *The Honourable Schoolboy*

Honourable Schoolboy produced a divided response to le Carré's perceived ambition to create literary spy fiction. 'Literary' reviewers tended to be negative: novelist Clancy Sigal claimed le Carré had "stumbled this time because he's bent on creating "serious literature" a la Graham Greene";[470] Clive James judged, "outwardly aspiring to the status of literature, le Carré's novels have inwardly declined to the novel of pulp romance";[471] novelist Anthony Burgess asked, "Does it have anything to do with literature? [...] The answer has to be no."[472] Crime specialists however tended to be positive: T.J. Binyon judged le Carré had "triumphantly succeeded in [...] writing a thriller which is [...] a substantial novel in its own right".[473] Having recently turned to spy fiction, Thomas Hinde claimed *Schoolboy*, "is not merely a splendid example of the genre but offers more in the way of characters, setting [and] relevance to life than the majority of ordinary novels".[474] Given the similarities with Greene's *Quiet American* (colonial Eastern setting; journalist hero; love triangle), it became a measure of this genre/literary division:[475] ironic, given this was where Greene ended his own distinction between "novel" and "entertainment".

Many reviewers treated *Schoolboy*'s Eastern setting, which le Carré spent 18 months researching, as incidental: mere "exotic settings" for Anthony Curtis.[476] For James, le Carré's "mysterious East" was nothing but "inventories [...] of flora and fauna". Eliot Fremont Smith bemoaned, "Local color sometimes yawns into travelogue", the setting merely "structure, scaffolding".[477] For Maurice Richardson, "Hong Kong [...] is a mass of

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[470] Clancy Sigal, 'Smiley's Villains', *Guardian*, 8 September 1977.
[471] Clive James, 'Go Back to the Cold!' *New York Review of Books*, 27 October 1977, p. 29.
[472] Anthony Burgess, 'Peking Drugs, Moscow Gold', *New York Times Book Review*, 25 September 1977, pp. 9;45. Similar points were made by Finger, Fenton, Holloway, Hope and Cox.
[473] T.J. Binyon, 'A Gentleman Among Players', *Times Literary Supplement*, 9 September 1977, p. 1069. Similar positive claims were made by crime writer H.R.F. Keating, quiz book writer George Thaw, film critic David Ansen and bestselling novelist Mollie Panter Downs, 'Briefly Noted', *New Yorker*, October 1977, p. 163.
[474] Thomas Hinde, 'Spy Story Plus', *Sunday Telegraph*, 18 September 1977, p. 14.
[475] Negative comparisons to Greene featured in Stern, Fenton; Sigal, West, Curtis, Vaizey; positive comparisons in Prior, Ansen and Holloway.
[476] Anthony Curtis, 'Yellow Mole', *Financial Times,* 8 September 1977, p. 14.
[477] Eliot Fremont-Smith, 'Thriller of Dignity', *Village Voice*, 24 October 1977, pp. 103/105.

topographical detail".[478] Louis Finger decried, "Research thrusts itself from almost every page in the form of huge, inert slabs of topography and local colour."[479] Consequently, Vietnam, despite being recent headline news, was cited merely as "exotic" setting, not a war –[480] or else it went unmentioned.[481] Only David Holloway hailed, "the picture of Southeast Asia in disarray as the Vietnam War comes to an end",[482] while Hinde declared "that wretched war-torn corner of Asia [...] often becomes the book's true subject"[483] and Keating uniquely cited the "Cambodia war".[484]

Intriguingly, a number of reviewers bemoaned the book had "no politics" (Sigal): Laurence Stern claimed, "le Carré eschews the larger issues of political combat between the competing systems".[485] Several foreign correspondents were commissioned to review the book, with James Fenton calling *Schoolboy*'s details "inaccurate and unconvincing",[486] as did Richard West,[487] while fellow correspondents Fenton, West and H.D.S. Greenway all disagreed about what was and *wasn't* "accurate".[488] In this narrowly defined 'political' approach, colonialism and Communism *both* went unmentioned.

Britain's decline in favour of America was acknowledged in British reviews only by Holloway and Richardson. Vaizey bemoaned le Carré's "tired cynicism" regarding British power. Grosvenor, in the patriotic *Daily Express,* asked: "is the British Lion, beaten at last, finally pulling in its claws? Not a bit of it. [Smiley is] a match for the Russians in counter-espionage." US reviews were blunter about British decline (Fremont Smith: "Smiley's job

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[478] Maurice Richardson, 'Our Man in a Maze', *Observer,* 11 September 1977, p. 25.
[479] Louis Finger, 'The Manly One', *New Statesman,* 23 September 1977, p. 414f.
[480] Examples included: John Leonard, 'Books of the Times', *New York Times,* 22 September 1977 (surprising from a reputed leftist); David Ansen, 'Out of the Cold', *Newsweek,* 26 September 1977, p. 84; A. J. Cox, 'Crime', *Morning Star,* 22 September 1977.
[481] Peter Grosvenor, 'The Circus Goes To Town ...Just for Laughs', *Daily Express,* 8 September 1977, p. 20; Allan Prior, *Daily Mail,* 8 September 1977, p. 7; George Thaw, 'Success for a Spy Man', *Daily Mirror,* 9 September 1977, p. 17; Andrew Hope, 'I Spy a Long Trip', *Evening Standard,* 13 September 1977, p. 21; Eddie Cain, 'Spies', *Scotsman,* 15 October 1977, Weekend, p. 2.
[482] David Holloway, 'Spying, le Carré's Way', *Daily Telegraph,* 8 September 1977, p. 14.
[483] Thomas Hinde, 'Spy Story Plus', Fiction, *Sunday Telegraph,* 18 September 1977, p. 14.
[484] H.R.F. Keating, 'With Sweep and Vision', *The Times,* 8 September 1977, p. 10.
[485] Laurence Stern, 'The Secret World of George Smiley', *Washington Post,* 9 October 1977, pp. 1/6.
[486] James Fenton, 'Le Carré Goes East', *New Review* 4 (1977), pp. 31-34.
[487] Richard West, 'Local Colour', *Spectator,* 10 September 1977, pp. 19-20.
[488] Fenton cites a near-ambush by the Khmer Rouge as inauthentic: Greenway, who accompanied le Carré to Cambodia, says this incident was described "just the way it was" (H.D.S. Greenway, 'Travels with le Carré', *Newsweek,* 10 October 1977, p. 49).

is to patch [the Circus] up (like England)"). Similarly, Australian James was blunt: "Smiley has also become the author's fantasy about his beleaguered homeland. […] the Circus can hope to make up in […] Smiley's cunning […] what it lacks in physical resources". US reviews were also more alert to the book's negative presentation of America: Leonard's phrase "the greedy Cousins from Langley" suggests both British jealousy and American imperial gluttony. Fremont Smith saw "lethal" Circus competition with "the truculent and despised American "Cousins"".

To summarise, in reviews the political themes of le Carré's work were again often occluded by preoccupation with genre. The colonial, Eastern setting was little acknowledged as important; US hegemony was touched upon, but the political enemy of Communism was ignored. These same tendencies occurred in later critical approaches: while the genre preoccupation is lesser, critics also treat the book as an 'exotic' diversion from the 'real' Cold War. Barley calls his *Schoolboy* chapter 'Sideshow'; Cobbs calls his 'Cold War in the Wings'; Lewis sees the East simply as background "colour" of "destruction and desolation" (Lewis, p. 141). In reality, the Cold War was hottest at the periphery and coolest at the centre. Critics tend, like reviewers, to elide the political realities of the novel and reduce it to personal conflicts.

This chapter will first examine how the colonial setting affects the presentation of the British state, with le Carré's individual vs. state faultline resulting in a plot-line split between Westerby and Smiley, the latter now *part* of the state. Secondly, the chapter will explore how the colonial setting creates faultlines pertaining to the British 'nation': stylistic instability, proclaimed colonial innocence, and justification. Still exploring 'nation', the focus on Cold War ally reflects Britain's uneasy transition from colonialism under US hegemony. Turning to the political enemy, this chapter will show how emphasising colonialism risks obscuring the political enemy of Communism, and how, contrary to the le Carré consensus, anti-Communism suffuses *The Honourable Schoolboy*.

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2. Colonialism and the British State

Colonialism undergirds all le Carré's Cold-War fiction, just as it undergirded the Cold War itself. Colonialism was largely subtextual in *Call* or *Tinker*'s backwards-looking, Britain-based, defensive operations, but *Schoolboy*'s present-day, aggressive operation on a world stage makes colonialism hard to avoid. The novel is, to quote *Lord Jim*, "in the destructive element immerse[d],"[489] resulting in a welter of textual faultlines.

Circus insiders are said to call events subsequent to Bill Haydon's exposure as Soviet mole, "after the fall" (*Schoolboy*, p. 63) and the Circus building is reduced to usefully symbolic rubble by the post-Haydon clean-up. "Fall" implies collapse alongside Biblical loss of innocence. "Innocent", we recall, is both Control and Ambrosetti's term for ordinary citizens, while Communists, conspiratorial, fallen, take advantage of innocence. Bill Haydon's treachery is said to have "brought the British so low that they were forced into a fatal dependence upon their American sister service" (p. 15). As ever, the Circus is conflated with Britain.[490] However it is striking that fiction does not so much *reflect* as *refract* history here. It was the fall of *empire,* not the work of Haydon's real-life counterpart Kim Philby – thus the Soviets – that forced Britain under US hegemony post-War. Blame for British decline is thus covertly reassigned here from West to East, from colonial capitalism's inherent contradictions to the machinations of international Communism. Consequently anti-Communism merges with postcolonial preoccupations and is often eclipsed by them in the novel: viz the long elegiac description of the closure of Britain's Hong Kong intelligence HQ (pp. 27-38). As head of the Circus, Smiley's speech to his troops as he launches Operation Dolphin again conflates Britain/the Circus: "not to produce was not to trade, and not to trade was to die" (*Schoolboy*, p. 69). Britain's trade was in a parlous condition in the mid 1970s, so Smiley's speech is a reassertion of British

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[489] Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* [1899] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 164.
[490] Le Carré: "the parallels [with Britain] were irresistible to me" Michael Barber, 'Le Carré, an Interrogation', *New York Times Book Review*, 25 September 1977, 9/44, p. 44. Wolfe is typical of critics in reproducing this fictional distortion of history (Wolfe, p 199).

potency whose language even hints at informal imperialism.[491] *Schoolboy* is a working-through of a threefold British anxiety therefore: how to justify a British world role without an Empire; how to sustain Cold-War rhetoric of "democracy and freedom" against Soviets and anti-colonialists without being tainted by Britain's colonial past; and the degree of room for manoeuvre for Britain within the 'special relationship' under US hegemony.

Smiley vs. Westerby: State Duty vs. Personal Honour

The split between *Schoolboy*'s two protagonists, George Smiley and Jerry Westerby, emanates from that first postcolonial anxiety: how to justify global British power without Empire. If anti-Communism provided a new rationale for British power, imperial concepts of British superiority and exemplarity kept slipping through the Cold-War syntax. We see this in the choice of Hong Kong as *Schoolboy*'s base. Having previously controlled India (until 1947), Ceylon (1948), Burma (1948), Malaya (1960) and Singapore (1963) in the East, by 1977 Britain still held onto Brunei and much-prized Hong Kong. Thus Hong Kong as location both asserts British power (artificially) *and* inadvertently reveals the imperial foundation of that power. Equally, while British political and cultural language shifted from a colonial dialectic of 'civilisation' vs. 'savagery' to a Cold-War dialectic of 'freedom' vs. Communism (MacPhee, pp. 18-19), colonial concepts kept slipping through. Thus Churchill's 1946 "iron curtain" speech implied democracy and freedom were white-owned commodities of the "English-speaking world" (MacPhee pp. 30-34), much as 'civilisation' had previously been. "The canonical view [was] that Orientals had no tradition of freedom" (Said, p. 241). This despite the lack of democracy in most colonies (including Hong Kong), and continuing racial segregation in the US. "Freedom" was, as it is today, a euphemism for capitalist liberal democracy, pitted against Communist "totalitarianism". But as Arendt pointed out, totalitarianism owed much to British

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[491] Sauerberg's is a rare recognition of this: "Smiley seems to [...] wish to reconstruct national pride" (Sauerberg, pp. 175-176).

imperialism (Arendt, *Origins*, pp. 175-184), meaning liberalism, capitalism, empire – and violence – were always historically conjoined.

We see this colonial slippage in Smiley's briefing speech to Westerby, quite as ideologically important as Control's speech to Leamas:

'Our present war began in 1917, with the Bolshevik Revolution. It hasn't changed yet. [...] I still feel strongly that I owe. Don't you? I've always been grateful to this service, that it gave me a chance to pay. Is that how *you* feel? I don't think we should be afraid of . . . devoting ourselves. Is that old-fashioned of me?' (*Schoolboy*, p. 122).

Here Smiley apparently claims beneficiaries of liberal democracy have a debt to fight against the Communism that threatens it. But with the Bolshevik 'threat' left unexplained, the link between colonialism and Cold War becomes not one of principle but only of *power*. Certainly Smiley's implicating interrogatives go unanswered ("don't you?"), by Westerby, who exhibits impatience: "'Sport [...] For Heaven's sake. You point me and I'll march'" (p. 123). This impatience is attributed by most critics to Westerby's operational-man lack of reflectiveness.[492] Westerby however is nicknamed "the schoolboy" (p. 403): and with his cries of "sport" and "super", he is clearly inculcated in the public school imperial ethos noted in the previous chapter. "The public schools became [...] intertwine[ed] with patriotic and imperialist endeavour. The games field came to be seen as a preparation for war" (MacKenzie, pp. 5-6). Thus Westerby tellingly answers Smiley in terms that acknowledge *power* rather than moral mission.

The novel's title suggests that Westerby deserts his post, and rejects Smiley's/Britain's authority, out of 'honour' towards Lizzie Worthington and her protector/lover, Drake Ko (whom Westerby connects with his father, p. 300). This is certainly how le Carré parlayed it: "[Smiley] faces a fearful moral defeat in the book

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[492] See: Homberger, p. 84; Aronoff, p. 24.

because personal loyalty can't be reconciled with loyalty to the service or to a cause. So the book ends up with a big question mark. Is what they are doing worth while?"[493] However Westerby's rejection of Smiley's orders in *Schoolboy* seems less a rejection of British power than a convoluted expression of postimperial nostalgia. With violence always the contradiction in ennobling 'service', Westerby's faith in the British project ("the sticky little matter of just why we climb the mountain") founders on "the selfless and devoted way in which we sacrifice other people" (p. 528) – i.e. the death of the banker, Frost and Smiley's exploitation of Lizzie as a source.

With *Lord Jim* lurking in *Schoolboy*'s wake, with its own emphasis on 'honour', we can see the Westerby/Smiley split as a Conradian conflict:[494] "a guilty, lawless Romantic individualism which struggles to subject itself to communal discipline" (Eagleton, *Criticism*, p. 134). This untrammelled individualism is solved by 'service' in Conrad (Eagleton, *Criticism*, p. 135) as it was within liberalism (Williams, *Culture*, p. 325). In rejecting Smiley's invocation of 'service' in a postcolonial world but without any political rationale (Westerby never mentions Communism nor antipathy to the 'sacrifice' of non-whites), Westerby's actions are a reaffirmation of that "guilty lawless Romantic individualism", the 'personal' – otherwise known as self-interest. Westerby has trouble with all three of Eagleton's definitions of Conradian "communal discipline": "work, duty, fidelity" (Eagleton, *Criticism*, p. 134). Westerby is disobedient as an employee, fails in duty to his daughter, mentor (Smiley) and country (Britain), and is unfaithful to Lizzie even as he dedicates himself to her (*Schoolboy*, pp. 482-487). In the final scene, Westerby attempts to undermine British objectives by foiling the very capture of Karla's Red China mole, Nelson Ko, that the entire plot has led up to. Westerby offers up his life to provide

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[493] *Daily Mail*, 8 September 1977, p. 10.
[494] Smiley calls himself 'Mr Standfast' (after John Buchan's 1919 novel) when visiting Control's mistress (*Schoolboy*, p. 243). The name Craw is in Buchan's *Castle Gay* (1930). Lord Vaizey made the Buchan connection: 'Futile Jerry', *Listener*, 29 September 1977, p. 409.

'service' and 'devotion': but to what? "For what linked them, and what linked him to Lizzie" (p. 566) – the familial, the personal: self-interest over state duty.[495]

Previously we have seen this honour/duty conflict *within* Smiley (albeit always resolved): with Smiley now unambiguously part of the state, the conflict splits into two – Westerby vs. Smiley. A critical split reflects this plot split, opposing factions facing off about whether individual or state, Westerby or Smiley, personal "honour" or state "duty", are the moral winners. One faction claims established exemplar Smiley is the moral victor.[496] A surprising number however champion Westerby: "in [his] ethical decision [he is] superior to Smiley";[497] a view widely echoed among critics.[498] Smiley is even implicated by critics in Westerby's death. "Smiley becomes Westerby's executioner as he takes on the role of the uncaring bureaucrat who steals people's anima and exploits their humaneness" (Beene, p. 104). But to debate which 'wins' – individual honour (Westerby) or state duty (Smiley) – is sterile for neither individual *nor* state in *Schoolboy* is especially honourable: both ruthlessly pursue self-interest, be that personal or national. So if satire of Smiley or Westerby is intended, as Goodman suggests, it is highly ambiguous, leavened with sympathy via Smiley's role of established avatar and the novel's titular tribute to Westerby. Moreover, if a broader satire is intended of what le Carré called the "shambles" of postimperial British policy, "now when we have no ideology" (Bragg 1976, 90), this rests heavily on postimperial nostalgia, a yearning for a 'simpler' time of clear national purpose and prestige. Such postimperial nostalgia blurs into the common claim of Western Cold-War non-ideological 'neutrality' highlighted throughout this thesis, and contradicted, as we shall see, by *The Honourable Schoolboy* itself. It also subtly ennobles imperialism. In fact Westerby's personal selfishness recalls what Williams called the "larger selfishness" of the British imperial project (*Culture*, p. 329), less 'civilising' mission than

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[495] "The elevation of the personal over the professional" (Barley, p. 115); Holtman (p. 67) and Dobel (p. 194) make similar points.

[496] Aronoff, p. 127; Dobel, p. 209; Barley, p. 122.

[497] Edwards, in Bold, pp. 53-54.

[498] Panek, p. 254; Wolfe p. 208; Bennett, p. 80; Lewis, p. 161; Wallace, p. 12

"enterprise [...] run for profit" (Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 39). So colonial-class

Westerby, representative of Britain on a world stage, acts as imperial Britain had:[499]

buying and selling the colonized – Charlie Marshall, prostitutes on the Mekong, even

Lizzie in Westerby's barter with Drake Ko – for reasons of self-interest, justified via

ennobling abstractions like 'honour' (c.f. 'civilisation', 'service'). Both Smiley and

Westerby, state and individual, ultimately express the very British colonial attitudes of

superiority and exceptionality that anti-Communism was intended to eclipse.

A second British postcolonial anxiety was how to sustain the righteous Cold-War

rhetoric of "democracy and freedom" against the Soviet Union and anti-colonial nationalist

movements without being undermined by Britain's brutal colonial past. But during the

War, the wind had changed: the 1945 United Nations Charter "enshrined freedom from

colonial rule as an ideal" (Springhall, p. 10), while a 1960 UN Declaration demanded "a

speedy and unconditional end to colonialism" (Brendon, p. 539). "'Empire' became a dirty

word in many languages," writes Piers Brendon, echoing Connie Sachs' postimperial

melancholia in *Tinker* (Brendon, p. 539).[500] As Connie's association of postcolonial

nationalists with subhuman 'beasts' attests, attempts to assert British imperial decency

contra the history of colonialism was a fraught and inadvertently revealing strategy: a

faultline. Colonial attitudes kept slipping through. Nevertheless, this is what *The

Honourable Schoolboy* attempts to do via its themes of imperial innocence and colonial

sacrifice.

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[499] "The questions raised [...] about personal motives become questions about the condition of a postimperial England" (Buzard, p. 155).
[500] "After 1960, certainly, British governments found the prospect of defending colonial rule against vociferous international criticism tiresome and unrewarding" (Springhall, p. 209).

3. Colonialism and the British Nation

"Trivial Critics of George Smiley": Unreliable Omniscience

The Honourable Schoolboy's unusual narrative style of unreliable omniscience is Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey's dictum in operation: "it is this displacement of contradictions which [is] 'literary style'".[501] This thesis claims 'neutrality' is a mirage, and consequently that omniscient narrators *always* smuggle in opinion. Yet *Schoolboy*'s narrator's overt, even controversial opinions upset the conventions of both omniscience (omniscient narrators do not *have* 'characters', Culler, p. 28) and of unreliable narration ("unreliability always requires characterization", Walsh, p. 511), which destabilises the authority of the narrative and undermines the 'objectivity' of its judgements.

Most critics see this omniscient strategy as mythologisation of Smiley, citing, for instance:[502] "The case history has no other moment like this. In the trade it goes under various smart phrases, 'The day George reversed the controls' is one" (*Schoolboy*, p. 301). Critics miss that these narrative incursions crucially reveal that Smiley's reputation is *disputed*: e.g. "It has been laid at Smiley's door more than once"; with this being rebutted by the jarring: "They are talking simplistic nonsense" (p. 231). Barley calls the narrator a "Smiley apologist [...] correcting interpretations [with] barely maintained patience" (Barley, p. 111). Lewis adds that the narration is "dogmatic, in vindicating [Smiley's] decisions" (Lewis, p. 144). Both miss that the tone is increasingly *defensive*. "It has been whispered once or twice by certain trivial critics of George Smiley that [...] he should somehow have seen which way the wind was blowing with Jerry" (*Schoolboy*, p. 328). "What is certain that nobody, neither Smiley nor Connie [...] can be seriously accused of failing in their duty" (p. 433); again, "Once more they look for ways of blaming Smiley, but there is no evidence of a lapse" (p. 480).

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[501] Pierre Macherey and Etienne Balibar, 'On Literature as an Ideological Form' [1974] in *Contemporary Marxist Literary Criticism,* ed. by Francis Mulhern (Harlow: Longman, 1992), pp. 34-55 (p. 44).
[502] Lewis, p. 144, Monaghan, pp. 162-4, Hempstead (in Samuel, p. 235); Barley, pp. 111-112; Crehan, p. 113.

Given that Operation Dolphin's failure is known (p. 16), the omniscient narration undermines its own pro-Smiley assertions. That the narrator offers questions rather than answers adds to this "floating uncertainty" (Lewis, p. 144): "Did Smiley *know* of the [US] conspiracy deep down? Was he aware of it, and did he secretly welcome the solution?" (*Schoolboy*, p. 574). Where Smiley was previously beyond criticism, now he is doubtable: given the equation between Smiley/Britain established, thus so is Britain. The defensive style of *Schoolboy* is a revelation of uncertainty regarding previous British certitudes: British 'decency', British service and British power. Let us now examine how other textual strategies attempt to assuage these anxieties.

British Imperial Innocence

The Cold War offered useful cover for the fallout from decolonisation, from its testimony to British decline to Britain's pursuit of a new, informal imperialism,[503] but most of all to its exposure of the brutalities of the colonial past. "Refracted through a 'quasi-existential' conflict between freedom and totalitarianism, the former colonial powers could reinvent themselves as colonially-innocent, democratic nation-states" (MacPhee, p. 26). "Innocence" was always part of the imperial project however, present in imperial ideologue, John Seeley's speeches,[504] John Buchan's novels, and in the very concept of disinterested 'service'. As Hempstead asks of *Schoolboy*, "How do you write the history of imperialism as something other than exploitation? You construct it not as 'an enterprise [...] run for profit' [Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*] but as a 'chance to serve'" (in Samuel, p. 239). We see this also in *Schoolboy*'s presentation of Hong Kong's British intelligence HQ: "built by the Royal Navy in the Twenties in all the grand innocence of that service, to receive and impart a sense of power" (*Schoolboy*, p. 27). No contradiction is suggested

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[503] Cabinet documents recommend moves towards, "Stable self-government or independence [...] in such a way that these [successor] governments are willing and able to preserve their economic and political ties with the West" (quoted in Louis, p. 492).
[504] For Seeley "the colonies merely operated an organic extension of the home nation. Thus imperial England differed from all previous empires in that it had avoided conquering subservient lands, and [...] exhibiting an absence of 'violent military character'" (Schwarz, p. 82).

between "innocence" and "power" as if imperial institutions of domination arose organically, without bloodshed. This is "imperial denial" (Gilroy, p. 158).

We see this same innocence characterised in Jerry Westerby, who has strong kinship with John Buchan's imperialist spy fiction's heroes.[505] Buchan's novels reflect the "schoolboy's dream of physical courage, high adventure, and the victory of the good" (Grella, p. 91), where "notions of foreign policy reflect the grand simplicity of an innocent mind, untroubled by ideas, fully in agreement with general cultural beliefs" (Grella, p. 91). We see this in Westerby initially giving himself over to Smiley/the state ("'you call the shots and I'll play them'" he declares p. 123), and then later in the unthinking colonial behaviour of his sex tourism.[506] Both actions trouble any notion of "innocence".

Let us now deploy intertextual comparison with Greene's *The Quiet American* to explore this idea of imperial innocence. Firstly, in *Quiet American,* set circa 1953, during the French-Vietminh conflict, the novel shows Fowler's vaunted imperial innocence – or "disinterest" – becoming untenable as the novel progresses (MacPhee, pp. 28-30). Greene carefully gives political competition between old (Britain) and new colonialists (America) over possession of Vietnam an analogue in personal competition between British Fowler and American Pyle over possession of a Vietnamese woman, Phuong. Leaving aside the unexamined sexual politics of both novels, *Schoolboy* separates the personal struggle from the political conflict, so British Westerby competes with Chinese gangster, Drake Ko, for the *British* Lizzie Worthington. Greene's political parable about colonialism has been personalised in le Carré, thereby implicitly asserting British imperial innocence.

Secondly, after a Vietnamese guard is shot by the Vietminh, as a result of Fowler and Pyle's presence, Fowler reflects, "I was responsible for that voice crying in the dark. I had prided myself on detachment, on not belonging to this war, but those wounds had been inflicted by me just as though I had used the sten" (*Quiet American*, p. 113). When Drake

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[505] As claimed by Binyon (*TLS*); Monaghan (p. 76); Holtmann (p. 67).
[506] Powell claims Westerby as 'neutral': "an operational man who is detached from political credos" (Powell, p. 91).

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Ko's banker, Frost, is murdered due to links with Westerby, Westerby opines, "I killed him […] Give or take a little, it was me who gave him the shove. It's not just the generals, it's every man who carries a gun" (*Schoolboy*, p. 353). The crucial difference in these remarkably similar lines in Greene and le Carré is that the guard in *Quiet American* is Vietnamese: Frost is British. Colonial British guilt in Greene becomes a generalised distaste for war in le Carré, rendering Britain imperially innocent.

Thirdly, Fowler comes to see that in the conflict, "the sacrifices were all paid by others" (*Quiet American*, p. 62), specifically the Vietnamese (pp. 185-6). When Westerby splits from Smiley, he answers to Smiley's briefing's invocation of 'service' – "a chance to pay" – using remarkably similar language to Fowler: "Trouble is, sport, the paying is actually done by the other poor sods" and cites "the selfless and devoted way in which we sacrifice other people" (*Schoolboy*, p. 528). But this potentially political point is utterly undermined by Westerby citing British banker, Frost, American journalist Luke, and British adventuress, Lizzie, as those exploited by Britain: all three victims are white Westerners – all are contemporary colonialists, exploiting the East. No critic notices this.[507] Furthermore, Frost and Luke are also killed – and Lizzie 'purchased' – by a colonised Chinese, Drake Ko. The narrative overwrites history with an imperial innocence, removing colonial exploitation and violence while reassigning that violence from exploiters to exploited. However *Schoolboy*'s self-conscious echoing of Greene exposes its own ideological stratagem, and is thus a literary faultline.

British Colonial Sacrifice

The colonial concept of 'service' always contained an ambiguity: who is the service *to*, the colonisers or the colonised? Civilisation 'cured' savagery in colonial ideology (Brendon, p. 62) and colonialism is still often presented in terms less neutral than glorifying: a

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[507] Lizzie represents "a symbol of the countless people who have truly paid for the British Empire" (Brady, p. 67); "all those who had given themselves for the good of the Empire" (Noland, p. 67). No one uses the word 'white'.

Wikipedia sentence like "Later, the British took their democratic ideals to their colonies"[508] turns brutal imposition of 'representative' government into an act of generosity, while occluding the contiguous suppression of vaunted 'freedom', not to mention the profits attendant. We see a similar strategy in *Schoolboy*, as pertains to Eastern characters, where again characterisation reveals ideological faultlines.

In this 'Eastern' novel, the Eastern 'other' is barely seen or heard. Westerby's interactions are primarily with other Western journalists, Western diplomats, even Western writers (Conrad) rather than the native people.[509] But it is notable that the four main Eastern characters are all either orphans or parentless. Dobler, with a third of his thesis devoted to "children in le Carré", misses this. Crucially, a concept of parent/child was part of colonial justification. "The British [insisted] their colonial subjects were 'like children' and 'required a long process of tutelage before they could participate in the governance of their country" (MacPhee, p. 26; Mamdani, p. 4). That such notions were hardly obsolete by the 1970s is revealed in Vaizey's *Schoolboy* review opining Britain should "train a few Africans in the elementary principles of good government".[510] Yet the question begged here is what *makes* the colonised childlike, in need of firm but nurturing 'parenting'?

Journalist/British spy Phoebe Wayfarer is a mixed race, needy, insecure and child-like fantasist. Phoebe's British colonial adventurer father, essentially purchases a Chinese wife but is killed "honourably" fighting against the Japanese (*Schoolboy*, p. 217). Phoebe's controller, Craw, suggests Phoebe sees the British as emblematic of her father, but her father is actually emblematic of the *British* here: his standing by his wife and child represents Britain's imperial self-image – "the British stand by their commitments" as Craw puts it (p. 217). This British justification of colonial exploitation via paternalist

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[508] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestantism, accessed 8/3/14
[509] Sabine Vanacker, 'A desk is a dangerous place from which to watch the world': Britishness and Foreignness in le Carré's Karla Trilogy' in *The Foreign in International Crime Fiction: Transcultural Representations*, edited by Jean Anderson Caroline Miranda and Barbara Pezzoti (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 28.
[510] Having contributed to Hugh Thomas's *Establishment* collection, Vaizey, ennobled by Harold Wilson in 1976, would take the Conservative whip in 1978. From this, the move should have been no surprise.

nurture has a long tradition, from Rudyard Kipling's 1899 poem 'The White Man's Burden' to "I am your mother and your father", "the missionary rhetoric whose standard slippage in India, Africa, and the Caribbean was from God to Queen Victoria and the British government".[511] But the British sacrificing themselves as surrogate parents elides Wayfarer being initially orphaned – and infantilised – by colonialism. It also elides which, in the parent-child relationship possesses the power, whilst implying that this 'obligation' to former "commitments" has a moral imperative to continue in the postcolonial world.

Pilot/mercenary Charlie Marshall comes from another union of colonial (French) and colonised (Chinese); rejected by his Chinese nationalist father as a *kwailo* ('white devil', p. 415), Marshall also is child-like, enfeebled by opium which he takes "like a baby's feed" (p. 414), weeping in Westerby's colonial, surrogate parental arms, with Westerby alternating maternal gentleness and paternal discipline (p. 422). Given that the British introduced opium into China (attested on p. 16), colonialism is arguably the *cause* of Marshall's dependency. Again this Eastern orphaning is overwhelmed by generous Western nurturing: Marshall finds a home with Western bandit Ricardo and his British lover, Lizzie Worthington, Westerby calling Lizzie "Charlie Marshall's big sister and earth mother" (p. 485). "We've all got to hold on to each other tight or we fall off the crazy mountain top" Marshall says of this grotesque 'family' (p. 415), recalling "we must love one another or die" (Auden 1940, 105), from 'September 1 1939', the poem which gives *Schoolboy* its epigraph, colonialism again disappearing into universalised *agape* and distaste for war.

Chinese brothers Drake and Nelson Ko are also orphans, their mother "killed by the guns" (p. 264) thus probably refugees of imperial strife, taken in by the British Hibberts' Christian Mission in 1930s colonised Shanghai, with the Hibberts again providing surrogate parents. Hibbert's Christian forgiveness of Nelson's Communist-inspired sacking

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[511] Helen Tiffin, 'The Body in the Library: Identity, Opposition and the Settler-Invader Woman' in *The Contact and the Culmination*, edited by Marc Delrez and Benedicte Ledent (Liege: University of Liege 1997) 213-228 (p. 34).

of the Mission comes close to an apology for colonialism (p. 274). "'We were enemy [...]

Europeans, capitalists, missionaries: all of us carpet-baggers who were there for their souls,

or their labour, or their silver. [...] Exploiters. That's how he saw us. Right, in a way, too'"

(*Schoolboy*, pp. 268-269). For Crehan this "betray[s] a forgiving, almost ludicrously

indulgent paternalism" (Crehan, p.112), but it is precisely Hibbert's saintly paternalism

that undermines Hibbert's avowed sympathy for Nelson's colonial critique. Hibbert's

daughter Doris highlights Nelson's behaviour as the ingratitude of child to sacrificing

parent: "'Didn't stop him from eating your food, did it?'" (p. 272). In this strategy again

we see attempts to cleanse the stain of British colonialism in a post-colonial world: another

form of "imperial denial".

"A Bunch of Wolves": America as Cold-War Ally

Despite the split with Smiley, it is not actually *Westerby's* actions that scupper Operation

Dolphin, but the CIA's. So it is time to explore the new theme of Britain's Cold War ally,

America, a relationship as key to *Honourable Schoolboy* as it was to British Cold-War

history. This is a variation on the theme of the British nation, the ideological field wherein

national identity is formulated and adapted in response to geopolitical developments. With

its colonial base eroding exponentially post-war, Britain had been forced, after the US

refused to support British military action over the "imperial lifeline"[512] of the Suez Canal

to operate internationally under US hegemony.[513] But Suez also alarmed the Americans

about potential Soviet influence in the global south as colonies imploded. "The colonial-

nationalist conflict provides a fertile field for subversive Communist movements,"

declared a National Security Council report (quoted in Leffler & Westad, p. 286),

specifically citing Southeast Asia. With this Cold-War alliance only previously hinted at in

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[512] Little in Leffler & Westad, p. 310.
[513] W. Roger Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization* (London, IB Tauris, 2006), p. 485.

le Carré (Alleline's "fatal reverence for the Americans"; Control's hatred of same, *Tinker*, p. 140), it now comes into central focus, and would be an enduring motif of future work.

The phrase "shotgun marriage" (*Schoolboy*, p. 16) is indicative of this Special Relationship's uneasiness in British culture. What were the implications of becoming deputy after once being head? How much independence of manoeuvre would the British have? We see this unease in Greene's *Quiet American* where "the Old-Hand of Empire is irritated at the naivety of American interference in colonial matters and seeks to reassert his position" (Goodman, p. 245). We see it also in the Bond industry where "in a quaint reversal of the real balance of power, it is the American Leiter who is the subordinate partner to the British Bond."[514] By contrast, Smiley's assessment of Operation Dolphin proffers realism about British status: "'If we cut [the Americans] in they'll swamp us. If we don't, we've no resources. It's simply a matter of balance'" (*Schoolboy*, p. 108).

There is early warning that this balancing strategy will be problematic when Smiley tells civil servants that cooperation with the US "will get us back to the top table" following Haydon's treachery (*Schoolboy*, p. 204). Smiley's Churchillian rhetoric[515] prompts a bureaucrat to respond, "'Top table! [...] Sacrificial altar, if you ask me. We've already burned the Middle East and half of Africa on it. All for the special relationship'" (p. 204). Referencing US takeover of British command (and British oil) in the Middle East and Africa (Louis, p. 485) the implication is that the Special Relationship is a cover story for Britain ceding power to America. Smiley makes a robust assertion of British pre-eminence in Hong Kong however, telling the Americans, "'Steal our thunder and get yourselves thrown off the Colony into the bargain'" (p. 300). However, unmentioned, Hong Kong was only regained by Britain in 1945 from China via US diplomatic support and military threat (Louis, p. 351, 375). Moreover, at the Circus's very first meeting with the Americans, the Drug Enforcement Agency's Sol Eckland humiliatingly describes the

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[514] J. Chapman, 'A Licence to Thrill' in *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader* ed. by C. Lindner (Manchester: University Press, 2003), p. 96.
[515] In 1954 Churchill told cabinet that nuclear weapons were "the price we pay to sit at the top table," (Hennessy, p. 46).

US/UK relationship as: "'you ride our wagon, we tell you where to get off and where to stay topsides'" (*Schoolboy*, p. 298). Ultimately the novel's plot trajectory appears to ratify a realistically downbeat assessment of the Special Relationship, when the CIA finally snatches Smiley's/Britain's artfully ensnared intelligence prize, Nelson Ko, at the island of Po Toi. Britain's attempt to establish pre-eminence on its *own territory* is outflanked by US hegemony.

Undercutting this plot realism however is a subliminal strategy, suggesting British moral superiority to its Cold-War ally, the old elect nation asserting itself over the new. Firstly, there's an aesthetic superiority, contrasting British sophistication with American philistinism. This is seen linguistically in Smiley and Guillam's affected bemusement at the use of the expression "meet with" (*Schoolboy*, p. 282) or their amusement at CIA man, Martello's use of the phrase "meat and potatoes" for their own "modalities" (p. 478). It is seen gastronomically in the claim Americans "wouldn't know the difference" between Spanish and South African sherry (p. 283). It is seen decoratively when Guillam perceives a "Howard Johnson" (America's biggest hotel/restaurant chain in the 1970s), tackiness to American offices (p. 489); while Martello's rosewood walls are, to Guillam's eye, "fake" (p. 298), as is, to Westerby's eye, a US airbase door (p. 470). With the ersatz, hollow and 'modern' contrasted to the genuine, solid and traditional, such comparisons are clearly national and political.

Secondly, there is a critique of what Hempstead calls "C.I.A. gun-barrel ethics" (in Samuel, p. 238), American strategic expediency. Where Britain, via the scrupulous Smiley, parlays a subtle espionage game, courteously collecting intelligence, America rides in with "too much hardware and overmanning" (*Schoolboy*, p. 543). Eckland's interjections form a fugue: "'What's holding everyone up? [...] Somebody ought to go out and shoot that bastard'" (p. 287). "What [the Brits] been doing all the time? Rubbing soap into their pretty faces? So when do they get to shave, for God's sakes?" (p. 296). "'And do we go for his jugular? [...] do we hell. We pussyfoot. We stand on the sidelines. 'Play it delicate, it's

a British ballgame'" (p. 297). The difference between crew-cut good ol' boy Eckland and glossy, Yale-groomed Martello turns out to be purely presentational. By the time Westerby disobeys Smiley and becomes a "rogue elephant" on Po Toi, attempting to save the Ko brothers, Martello exhibits similar impatience with Smiley's/British caution, suggesting shooting Westerby, reframing the difference between US and UK methods from delicacy versus expediency to "'the conspiracy or the fuck up'" (p. 560). Held at bay during the intelligence-collecting stage, the Americans finally break free of British – literal and figurative – restraint when they snatch Nelson Ko from British hands on Po Toi. So when this dishonourable act turns out to be the first part of a political Circus *putsch*, replacing Smiley with the more US-friendly Saul Enderby, the moral impact of these anti-US strategies if anything increases. Suggestive of US 'dishonor', Guillam calls the Americans "a bunch of wolves" (p. 527). Let us next examine a third anti-American strategy in *Schoolboy*, which now begins to suggest British hypocrisy.

"One Vanishing World": American and British Imperialism

Westerby's trip around Southeast Asia on adventurers Tiny Ricardo and Charlie Marshall's trails takes up fully half of *Schoolboy*'s length yet advances the plot only marginally. It does however do a great deal of ideological work, this tour of imperial fallout offering both an elegy for European colonialism *and* a critique of American imperialism. But this ongoing assertion of British superiority over America increasingly creates a faultline, whereby altogether different truths to these strategies can be discerned.

When Westerby visits former French colony, Cambodia, recently subjected to intensive US carpet-bombing along its Vietnam border, the language suggests imminent collapse into chaos: "With the end so close" (p. 361); "the Indians stay to pick the carcass" (p. 362); Cambodia is "bleeding to death" (p. 367). Amplifying the Orientalist slurs, Westerby escapes the present by retreating into Conrad, a nostalgic reassertion of European imperialism (p. 360). On a trip to the front-line, Westerby's focalisation opines

of an ignorant female American photographer, "when the Pentagon thinks of civilisation […] it thinks of you" (p. 374). If the implied critique is that, for the US, 'civilisation' equates with 'white', this overlooks Britain's pioneering work in this field: the subject of Bill Schwarz's entire *Memories of Empire* (2012). Indeed the travails of war occur, fairly consistently in *Schoolboy*, only to white Westerners: the journalists escaping the Khmer Rouge, above, the diplomats in Phnom Penh continuing their dinner party while the bombs drop (pp. 380-386). One British diplomat expresses "satisfaction" that the Americans "'boobed'" in a military (over) reaction (p. 383), and pages later complains, "'Yank[s] seem to want to run the world single-handed these days'" (p. 386). The hypocrisy of the critique is revealed: the old hand of empire resenting the new, while ignoring Britain's own bloody imperial "boobs" such as, at random, the partitioning of India. No textual sympathy is suggested for the native victims here: just a turf war between allies. The textual tone of tragedy is retained for the death of colonialism, not the death of *colonials*.

Next, Westerby visits Saigon, in another former French colony, Vietnam. "C'est terminé" shrugs a French priest of the "final act" in the American war (p. 430). With everyone attempting to leave Saigon, when a British Vietnamese agent begs, "'The British are my friends! […] Get me out!'" Westerby says, "'Try the Americans'" (p. 431) and cuts off the phone call. The implication is that Vietnam is solely America's problem, again evincing a total lack of sympathy for the victims of war whilst occluding the fact that the British held Vietnam for the French from 1945-6, supporting a pan-European *principle* of imperialism (Springhall, pp. 35-36). This helped create, with the French, both the problems *and* the template for the Vietnam War (Springhall, pp. 40-41). Moreover, Britain was considerably more complicit in the Vietnam War than its lack of provision of troops suggested.[516]

Westerby twice stops off in former French colony, Laos, where again in the capital, Vientiane, there is also a tragic sense of imminent end to the colonial era. The deserted

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[516] Marc Tiley, 'Britain, Vietnam and the Special Relationship', *History Today* Vol 63, Issue 12 (December 2013). http://www.historytoday.com/marc-tiley/britain-vietnam-and-special-relationship

French hotel's concrete bar "could do duty as a bomb shelter or firing position" (p. 432); nationalist Pathet Lao soldiers occupy the town (p. 432). Westerby remembers that Vientiane was a base for Lizzie Worthington, Tiny Ricardo and Charlie Marshall's colonial adventuring. That adventuring included dropping explosives on Laos's Plain of Jars during the US's brutally intensive bombing campaign from 1964-73 (p. 404). If this does not damn the US enough (overlooking British expedient actions like the firebombing of Dresden), Laos was also the location for the CIA's farcical strategy of bringing local tribes onside via opium growing (referenced in the novel, pp. 288-98). If here the new imperialists are inefficient as well as expedient, Westerby's postcolonial complacency overlooks Britain forcing the opium trade on China via the Opium Wars (1839-41; 1856-60).[517] Again a literary apartheid reigns here: there is no sense of the effect of war on the native population, only on whites coming to the end of a glorious era.

Throughout Westerby's trip are regular returns to Thailand – apt in that although never colonised, French and British empires perpetually worried at Thai territory.[518] Here again is a sideswipe at the Americans, via Westerby's "inkling" that a Thai colonel's "American-English" expression "Communist Terrorist" "was originally a British phrase" (p. 438). It was: in Malaya, thus the reader is offered a subliminal reminder of Britain's 'success' in Malaya as against American failure in Vietnam. So, shortly afterwards, at a Thai US military base, when US major Masters tells Westerby of final American defeat in Vietnam: "'The United States of America has just applied to join the club of second class powers, of which I understand your own fine nation to be chairman, president and oldest member'" (p. 474) – Westerby is insulated against the insult. "This is how they tried to win, Jerry thought: from inside sound-proof rooms, through smoked glass, using machines at arm's length. This is how they lost" (p. 472).[519] Goodman rightly calls Westerby's

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[517] Christopher Hill, 'History and Patriotism', in Samuel, *Patriotism 1*, p. 4.
[518] *Schoolboy*, pp. 355-359; pp. 434-466; pp. 469-474; pp. 482-486.
[519] Le Carré: "And then there are the gray men, who should be feeding computers with information from the satellites [...] figures one saw around the edges of the Vietnam War, who had all sorts of pretty words for 'kill'. They're scary" (Godfrey Hodgson, 'The Secret Life of John le Carré' *Washington Post*, 9 October

attitude "imperial self-congratulation" (Goodman, p. 252), the smug tone of the Old Hand towards the new boys on the imperial block but wrongly assumes Westerby is being satirised.[520] For American deployment of what Mamdani calls the "bifurcated state" (1996, 16) was no different to Britain's latterday imperial methods. Unlike the French empire, which favoured direct rule, British imperial governance came to favour indirect rule via local proxies (Arendt, *Origins*, p. 130), as developed by Shepstone in Natal and Lugard in West Africa, which Mamdani calls "decentralised despotism" (Mamdani, p. 37). Apartheid was a development of this strategy. So if Martello feels he is in "enemy territory" (*Schoolboy*, p. 508) upon leaving US institutional premises, with their American décor and symbolic lack of windows (p. 280), equally Westerby has almost no contact with the "native" population in any of the countries he visits, beyond purchasing information and purchasing sex on the Mekong Delta (p. 344; pp. 482-487). This is entirely consistent with British imperial "aloofness" (Arendt, *Origins*, p. 212).

In fact, only the *success* of the British Malayan campaign distinguished it from the American Vietnam campaign, right down to its scale of civilian casualties (11,343 Malayans killed), its brutal "new village" approach (putting the peasantry in concentration camps, reconfigured as "strategic hamlets" in Vietnam, 1962-3) and chemical defoliation (Springhall 2001, 56). Indeed British Malayan Permanent Secretary, Robert Thompson, advised the US government during Vietnam. "If anything the British were more ruthless" than the US (Springhall, p. 56), while with Britain also fighting bloody campaigns in Aden and Borneo (Louis, p. 573) concurrent with a Vietnam they covertly supported, the British had little to be imperially superior about. Again, the sense of the Vietnam War is of losses to America (the Major consoling himself with drink) and to Britain (the airbase sound

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1977, p. 1).
[520] Two years later, le Carré appeared to suggest overt (British) colonialism was better than "covert" (US) imperialism, "such adventures have done more to discredit the Western cause than they have ever done to advance it" John le Carré, review of *The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA* by Thomas Powers, *New York Times Book Review*, 13 October 1979, p. 48.

system playing "end of the world music", p. 473): the Vietnam War is a tragedy for the colonizers not the colonized.

Comparison between *Schoolboy* and *The Quiet American* is again telling. Fowler is critical of American imperialist methods (*Quiet American*, p. 162) but slowly recognises his kinship with Pyle: "Was I so different from Pyle, I wondered?" Fowler references an incident when he pushed Pyle's foot in the blood of an explosion Pyle himself had ordered. "Must I too have my foot thrust in the mess of life before I saw the pain?" (*Quiet American*, pp. 185-186). This is effectively an admission of British colonial guilt.[521] In *Schoolboy* however, Westerby makes *no* such recognition of kinship with his American "cousins" – his tone is one of casual superiority: "the Cousins' [...] presence made it a much rougher ball-game" (*Schoolboy*, p. 486).[522] In *Schoolboy*'s imperial ideology of good sports and bad eggs, the Americans do not play fair: they are 'dishonourable'.

But what use is such a "moral victory over [Britain's] American allies" (Sauerberg, p. 175), as against military victory? What use rhetorical power as against *political* power? Yet Raphael Samuel claims that "Britain was thought of as setting an example to other countries [...] a stable and traditional society".[523] Fiction, especially bestselling fiction, serves a key function here. Louis cites a British "system of influence [...] converting discontented subjects into loyal allies" (Louis, p. 485), and, more importantly, business partners in this postcolonial world. Britain in *Schoolboy* is posited as the brains behind America's brawn, and the more 'honorable' business partner than the slippery US in the transition to informal empire via trade. We have already noted Britain's over-representation in Cold War cultural production, thanks to Fleming, le Carré et al: consequently, Britain as an ideological 'nation' often eclipsed its Cold-War ally. The point throughout this thesis is that ideology, in politics and in fiction, is a highly effective

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[521] Eagleton claims Fowler is accusing the Americans, not accepting British blame, Terry Eagleton, *Exiles and Emigrés: Studies in Modern English Literature* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970), pp. 125-8.
[522] Westerby should know, having been in the Congo, (c.f. *Heart of Darkness*) during the Belgian/US-backed 1961 military coup and murder of "Communist" Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba (*Schoolboy*, p. 366) in which Britain was complicit (Louis, p. 498).
[523] 'Introduction' in *Patriotism I*, ed. Samuel, p. xxvii.

weapon (albeit one that can implode on the wielder). In testament to this, clutching his *Time* cover story, le Carré would shortly recommend himself to Yasser Arafat as "an opinion former".[524]

Finally then, in this consideration of postcolonial currents in *Schoolboy*, Westerby, leaving Hong Kong, has a vision of "the Colony's last day [...] Peking has made its proverbial telephone call, 'Get out, party's over'" (*Schoolboy*, p. 528). His vision expands:

> For a moment it was all one vanishing world – here, Phnom Penh, Saigon, London, a world on loan, with the creditors standing at the door and Jerry himself in some unfathomable way a part of the debt that was owed (p. 528).

Here we have condensed the thematic tensions contained by *The Honourable Schoolboy*: postimperial nostalgia, with a sense of tragic end ("one vanishing world"); the tension between colonial guilt ("creditors standing at the door") and protestations of imperial innocence (the imperial debt is "unfathomable"). Most of all however there is a lack where the new world replacing that "vanishing world" should be: China, in this case, but more generally across the postcolonial frontier, Communism. For while le Carré declared *The Honourable Schoolboy* was about "the evanescence of the Western presence in southeast Asia" (Barber, p. 9), his statement, like *The Honourable Schoolboy* itself and the critical discourse around it, elides what was *replacing* that Western presence.

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[524] Le Carré speech, Hay Festival, 31/5/2013, author's transcription.

4. "A Spreading Plague": Communism and Southeast Asia

Under-written in *The Honourable Schoolboy*, and unremarked by critics,[525] is that *all* the territories Westerby visits on his tour of Southeast Asia are not just about to be lost by colonialism, but to shift control from colonial to *Communist* powers. So in order to avoid anti-Communism becoming merely a "cover story" for postcolonial concerns, I will now "reverse the controls" of this chapter, just as Smiley does midway through *Schoolboy* (p. 301) and look more closely at Communism, by returning to the locations Westerby visits on his Southeastern tour and re-examining their contemporary and historical context.

Westerby's first stop, Cambodia is about to fall to the Communist Khmer Rouge. Phnom Penh is described as "a city about to be given back to the *jungle*" (p. 422, my emphasis). Reviewing *Schoolboy*, foreign correspondent James Fenton complained, "there *was* no jungle around Phnom Penh" (*New Review*, p. 34). Contra Fenton, this manipulation is irrelevant to textual 'quality', but does ideologically suggest the barbarian at the gate. In US-held Saigon, under acute siege from the Communist Vietcong, "the *rot* this time was irreversible" (p. 431, my emphasis); "the panic was everywhere, like a spreading *plague*" (p. 432, my emphasis). Communism is here decay ("rot") and disease ("plague"): destruction, clearly posited against European colonial *construction*.

In Laos, the occupying Pathet Lao are again Communist, signalled by their Mao caps, and their December 1975 takeover is imminent.[526] Like the Cambodian "jungle" slur, the Pathet Lao are inaccurately described as "not long down from the hills", suggestive of tribal primitivism (p. 432) when it was US-trained *anti*-Communist forces that were recruited from hill tribes. This serves reminder that while Ricardo and Marshall's bombing raids on Laos's Plain of Jars was a profiteering adventure, they also served an anti-Communist purpose. However flippant, Marshall's shirt flaunts a patch reading, "Kill a Commie for Christ" (p. 399). Colonialists and Communists are antagonists.

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[525] Crehan (in Bold, p. 124) is the sole exception.

[526] While the West spurned assistance for the Cambodian people during the Khmer Rouge regime 1975-79, backed by China, it was Vietnamese invasion that defeated the Khmer Rouge in 1979, pushing Cambodia and Vietnam to the Soviet side of the Sino-Soviet split.

In Thailand, the link Westerby makes to the victorious British Malayan anti-Communist campaign (p. 438) is premature: in 1975 the Thai Communist insurgency was thought likely to succeed.[527] After Westerby is told by US Major Masters of the end of the Vietnam War at a US airbase, Masters is described, as "suffering the stab of defeat at the hands of unintelligible *savages*" (p. 474; my emphasis), another conflation of colonial and Cold War vocabulary. Finally, Hong Kong, a post-war "capitalist showroom" (Louis, p. 349), perennially under threat from Communist China, is described in apocalyptic terms in Westerby's vision of final capitulation to Communism: "the looted shops, the empty city waiting like a carcass for the *hordes*" (*Schoolboy*, p. 528; my emphasis). Again we have the merging of colonial and Cold War language, with Communists the barbarian at the postcolonial gate, the othering here combining criminality, destruction and mass hysteria. Communism is thus contemporary savagery, "the hordes" reclaiming the postcolonial city for the atavistic 'jungle', where the 'tribes' will ensure that the 'carcass' of civilisation will 'rot'. Despite the novel's W.H. Auden epigraph, "those to whom evil is done, do evil in return" (from *September 1 1939),* the text cannot conceive that colonialism *created* Communism. Many commentators believe the main recruiter to the Khmer Rouge's vicious distortion of Communism was the US carpet-bombing of Cambodia (1969-73).[528]

There is a problem with emphasis in postcolonial considerations of the East. In following revisionist historians such as William Appleman Williams and convincingly arguing that European decolonisation in the East was overstated and disguised the transition from formal to informal imperialism, MacPhee allows the Cold War to recede from view, anti-Communism becoming simply a cover story for capitalist reconfiguration (MacPhee, pp. 22-23). While it is important to assert that Western exploitation of Southeast Asia was not and is not "evanescent", it was by no means clear in 1974-77 that the informal imperialism Mandel described in *Late Capitalism* (trans. 1975) would be

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[527] Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: University Press, 2007), p. 191.
[528] Historians William Shawcross (*Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the destruction of Cambodia,* 1979) and Ben Kiernan (various) and journalist John Pilger (*Heroes,* 1986).

successful in the East. For all *Schoolboy*'s hostility to the Americans, the beneficiaries of decolonisation looked more likely to be the Soviet Union or China. Consequently, the key fact that most anti-colonial nationalist movements were Communist deserves more pause than given by MacPhee or Neil Lazarus,[529] in their compelling accounts of postcolonial literature or by Goodman in his specific study of *The Honourable Schoolboy* (Goodman, pp. 243-256), which does not mention Communism once. World Communism offered both an explicit philosophical critique of *and* a physical threat to expansionary global capitalism. From the Second Congress of the Communist International onward, colonialism was specifically rejected as the tool of capitalism (Young, p. 132-3). So it is not a question of *either* a philosophical anti-Communism to which capitalism is incidental *or* an expedient anti-Communism which masks capitalist imperatives. 'Containing' a Communism explicitly hostile to capitalist interests was America's purpose in Korea (1950-53) and Vietnam (1955-1975), "to make the world safe for capitalism" (Westad, p. 31). The results were an expensive and bloody stalemate (Korea), and a global military, capitalist superpower being soundly defeated by peasant Communist guerrillas (Vietnam). The viciously anti capitalist Khmer Rouge would take over in Cambodia in the same month Saigon fell and declare 1975 "Year Zero" before exterminating 1/5 of the population, largely due to perceived 'Western' corruption, Pol Pot's regime backed by enduringly Communist China. As mentioned, even un-colonised Thailand was at threat from Communist takeover.

Anti-Communism was not, contra Logevall, simply the US's preoccupation (Logevall in Leffler & Westad, p. 282): in Malaya the British made considerable attempts to nurture a non-Communist succession (Louis, p. 566) more sympathetic to enduring British commercial ties. Most British post-war interventions in Southeast Asia shared the American objective of keeping out Communism: in Vietnam in 1945-6, where Britain suppressed the elected Communist government (Springhall, pp. 38-43); in Malaya; and in

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[529] Neil Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge: University Press, 2011).

The Honourable Schoolboy's axis Hong Kong, which came "to symbolize resistance to Communist expansionism" (Louis, p. 374).[530]

So in Westerby's "vanishing world" rumination – "[Hong Kong], Phnom Penh, Saigon, London" – the reason *London* should appear in a list of vanishing colonial territories now becomes clearer. Westerby is invoking the barbarian at the gate of the colonial 'centre' – the working class – as kin to the barbarian at the colonial 'periphery' – Southeast Asian Communists. British imperialism had previously functioned as distraction from class strife, both ideologically ("Patriotism became [...] a vital counterweight to class-consciousness [...] the labour movement was 'bribed' by the economic benefits of imperialism" (MacKenzie, p. 7) and practically (exporting unemployed, potentially troublesome, members of the working class to the colonies). This symbiosis is demonstrated in the renewed post-war imperialism that financed the Welfare State and is the basis for the conservative view that the Welfare State cost Britain its imperial power (MacPhee, p. 56).[531] A declining empire had few sticks or carrots to offer its restive working class. So the struggles of ex-colonies for national liberation were – for elites – frighteningly paralleled by the militant struggles of the British working class in the 1970s, struggles which brought down the government of Edward Heath in 1974, and would shortly bring down that of James Callaghan in 1979, before Thatcherism launched a counter attack. The domestic 'other' thus combines with the colonial 'other' as a threat to the safety of capitalism.

Alan Nadel describes how the US's political strategy of "containment" of Communism led to "a rhetorical strategy that functioned to foreclose dissent, pre-empt dialogue and preclude contradiction" (Nadel, p. 14). One key facet of this was a politicised

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[530] "The whole common front against Communism in Siam, Burma and Malay[a] was likely to crumble unless [we] resist[ed] this threat to Hong Kong," Attlee, May 1949 Cabinet minutes (Louis, p. 371). The Chinese Communist revolution finally attained victory in 1949.
[531] As well as the aforementioned Larkin, Fleming parlayed this view in his own East Asian espionage novel, *You Only Live Twice* (1964). "Our Welfare Sate politics may have made us expect too much for free, and liberation of our colonies may have gone too fast" (*Blofeld Trilogy*, p. 491). Both it and *Schoolboy* contain characters inspired by foreign correspondent Dick Hughes, Dicko Henderson and Craw.

stabilisation of that which cannot be stabilised: "the distinctions between Other and Same" (Nadel 1995, 20). Much the same occurred in the UK, used particularly against an established socialist tradition, even if never producing a homegrown McCarthyism. Perhaps because of the deepening domestic crisis and the sense of imperial international fracturing, *The Honourable Schoolboy* is even less ambiguous about Communism than previous le Carré novels. Smiley moves a long way from being "a little embarrassed by professions of anti-Communism" (*Tinker*, p. 160) to "Our present war began in 1917, with the Bolshevik Revolution" (*Schoolboy*, p. 122). Critics tend to deny Smiley political motivation in *Schoolboy*, attributing his briefing's forthrightness to simplification for the unreflective Westerby.[532] Indeed many critics insist on a personal, non-political reading of Smiley's quest for Karla. Aronoff is typical: "Smiley's patriotism has become distorted by a personal vendetta against Karla," (Aronoff, p. 96).[533] For Barley, "Duty and devotion stop Smiley thinking politically: Karla no longer substantially represents Communism. He is a 'a left-over legend'" (Barley, p. 119). The passage Barley references, is one of few moments we access Smiley's thoughts in *Schoolboy*:

> Smiley perceived in himself the existence of a darker motive [...] one which his rational mind continued to reject. He called it Karla, and it was true that somewhere in him, like a left-over legend, there burned the embers of hatred toward the man who had set out to destroy the temples of his private faith, whatever remained of them: the service that he loved, his friends, his country, his concept of a reasonable balance in human affairs (*Schoolboy*, p. 126).

The suggestions of personal motivation here are rhetorical rather than substantial: there is no mention of Karla's use of Haydon to seduce Ann (despite Haydon being mentioned in

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[532] Homberger, p. 84; Aronoff, p. 24.

[533] Other critics that make the same point include: Sauerberg (p. 179); Hoffman (p. 143); Cawelti & Rosenberg (p. 182). In the text, Lacon *(Schoolboy,* p. 67) and Martindale (p. 59) make similar suggestions. An arch bureaucrat and a buffoon are hardly founts of wisdom in a le Carré novel however.

the preceding paragraph). "Private" here is not synonymous with 'personal' but with an ideological *individualism*, contradictorily affirmed by Smiley via a series of collective ideologies like "the service", and "country". Moreover, "a reasonable balance in human affairs" is a typical Smiley-ism, laying claim to an empirical decency outside political ideology which simply affirms British geopolitical objectives. Sauerberg's gloss is a typical surface reading that affirms Western consensus: "a shared balance only to be reached against the background of the Western tradition" based on "restraint and common sense" (Sauerberg, p. 62).[534] Similarly in another, much-quoted, passage, Smiley says Ann calls his "quest for Karla" "his black Grail" (*Schoolboy*, p. 540). Here Ann's own quest, for love, "her own Grail" (p. 540) is implicitly linked with Westerby's quest and his love for Lizzie. In pursuit of their personal quests for gratification (e.g. Westerby visiting prostitutes during his courtship of Lizzie), Ann and Westerby both betray Smiley/Britain. Ultimately, in a novel about British representatives on a world stage, the grail is pursued for the collective good, to heal the nation, wherein Smiley becomes both Gawain *and* Arthur. Were anyone in any doubt about le Carré's position, an accompanying interview published on both sides of the Atlantic was unambiguous: "When we look at the heathen, we run back and take new faith. However liberal and doubtful we may be, there is absolutely no doubt that world Communism is not something I wish my children to be subjected to" (Hodgson, p. 1: reprinted in the *Daily Telegraph*). These lines notably conflate colonial and Cold-War language ("heathen") in their insistent othering of Communism.

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[534] See also: Noland, who separates "British values" from "the political" (p. 65); Homberger, who claims the same neutrality: "Smiley is also the custodian for certain positive values, not [...] any Cold War ideology of anti-Communism, but [...] compassion" (p. 83).

Characterising Communism

All that said, Communism is largely notable for its absence in *The Honourable Schoolboy*. Karla, the ideological enemy, is reduced to a blurry picture on Smiley's wall – again, in this second volume of *The Karla Trilogy* we neither see nor hear him. But this strategy itself is ideologically effective: "the looming presence of Karla's image reminds the British spy of the threatening object against which his own function and identity are measured (Buzard, p. 173). As for the other major Communist character, we never hear Karla's Red China 'mole', Nelson Ko, speak. We hear Nelson's critique of the West only via the mediation of the missionary, Hibbert (*Schoolboy*, pp. 268-269) and only see Nelson briefly on the closing pages of the novel, before he is snatched away from the British and the reader alike. The Soviet Union and Red China are thus almost entirely invisible in this Cold-War text. Consequently Communism is not a political philosophy, or even a political system in *The Honourable Schoolboy*, it is a mode of behaviour: a brutal anti-humanism that resembles colonial depictions of 'savagery'. Karla methodically murders the agents exposed by Haydon. Attempts to save two Ukrainian agents are scuppered, resulting in Smiley "weeping silently" (pp. 65-66). Nelson Ko sacks the Christian mission that gave him and his orphaned brother succor: Hibbert forgives him in saintly Smiley style. When Smiley orders Westerby to try "shaking the tree" to expose Drake Ko (p. 307), the enactment of this colonially loaded metaphor, rendering the other primitive, animalistic, prompts Drake Ko to respond in suitably 'savage' style, with a spate of brutal murders. Drake Ko's brutal actions, as the 'enemy' in a Cold-War novel, blur with Communism's, whereas Drake Ko is a capitalist, a businessman, a recipient of the Order of the British Empire (like Philby). This association of the 'other' with the savage is a faultline which, again, inadvertently invokes British as much as Communist brutality. This confirms Nadel's point that the "Other" is not a stable identification (Nadel, p. 20). Nevertheless, the murder of the banker, Frost, by Drake Ko's thugs is notably painful for Smiley and gives rise to just such a declaration of stability from Connie Sachs:

'Karla wouldn't give two pins, would he, dearie? [...] Not for one dead Frost, not for ten. That's the difference really. We can't write it much larger than that, can we, not these days? Who was it used to say 'we're fighting for the survival of Reasonable Man'? Steed-Asprey? Or was it Control? I loved that. It covered it all. Hitler. The new thing. That's who we are: reasonable. [...] We're not just English: we're reasonable' (*Schoolboy*, p. 353).[535]

Britain is here characterised as a bastion of reason, moderation, compassion and humanism. But more importantly, Communism is characterised as simply the *negation* of these immanent qualities: un-reasonable, immoderate, cruel and in-human.[536] But for Connie, Communism is only the most *recent* manifestation of the inhuman other ("the new thing"), of the 'savagery' to which British 'civilisation' will always be innately superior. Even if Britain is physically, militarily less potent, the moral centre will hold. Karla's indifference to human cost in pursuit of political ends is also Fiedler's in *The Spy,* Dieter Frey's in *Call*: it is, in le Carré's world, Communism's. Communism's inhumanity and savagery, indecency and lack of civilisation thus blur with colonial conceptions of the colonised: a "spreading plague".

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[535] These lines prompt former intelligence officer Hoffman to declare as empircal truth: "We [the West] never subscribed to the grand ideological crusade [...] we always [...] maintained a sense of reason, a cognition of excess. [...] But then, we did defeat Hitler as well as the new thing, didn't we? That was because true strength derives from a moral wellspring [...] we never deviated from our commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and respect of human beings" (Hoffman, p. 148).
[536] Revealingly, however, two 'indecent' Soviet tactics in the novel, buying up civil aviation companies for political purposes (Crehan, p. 124) and flying opium into China, were documented *CIA* tactics (Lashmar & Oliver, p. 3).

5. Communism and Colonialism: Conclusion

In conclusion, *The Honourable Schoolboy*'s colonial setting prompts a welter of contradictory textual strategies that reveal a raft of cultural anxieties about Britain's past, present and future role in the world. The book shifts uneasily between assertions of imperial innocence and testaments to colonialism as self-abnegating sacrifice. *Schoolboy* focuses strongly on Britain's uneasy alliance with Cold War ally, America, apparently accepting political realities, but fighting a rhetorical rearguard action to assert British superiority. All these strategies tend to be contradictory: imperial innocence actually flags up imperial guilt; proclamations of colonial sacrifice signal the colonially created *need* for that sacrifice; criticising America highlights commonalities as much as differences betwen Britai and its Cold-War ally.

However, while these postcolonial elements are key to understanding *The Honourable Schoolboy*, it is an error to overlook the Cold-War enemy, Communism. At the time of *The Honourable Schoolboy*'s writing and publication, Communism still represented a clear and present danger not just to colonialism but to its ontological root, capitalism. This connection was put stringently by one radical during the countercultural high-water mark of 1968: "It was in the world of capital that SIS had its traditional heart, in the preservation of trade routes, in the defense of foreign investment and colonial wealth". That radical was John le Carré (*Philby*, p. 35). Thereafter it seems le Carré, as Williams said of Orwell, "was never able to see [capitalism], fully, as an economic and political *system*" (*Orwell,* p. 25).[537] 'Capitalism' occurs in *The Honourable Schoolboy* even less frequently than 'Communism': as such it is the "not said", the invisible, unheard link between the book's colonial and anti-Communist preoccupations.

A fascinating consequence of reconfiguring *The Honourable Schoolboy* to balance its anti-Communist subtext with its overt postcolonial preoccupations is that the political implication of the plot begins to look distinctly different: more like a *Western* success than

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[537] Ironically, Orwell accused Dickens of the same myopia. George Orwell, 'Dickens', *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell,* Vol. 1: *An Age Like This* (London, Penguin, 1976), p. 457.

a *British* failure. Operation Dolphin's purpose – checkmating the Soviet Union by neutralising its Chinese mole – is achieved. The plot performs a 'containment' of Communism that is of equal advantage to the US *and* the UK in their joint defense of Western capitalism. At the time, after American defeat in Vietnam, with Eastern Communism resurgent in the region, such a Western strategic victory against Communism was a political fantasy. But such fantasies are ideological, and however forgotten now, *The Honourable Schoolboy* was widely read at the time. As it transpired, the 1970s Communist threat to capitalism dissipated: some Communist takeovers never occurred (Thailand); one 'Communist' regime was effectively neutralised by another (Cambodia by Vietnam), while many Communist regimes slowly changed their policies to be more capitalist-friendly (Vietnam from 1986; Cambodia; even Laos). If Communist opposition to capitalism is telescoped now to a 25-year blip in a 70-year reconfiguration of capitalism, this does not justify writing it out of history. So a forgotten text like *The Honourable Schoolboy* deserves reinvestigation for its inadvertent revelation of the forgotten material realities and forgotten discursive frame of British postcolonialism and British anti-Communism in the 1970s.

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Chapter 6: *Smiley's People*

1. Blunt and Détente: *Smiley's People* in Context

Smiley's People did not have quite the cultural endurance of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy,* its

1982 televisation being less popular, while the mooted Thomas Alfredson's film of

Smiley's People, follow-up to 2011's *Tinker,* is still delayed as of this writing.[538] Yet, at its

publication on 12 November 1979 (US) and 4 February 1980 (UK), *Smiley's People*

represented the peak of le Carré's cultural platform in the Cold War. The book emerged a

few months after Margaret Thatcher came to power (in May 1979), ushering in the Second

Cold War, and shortly after the BBC's hugely popular *Tinker* adaptation (September-

October 1979), which brought le Carré a new mass audience (c. 11 million).[539] Then, on 16

November, Thatcher exposed Anthony Blunt as the Cambridge spy-ring's "fourth man",

and Kim Philby's collaborator.[540] Blunt's exposure chimed both with anti-statist and anti-

détente currents in Thatcherism – as does *Smiley's People*.

Détente, the gentler, post-Cuban Crisis approach to the Cold War, had culminated in

June 1979's SALT II nuclear arms limitations agreement but ended soon after with the

December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.[541] Afghanistan plus Soviet crackdowns on

human rights activists were Western front-page news during *Smiley's People*'s PR

campaign.[542] While proxy Cold Wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua, US President Carter's

refusal to recognise Vietnam-occupied Cambodia, his funding of Afghan anti-Soviet rebels

since July 1979,[543] and the GDR's reinforcing of the Berlin Wall suggest détente had been

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[538] http://www.screendaily.com/news/europe/fiennes-mikkelsen-close-in-on-our-kind-of-traitor/5051535.article: accessed 18/10/2013
[539] http://www.newstatesman.com/film/2011/09/smiley-Carré-novel-british; accessed 30/9/13
[540] Thatcher pursued the hints in Andrew Boyle's *Climate of Treason* (5 November). Thatcher's exposure of Blunt was "highly symbolic of [...] the new order of Conservatives [...] overthrowing the niceties of the old Establishment", Joseph Oldham, ''Disappointed Romantics': Troubled Heritage in the BBC's John le Carré Adaptations' *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 10: 4 (2013), 727-745, (p. 739).
[541] Afghanistan was *Telegraph* front page, 31 Jan 1980; Peregrine Worsthorne, 'A Cold War Begins at Home', *Daily Telegraph,* 27 January 1980, p. 16, cited "new Cold War" and "world crisis".
[542] Stephen Pile, 'What boycott, comrade?' *Daily Telegraph*, 2 January 1980, p. 8; Richard Beeston, 'Soviet Dissidents Left Leaderless by Persecution' *Daily Telegraph,* 24 January 1980, p 4.
[543] Hawk, Ronald Reagan replaced Carter in January 1981. Left-wing 'dove' Carter had already raised the Cold War stakes via Presidential Directive 59, which emphasised the threat of US nuclear aggression.

in decline for some time,[544] Thatcher's hawkish attitude – soon to chime with Ronald Reagan's – caused détente's death. Resulting public anxiety paralleled its early sixties' peak, indicated via hugely increased CND membership. Thatcher's hawkishness signalled her determination to reverse British decline, culminating in the 1982 Falklands War.[545] In tandem, Thatcher portrayed union militancy – and by implication socialism – as "unpatriotic".[546] The *Tinker* TV adaptation's use of Oxford's Radcliffe Camera and the 'Nunc Dimitis' presaged a televisual "heritage industry" (*Chariots of Fire*; *Brideshead Revisited*, 1981) which chimed with Thatcherite patriotism (Oldham, p. 740). Adding to the Thatcher parallels, le Carré chose *Smiley's People*'s PR campaign to make his most unambiguously anti-Communist statements yet: "I do believe, reluctantly, that we must combat Communism. Very decisively" (Gross, p. 33).[547]

Smiley's People is the final part of the trilogy begun with *Tinker*, later published as *The Quest for Karla*. The plot sees the Cabinet Office's Oliver Lacon pulling Smiley out of retirement to investigate the murder of an elderly Russian émigré, General Vladimir, on Hampstead Heath. Smiley eventually discovers Vladimir's and other murders are an attempt by Karla, Smiley's Soviet nemesis, to protect Karla's disturbed daughter, Tatiana. Smiley traces Tatiana to a sanatorium in Berne, Switzerland, and mounts a 'sting', with the help of former Circus personnel, against Karla's factotum, Grigoriev, using Tatiana as leverage to persuade Karla to defect. Having failed to effect Karla's defection in *Tinker*, *Smiley's People* can be seen as fictional and ideological resolution of issues left unresolved in *Tinker*. Karla's defection occurs at the Berlin Wall, symbol of Communist intransigence and endurance.

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[544] From 1975-80, the 'Grenzmauer' was reinforced by mesh-fencing, anti-vehicle trenches, barbed wire, 300 watchtowers, and 30 bunkers.

[545] "We have ceased to be a nation in retreat" Speech to Conservative rally, Cheltenham, 3 July 1982, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=104989, accessed 19/2/15.

[546] In the book a sympathetic German echoes this: "'You English are poor these days. Too many trade unions'" *Smiley's People* (London; Pan, 1980), p. 202. Future references are to this edition and are included in parentheses in the text.

[547] Le Carré later suggested he "might even vote for Mrs Thatcher [...] even her leadership is better than no leadership at all," Nicholas Wapshott, 'Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Novelist', *The Times*, 6 September 1982, p. 7.

Contemporary Reception of *Smiley's People*

Both the *Tinker* televisation and the Blunt affair informed reviewers' reading of *Smiley's People*. George Thaw's positive review claimed that via Blunt, "reality has overtaken the fiction;[548] Ian Hamilton's negative review noted how "le Carré's appeal is supported by actual recent history";[549] while John Coleman's positive review observed how such fiction "tidied" history.[550] However the Blunt citations sometimes treated politics as by-product of art: Melvyn Bragg's glowing review declared, "Reality sponges more off le Carré than vice versa. Fiction rules,"[551] while S.S. Prawer's negative review stated, "ever anxious to imitate television serials, life threw up the Anthony Blunt affair to make Smiley the mole-hunter a national institution".[552] A. Alvarez's positive review suggested, "nature seems to have been imitating art in the most vulgar way".[553] Andrew Boyle's positive review[554] asserted the "world of difference between spy-fiction and spy-fact", but made no comparison between the two. Christopher Booker's negative review attributed both Haydon's and the Cambridge Spies' motives to "individual reasons" not ideology.[555] In the US, only Stefan Kanfer[556] and Julian Moynahan's lukewarm reviews mentioned Blunt.[557] Indeed fully half the reviews failed to mention Blunt at all.[558]

The book's détente theme was highlighted by only a handful of reviewers.[559] Hamilton noted, "much of the point of this new book is to take a swipe at détente merchants who […] are contemptuous of the old Circus assumption that Moscow would *never* abandon its original designs" (Hamilton, p. 15). Other reviewers simply affirmed the

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[548] George Thaw, 'Smiley Spins his Deadly Web Once More', *Daily Mirror,* 4 February 1980, p. 23.
[549] Ian Hamilton, 'Smileyfication' *London Review of Books*, March 1980, pp. 15-16.
[550] John Coleman, 'A Crafty le Carré: Smiley springs the Trap', *Sunday Times*, 3 February 1980, p. 42.
[551] Melvyn Bragg, 'Pawns in Smiley's Game', *Evening Standard*, 5 February 1980 p. 19.
[552] S.S. Prawer, 'The Circus and its Conscience', *Times Literary Supplement,* 8 February 1980, p. 131.
[553] A. Alvarez, 'Half Angels versus Half Devils', *The Observer*, 3 February 1980, p. 39.
[554] Andrew Boyle, 'A Man for all Treasons', *Evening News*, 4 February 1980, p. 7.
[555] Christopher Booker, 'Spymasters and Spy-Monsters', *The Spectator* 9 February 1980, p. 16.
[556] Stefan Kanfer, 'New Act for the Circus Master' *Time*, 31 December 1979, p. 70.
[557] Julian Moynahan, 'Smiley's People', *New Republic*, 19 January 1980, p. 31-32.
[558] Cosgrave; Prior; Grosvenor; Snow; Robert Kee, 'Dangerous Mudlands', *Listener*, 7 February 1980 p. 191; Coady; Barkley; Prawer; Pritchett; Rickenbacker; *Kirkus, Hudson Review;* Jack Sullivan, *Saturday Review,* 1 March 1980, p. 44; Henri C. Veit, *Library Journal,* 1 December 1979; Karl O'Lessker, 'Le Carré's People', *American Spectator,* March 1980, pp. 17-18.
[559] V.S. Pritchett, 'A Spy Romance', *New York Review of Books,* 7 February 1980, pp. 22-24; Harry Reid, 'Self -Effacing Superspy', *The Scotsman*, 2 February 1980 p. 3; *Kirkus*, 1 January 1980; also cited by Kanfer.

book's anti-Communism: Peter Grosvenor's positive review referenced "the assassin Karla", thus taking the politics out of political murder;[560] similarly V.S. Pritchett's positive review saw Karla merely as "a murderous absolutist" (Pritchett, p. 22). Amongst British reviewers, only David Caute's positive review challenged Karla's portrayal, complaining that in le Carré, "the only good Russians are those uncontaminated by Communism".[561] American reviewers echoed this: "since [Karla] is Red his motivation must be fanatical and 'absolutist', his methods merciless; whereas Smiley's motive and method are always described as 'reasonable' and 'decent'" (Moynahan p. 32). Michael Wood's tepid review concurred: "The Russians are monsters [...] because they don't care about killing and we do".[562] In fact, Karla is humanised in *Smiley's People*, a characterisation that Hamilton, Matthew Coady[563] Patrick Cosgrave,[564] alongside Americans Rickenbacker[565] and Kanfer, in a clutch of negative notices, found contradictory: "Karla [...] turns out not to be inhuman after all [...] although in all previous appearances he has been nothing but an arachnid" (Kanfer, p. 70).

Other reviewers saw Karla's humanisation as indicative of *Smiley's People*'s personal rather than political meaning. Alvarez declared, "the great battle of Secret Service titans [...] hinges finally on paternal guilt" making the novel "about character and [...] human weakness". As such, Prawer and William H. Pritchard saw the novel as merely "sentimental".[566] C.P. Snow's glowing review excluded politics altogether,[567] while Booker saw only a psychic "battle with the inner monster which lies in each of us".[568] Walter Clemons was typical in finding "Karla's secret is personal, familial" not

[560] Peter Grosvenor, 'I Spy Another Side to Smiley', *Daily Express*, 7 February 1980, p. 10.
[561] David Caute, 'It was a Man', *New Statesman*, 8 February 1980 p. 209: Caute authored *The Great Fear* (1978) about Communist witch-hunts in the US and *The Dancer Defects* (2003).
[562] Michael Wood, 'Spy Fiction, Spy Fact', *New York Times*, 6 January 1980, p. 16.
[563] Matthew Coady, 'Spy Story', *The Guardian*, 7 February 1980, p. 9.
[564] Patrick Cosgrave, 'Smiley's Final Bow', p. 14, *Daily Telegraph*, 7 February 1980. That day's headlines included 'Bolshoi Stars Defect' and 'Russians in Snow Battle', on Afghanistan (p. 1).
[565] William F. Rickenbacker, 'Missing in Action', *National Review*, 8 August 1980, pp. 974-5.
[566] William H. Pritchard, 'Fictional Fixes', *Hudson Review* 33; 2 (Summer 1980), 261-262.
[567] C.P. Snow, 'Estonian Connection', *Financial Times*, 2 February 1980, p. 10.
[568] Booker was an interviewee on 60s leftists who'd turned rightwards, in 'The Light that Failed', *Daily Telegraph*, 27 January 1980, pp. 8-9.

"political."[569] Only Tom Paulin's favourable review suggested that Karla's humanisation was *itself* a critique of Communism: "le Carré is saying that deep down we are all squashy liberals, and the central inspiration of *Smiley's People* is [...] to assert the superiority of Western to Eastern values" (Paulin, p. 60).[570]

Smiley's People's anti-statist theme found approbation via reviewers' contrast between principled, "human" Smiley and what Prior called "public school apparatchiks",[571] and Boyle called "time-servers" – echoed by many reviewers.[572] Regarding *Smiley's People*'s defeat of Soviet intelligence chief Karla, US reviewers Kanfer, Moynahan and Clemons saw this as British political fantasy. Amongst British reviewers, only Coleman (p. 42) and Thaw concurred: "If there had ever been a real Smiley we would have won the spy war years ago" (Thaw, p. 23).

Smiley's moral ambiguity in the new novel was little noted by critics. Grosvenor, Reid and Paulin saw only affirmation in the ending: "An unequivocal victory for good", with Smiley "a saintly confessor, a divine, a human absolute whom we can trust [...] a complex and hard-won assertion of English superiority" (Paulin, p. 60).[573] Pritchett, Coleman and Reid actually found Smiley *too* "saintly". Of British reviewers only Hamilton ("a bit of a monster", p. 16) and Alvarez (p. 49) recognised any 'corruption' in Smiley. It was left to American reviewers to make the political parallel: "We just don't believe that the dirty tricks of one side are OK because they were ordered up by a decent little English guy" (Moynahan, p. 32). "Smiley and his people are fighting for decency, but there is more blood on their hands than they [...] care to contemplate" (Wood). For Robert Lekachman, "[using] tactics imperceptibly less nasty than the KGB's [...] Smiley is able, but barely, to reassure himself that he cheats and deceives on behalf of the better society."[574]

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[569] Walter Clemons, 'The Old Dependables', *Newsweek*, 24 December 1979, p. 71.
[570] Tom Paulin, 'National Myths', *Encounter*, June 1980, 58-63.
[571] Allan Prior, 'Spymaster with the modern touch', *Daily Mail*, 4 February 1980, p. 7.
[572] Caute, Michael Ratcliffe, 'George's Black Grail', *The Times,* 7 February 1980, p. 12 (positive). Richard Barkley, 'Smiley's Final Showdown', *Sunday Express*, 3 February 1980 p. 6 (negative). Joseph McLellan, 'George Smiley's Revenge', *Washington Post*, 23 December 1979, p. 1; 4 (positive); Clemons.
[573] This was echoed by American J. Roger Lee, 'The Spy Who...' *Reason,* August 1980, pp. 49-50.
[574] Robert Lekachman, 'Good Boys, Bad Boys, Old Boys', *The Nation,* 26 April 1980, pp. 504-506.

This de-politicising tendency continued with literary critics. *Smiley's People* is regarded by Barley as an apolitical novel that "excludes even the acute, topical historical observations of its predecessor" (Barley, p. 127). Sauerberg concurs: "the importance of international relations is reduced to almost nil [...] Smiley's assignment is [...] a purely personal crusade" (Sauerberg, p. 186). Bennett similarly states, "[*Smiley's People*] contains many more signs of psychological rather than moral or political interest" (Bennett, p. 85).

This chapter argues to the contrary that, given *Smiley's People*'s timing and its strong anti-Soviet theme, this was le Carré's most overt political intervention, a conscious cultural front in the 'Second Cold War'. In doing so, this chapter will examine first the familiar faultline of Smiley's relationship with the state, focused, as previously, on bureaucracy. Then the chapter will explore how, under the rubric of the 'nation', such issues as Britain's role in the world and how to marry political expediency to a national investment in 'decency' are explored. Finally, the chapter will turn to the political enemy, and explore how these novels' most Manichaean depiction of Soviet Communism yet is complicated by an abrupt switch in the trilogy's characterisation of Karla. In each case, we will return to the novel's key event and climax: the politically laden defection of Karla at the Berlin Wall.

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2. "Malevolent Bureaucracy": Smiley and the British State

The British state is always a faultline in le Carré. In contemporary discourse on the *Tinker* TV series "an emphasis on the workings of institutions" (Oldham, p. 736) was seen as le Carré's identifying style. "Smiley is the spy as super-professional, not a James Bond daredevil, more a Sherlock Holmes of the files and dossiers" declared Robert Cushman in the popular *Radio Times*.[575] "Adventure becomes bureaucratized" as Cawelti & Rosenberg (p. 181) characterised both le Carré's espionage fiction and espionage reality. For all his avowed antipathy to bureaucracy therefore, Smiley has always been easily mistaken for a bureaucrat himself, with his belief that "the file was the only truth" (*Smiley's People*, p. 253). Yet Smiley is presented as quite distinct from the bureaucrats in *Smiley's People*, indeed, in stark contrast to *Schoolboy*, where Smiley was chief of the Circus, Smiley, now retired, is placed *outside* the state – operating independently, indeed against the specific instruction of the state's bureaucrats, expressing antipathy to the state. Smiley's actions, again in contrast to *Schoolboy*, are now that of operational fieldman rather than bureaucratic deskman. All this is contradictory however, as Smiley is brought into the plot as a state employee, and even when he departs his state brief, he works to defend and secure the state. Let us see how this is done.

"Caesar's Due": Smiley against the State

Following the murder of Soviet émigré, General Vladimir, on Hampstead Heath, Smiley is summoned to a bureaucrats' briefing in a safe flat in Hampstead. Oliver Lacon, "Cabinet Office factotum" (p. 42), comes anticipated, from previous novels, as the arch-bureaucrat, concerned to preserve state and status quo, prioritising appearances and continuity (e.g. issuing D-notices, p. 64). However, it becomes clear that Lacon and "Circus fixer" (p. 43) Lauder Strickland, both deskmen, have failed to care for former fieldman, Vladimir (p. 82). The Circus have botched an operation (pp. 55-60), resulting in Vladimir's murder, and

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[575] Robert Cushman, 'Sir Alec's assignment', *Radio Times*, 8–14 September 1979, 84–93. p. 87.

are now forced to bring in 'caseman', Smiley, because – implicitly – they cannot solve it themselves. Indeed it will take all of Smiley's 'field' skills to 'solve' the mystery: we see far more physical investigation/action in this novel than previously. By contrast, the bureaucrats' myopic, PR-orientated vision can conceive little more from Smiley than a cover-up, culminating in Lacon's Orwellian injunction to Smiley to "'temper truth'". This is derided by Smiley as Lacon's "declaration of personal faith" (p. 47), truth moulded to minimise inconvenience to the state's suspect legislative branch.[576] We see then that despite Smiley paraphrasing Orwell's *Animal Farm* ("émigrés in, émigrés out. Two legs good, two legs bad", *Smiley's People*, p. 138), the critique of British bureaucracy here is not, as in *The Spy* or *Looking Glass,* about 'totalitarian' instrumental rationality, but about bureaucracy's self-preserving "endless inaction" (Cawelti & Rosenberg, p. 186), shuffling paper on a desk, a perspective that echoes Thatcher's contemporaneous attitudes,[577] and her systematic attack on the civil service.[578]

Looking more deeply, it is clear that considerable textual effort is expended to put distance between Smiley and the state – clear evidence of a faultline. "When [such] a key concept is structurally unstable, it produces endless textual work. The awkward issue has continually to be revisited, reworked, rediscovered, reaffirmed" (*Faultlines*, p. 74). This faultline is indicative of unease in British society about even fully acknowledging – as opposed to endorsing – the state.

We see this first in the intelligence bureaucracy distancing itself from Smiley. In the safe flat, Strickland insists: "'that's a confidential matter [...] Mr Smiley may be a distinguished ex-member, but he's no longer family'" (p. 57). Lacon confirms this: declaring that Smiley will act, in tidying/covering up after Vladimir's murder, as "a private

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[576] Lewis glosses that "the tension between Smiley and Lacon is that between an individualist, often uneasy within an institution, and a bureaucrat, primarily concerned with preserving the institution" (Lewis, p. 168). "The displacement of the real goals of the organization for self-interest and organizational survival" (Dobel, p. 201).

[577] "The slow but certain route to national suffocation under a blanket of bureaucracy and State control", Thatcher, 'The Britain I Want', *The Sun*, 2 May 1979. http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104066

[578] Thatcher launched a series of anti civil-service initiatives, abolishing the Civil Service Department (1981), Financial Management Initiative (1982) and Performance Related Pay (1984), removing the brake on politicians (Du Gay, *In Praise*, pp. 121-122).

citizen, Vladimir's Executor, not ours", i.e., the state's. Smiley puts just as much distance

between himself and the state as vice versa, e.g. "Against stupidity, the gods themselves

fight in vain, thought Smiley: but Schiller had forgotten about the bureaucrats" (p. 63).

What's more, Smiley responds to Lacon's assertion, "'You have a duty, as we all do. A

loyalty'" with precisely the question Smiley himself previously deployed in *Call for the

Dead*: "'Duty to *what*? [...] Loyalty to *whom*?'" (*Call*, p. 63). The parallel is telling: as in

Call, Smiley will disobey the state's brief in order to *save* the state from a rather deeper

danger than bad press.

    There are also deeper political ramifications here than mere anti-statism. As part of

the distancing strategy, Lacon bids Smiley remember, "you are of the past, not the present"

(p. 64). However with Vladimir "'a total hangover from the worst days of the cold war'"

(p. 62), Smiley and Vladimir are thus positioned as anti-*détente*, indeed, *ante*-détente.

Détente is negatively associated with the novel's "current" Labour government (Labour

lost power in May 1979), which has imposed a new layer of (socialist) bureaucracy, the

"Wise Men", as a "brake" upon the intelligence services (p. 49) and declared "'certain

types of clandestine operation [...] anti-détente, inflammatory'" (pp. 50-51). Strickland

satirically lists the strictures: "'No honey-traps. No doubles. No stimulated defections. No

émigrés. No bugger-all'" (p. 50). Lacon pointedly links such methods with Smiley: "'in

your day the very meat and drink of counter-intelligence'" (p. 51). Again the distancing is

mutual: Smiley, as 'caseman', offers an unusually direct rejection of this bureaucratic

muzzling of action: "'What utter nonsense'" (p. 52). We can link this with Thatcher

damning Labour 'naivety' about Soviet aggression and her equation of détente's with

impotence.[579]

    Thus it is also crucial that, despite Lacon and Strickland's complaints about the

legislative branch's détente decrees, these bureaucrats are strongly associated with détente

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[579] "Hesitancy and lack of spirit has been the distinguishing mark of what has passed under Dr Owen for
British foreign policy", speech to Conservative Rally in Birmingham, 19 April 1979,
http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104026

themselves. Strickland deleted from the Circus's tapes of Vladimir's alarm-calls the key reference to "the Sandman" (Karla) (p. 65), removing the murder's association with the Soviet state. This is an association that Lacon also rejects when Smiley accuses "Moscow Centre" of the murder (p. 63), long established as synonymous with Karla.[580] Later, Connie will remind Smiley that new Circus Chief Saul Enderby (another desk rather than field man) first obstructed and finally quashed Connie, Smiley and Vladimir's previous anti-Karla operation (p. 164; 169). Connie deploys strikingly similar language to Strickland: "'no honey-trap, no dividend, no bugger-all.'" (p. 182). The Circus's sacking of Smiley and Connie, and distancing from Vladimir followed. Lacon will later complacently assert détente attitudes at a drunken dinner with Smiley, thinking the Vladimir affair concluded, blissfully unaware that Smiley is about to set off in hawkish pursuit of Karla's 'containment' (p. 258).

The link between socialist bureaucracy (the Welfare State) and Soviet bureaucracy (characterised here as "malevolent bureaucracy", p. 11), between socialism and Communism, is implicit in both Thatcher's speeches and in Smiley's reactions to the bureaucrats,[581] and is seen as appeasement.[582] By contrast, Smiley's actions will be a triumphant reassertion of aggressive, fieldman, anti-détente methods – essentially, 'containment' of Communism. In this we see more clearly the central contradiction. For all Smiley's criticism and disavowal of the state, Smiley's ultimate purpose is to *defend* the state, to secure it, indeed, as we shall see, to glorify it via Karla's defection. Paulson's is thus a typical but inaccurate assessment of le Carré's supposed anti-establishment trope: "It is the state – the flimsy, bungling, ruthless system of MI5 – which betrays its own operatives [...] In the Cold War novels the ultimate evil is the system" (Paulson, p. 325).

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[580] Lacon: "'By Karla you mean Moscow Centre? [...] I think it safer to stay with institutions if you don't mind. In that way we are spared the embarrassment of personalities. After all, that's what institutions are *for*, isn't it?'" (*Schoolboy*, p. 67).
[581] E. g. Thatcher's speech to Christian Democratic Union Conference, 25 May 1976, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103034
[582] "This Government will never go the way of appeasement, although any Government formed by the Labour Party might", Thatcher, 30 October 1980, PQs, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104438

Let us explore, in dissident spirit, quite how integrated Smiley is with the state, how *Smiley's People* enacts yet another Operation Margarine.

Smiley responds to Lacon's/the state's early-hours summons without question (*Smiley's People*, p. 34), and accepts Lacon's commission to investigate Vladimir's murder for the sake of "his" "service" the Circus (p. 62). What's more, while Smiley's relationship to Vladimir is considerably warmer than the bureaucrats', it is hardly one of personal friendship: it is a political relationship. When Smiley asserts, "'Vladimir was one of the best agents we ever had'" (p. 52) the "we" is unquestionably the British state. Nevertheless there is a running textual personalisation of Smiley's motivation, e.g. "As with his marriage, so with his sense of public service"; Smiley then says to himself: "'I invested my life in institutions […] and I am left only with myself' (p. 138). When Smiley pursues his investigation beyond Lacon's restrictive brief, the text suggests Smiley thereby distances himself from the state, by repeatedly lying to Lacon (pp. 128-9; 259). But Smiley's decision to pursue a larger Cold-War agenda, against Karla – still synonymous, at this point, with "Moscow Centre" (p. 252) – is a curious take on the 'personal'. It is a political decision to aggressively secure the British state.

In a key passage, Smiley ponders "his sense of *civitas*, or how much or how little, he owed to Oliver Lacon: 'Your duty, George.' Yet who could seriously be Lacon's man? he asked himself. Who could regard Lacon's fragile arguments as Caesar's due?" (p. 138). While ostensibly establishing Smiley's actions as antipathetic to the state, this passage actually highlights a key distinction. "Caesar's due" is an allusion to Christ's "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22. 21). While Thatcher had recently interpreted these lines as defining the limits of the state's claim on the individual,[583] we might more aptly make a distinction between the state as entitled functionaries (bureaucrats) and the state as a deep system of interests. That the two are enduringly confused is largely due to the cultural queasiness in

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[583] Thatcher, Speech at St Lawrence Jewry; http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103522

owning to capitalism and violence as key facets of the British state. So we can see also that Smiley's invocation of "civitas" (civic duty) is not the same as loyalty to state functionary, Lacon. When Smiley later revisits the Circus, he is reported as:

> …staring at the building he was about to take his leave of, and at the light that was burning weakly in his former room, much as old men will look at the houses where they were born, the schools where they were educated and the churches where they were married (*Smiley's People*, p. 252).

In this way, the political institution, the Circus, wherein both the state's functionaries *and* the state's deep structural interests conjoin, is paradoxically recalibrated as personal, via the common le Carré technique of investing the institutional with the emotional. This is also a key practice of nationalism: indeed Weber's definition of "civitas" blurs state with nation ("the personification of the total body of the citizens", Weber, p. 697). We shall return to the nation, but suffice to say that the national and the personal emphases on Smiley's actions also blur in *Smiley's People,* eliding Operation Margarine: the fact that Smiley is defending and securing the British state.

"Deniable Blessing": Smiley and State United

Smiley's authority during his investigation then is of considerable interest. He carries both the limited authority a state functionary (Lacon) has given him to act on the state's behalf, but Smiley carries also the authority of the state's deeper interests from both his past (as state functionary himself), and what has become his personality, wherein the personal (Ann being its sole representative) and the political (the Circus) cannot be disentangled. For the novel's women, anxious to protect their former Cold Warrior partners, Smiley simply represents the state: the state specifically as collective threat to the personal. "'Stay away all of you […] however bad it is'" says Stella, wife of Soviet émigré, Villem, when

Smiley visits (p. 107): note the collective address. Émigré, Mikhel's wife, Elvira, Vladimir's lover, shows "contempt" for Smiley when he visits Mikhel's Baltic Library: she blames Smiley for the *state's* failure to protect Vladimir (p. 119). When Smiley comes to the Oxfordshire "dacha" to interrogate Connie Sachs, Connie's disturbed lesbian partner, Hilary, already sacked by Smiley/the state after running amok in the Circus cipher room (p. 178), finds in Smiley a political threat to her and Connie's personal relationship: "'I want you to go'" Hilary tells Smiley (p. 183) before again breaking down.

Even the *challenges* to Smiley's authority, suggestions that his investigation is independent, thus personal rather than political, ultimately reassert Smiley's integration with the state. Connie's goads – Smiley is a "baron" in the same "tribe" as Enderby (p. 167); "'George is *fifth floor*'" (Circus top brass) – are sufficiently close to the truth to be telling. Smiley negotiates another female gatekeeper to obtain an interview with another former state colleague, another émigré former Cold Warrior, Toby Esterhase, and another challenger to his authority. By again suggesting Smiley is freelancing, Esterhase emphasises the institutional reality: "'Who is speaking here actually? Is it George Smiley? Is it Oliver Lacon?'" (p. 148): i.e. Smiley or the state. The distinction is spurious: it is Smiley speaking as the deeper state than Lacon's bureaucratic myopia can access. Later, to Otto Leipzig's friend, Kertschmarr, in Hamburg, Smiley claims to "represent a large company", though this paltry subterfuge disappears when Kertschmarr responds, "'your parent company – okay, London'" (p. 195). Arriving to question a besieged Ostrakova in Paris, Smiley says he has "'come from London to help you'" (p. 227). 'London' in both these cases is the British intelligence services, and thus the state, just as it was in *The Spy*. Roping in Peter Guillam in Paris to his investigation, Smiley employs "all the authority of [Guillam's] old chief" (p. 231), a reminder of Smiley's status as head of the Circus in *Schoolboy*. Smiley's authority then comes from the state both present and past.

Even when the state and Smiley *overtly* join forces, when Circus chief, Saul Enderby authorises Smiley to ensnare Karla, the mutual distancing of Smiley and state continues.

Enderby gives Smiley's operation his "totally deniable blessing" (p. 248). Should Smiley's Swiss 'sting' against Karla fail, Enderby will disown the operation as, "'a ludicrous piece of *private* enterprise by a senile spy who's lost his marbles'" (p. 247; my emphasis). Yet it is the distancing of Smiley from the state which borders the ludicrous: Smiley has to visit the Circus registry at night (p. 251); there is an attempt to deny Smiley the very Bill Haydon file that he himself wrote (p. 253). The effect is a textual "deniable blessing" whereby Smiley's centrality to the state is asserted even via its very disavowal. Indeed we might regard the state's "deniable blessing" as Operation Margarine, as summing up precisely the equivocation regarding the state in all these novels.

This equivocation is read by critics as indicative of the book's lack of political meaning. Monaghan claims, "having been stripped of its social and ideological dimension, Smiley's quest for Karla is now nothing more than an acting out of personal obsessions" (Monaghan, p. 139). Martin argues for understanding this Cold War novel "without the Cold War trappings" (Martin, p. 48).[584] However, regarding Smiley's motivation, Enderby asks Smiley if his attack on Karla is "business or for pleasure": a clear separation of personal and political, individual and state. Enderby is referencing Bill Haydon's seduction of Smiley's wife, Ann, in *Tinker* at Karla's orders. Smiley replies, "'I was never conscious of pleasure [...] Or rather the distinction'" (p. 248). Haydon's seduction of Ann was political: to distinguish between Smiley's personal and political pain – or pleasure – is thus spurious. This is a key admission.

Haydon *is* a key factor in Smiley's current operation against Karla however: Haydon is mentioned 24 times in *Smiley's People*. Enderby makes clear his own desire for political revenge for the Haydon debacle (p. 246), an unambiguously state-impelled motive; Haydon is cited by Smiley at the very moment Karla crosses to the West (p. 333). So *Smiley's People* can be seen to 'resolve' *Tinker* and thus also to resolve the historical humiliation of the British state by Philby. As head of Soviet intelligence, Karla will be a

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[584] Beene adjudges Smiley's "quest inconsequential" (p. 90).

vital source of information on the Soviets, and a tactical blow to Soviet state structures. Enderby again: "'I *want* Karla sitting in the hot seat at Sarratt, coughing out his life story to the inquisitors'" (p. 245). This is political. In this attack on Karla/the Soviet Union, the two versions of the British state come together, the bureaucratic functionaries and the state's deeper interests.

The resultant 'sting' against Karla consequently has further political ramifications. The British state is now (deniably) endorsing anti-détente action, actualised by the (unofficial) re-employment of the state's former (semi-legal) Lamplighters and Scalphunters in the sting (p. 264), groups previously prescribed as "anti-détente" by the state's own Wise Men.[585] My parentheses here suggest the constant qualification the text pursues in order to maintain distance between Smiley and state. In fact the state's monopoly of violence is being put at Smiley's disposal: a crucial structural link between state and 'freelance' Smiley. Barley complains that Enderby ditches his previous bureaucratic inaction/ détente approach all-too readily (Barley, p. 128). But what we have witnessed, through Smiley's painstaking investigation for two-thirds of the book, is an *out-manoeuvring* of the state's derided bureaucracy, the state as entitled functionaries, by Smiley, representative and champion of the state's deeper interests. These interests are defined as requiring aggressive action against the Soviet Union.

The defection of Karla at the Berlin Wall[586] is the endpoint towards which all the actions and strategies described have been working. However, even here, the equivocation regarding the state complicates this political victory. We already know, via the self-conscious historicisation of Smiley's 'sting', with its "scale-model at Sarratt" (p. 286) that Karla's defection will be regarded as a victory for the British state within the secret state. Now however ownership of this collective "triumph" (p. 333) is abruptly depoliticised via

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[585] Rita Rippetoe in 'Layered Genre Strategies in *Smiley's People'*, *Clues* 20;1 (1999), 89-100, offers a convincing reading of this plot section in terms of the "crime caper": see *The Italian Job* (Peter Collinson, 1969); *The Sting* (George Roy Hill, 1973). The caper genre's motifs and lightness of tone help legitimise/elide both the role of the state and its use of illicit methods.
[586] The precise location is Berlin's Glenlicke Bridge, where Soviet spy Gordon Lonsdale was swapped for British spy Greville Wynne – another fictional 'resolution' of history.

a clutch of personal pronouns: "'George [...] All your life. Fantastic!'" congratulates Esterhase (p. 335). "'George, you miracle, you won,'" says Guillam (c.f. *Secret Pilgrim*'s "*we* won"). But Smiley's equivocal, "'Did I [win]? [...] Yes. Yes, well I suppose I did" (p. 333) seemingly rejects this personalisation, or that this represents a victory. Or, being British, he simply does not like to boast. The political victory, however, remains.

Smiley's relationship with the state then is a faultline. State and Smiley mutually disavow one another, but Smiley uses the state's authority and monopoly of violence ultimately to *uphold* the state. Clearly, the "awkward issue" that is being textually worked through is that the state in British culture is normatively bad (Leys, p. 273), especially in the Thatcher era. The novel's collective state is antipathetic to individualism, its bureaucracy operates, in arch-bureaucrat Lacon's words, as "'a channel, a filter, a brake'" (p. 49), benefiting its functionaries, as Thatcher claimed, rather than the citizenry. The policy of détente is seen as a major indication of both the bureaucratic stasis of state functionaries and the naivety of the Socialist legislative branch. The novel's plot gives Smiley, representing deeper state interests, a triumphant victory over bureaucracy, the Labour Party, the policy of détente, *and* the USSR. However, these deep state interests are another "awkward issue" in a culture queasy about its capitalist base and violent superstructure, and so the victory is not properly claimed by either Smiley or the state. However, despite this Operation Margarine equivocation, there is clearly a victory here, and the downbeat reaction cannot dampen the generic satisfaction of the successful 'sting', or the romance's joyful triumph of the hero over the villain. We might best regard this defeat of Karla then as a *national* victory, and it is to the concept of the 'nation' that we will now turn.

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3. "The Survival of Reasonable Man": Smiley and the British Nation

The ultimate plot trajectory of *Smiley's People* is le Carré's headiest national fantasy yet: the defection of the chief of Soviet counter-intelligence to the West, a coup engineered by the British, entirely without American help.[587] This glorification of Britain was a motif entirely in tune with Thatcher's determination to boost Britain's international standing: "we have ceased to be a nation in retreat," she declared.[588] *Smiley's People* superficially seems to accept the reality of British decline less ambiguously than *Schoolboy*. During the Enderby-Smiley briefing, Enderby asks if Smiley's Karla operation is "'not all a wicked Bolshie plot, George, to lure us to our ultimate destruction?'" Smiley replies: "'I'm afraid we're no longer worth the candle, Saul.'" If "Enderby did not care to be reminded of the limitations of British grandeur" (*Smiley's People*, p. 246) nor, ultimately, does the novel: Britain here is no longer a nation in retreat either.

As ever, it is in this discursive field of the nation that, in le Carré's fiction, political anxieties and fantasies about "Britain" and Britishness are explored, sublimated or resolved. British public image was as crucial as its reality in a Cold War often more about PR than physical engagement. British self-image was also key in a Cold War where home-front morale was perpetually tested by the threat of nuclear war. However nation cannot function without the state (Gellner, p. 4). So, just as Thatcher's real-world reassertion of Britain rested on the state's monopoly of violence (the Falklands War), so does Smiley's fictional reassertion. The Grigoriev sting rests heavily upon the threat of the state's Scalphunters (e.g. "hard man" Skordeno's manhandling of Grigoriev p. 290). Beyond this, Smiley's employment of expedient means to achieve the national victory of Karla's defection renders the novels' always-complex maintenance of Smiley's characteristic 'decency' untenable.

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[587] Le Carré admitted flattering British intelligence by prioritising "conspiracy" over the more realistic "cock-up" (Gross, p. 33). He also admitted deliberately leaving the US out to strengthen British fictional hands (Vaughan, p. 340).

[588] As Peregrine Worsthorne declared at the time, in "calling for a firm stand against Soviet aggression" Thatcher was "an interventionist lion abroad, willing to roar furiously in defence of her cubs against the Russian bear," *Daily Telegraph,* 27 January 1980, p. 16.

Character is a key area where ideological contradictions are played out (and revealed). Since Smiley has been a synecdoche for Britain, exemplar of British values and characteristics throughout, this 'corruption' in Smiley in *Smiley's People* is also a national corruption. We might say that reversing British political decline results in British moral decline. But where previously the contradictions in Smiley's characterisation were elided, those contradictions are rendered central in *Smiley's People* and Smiley's moral corruption is textually flagged. Rather than exploring the meaning of this contradiction, critics reveal a tendency we will see also with Karla's changing characterisation: to choose the Smiley (or Karla) that suits their cultural temperament, and to ignore the other. So let us explore the textual evidence for Smiley/Britain first as newly 'corrupt' and second as enduringly 'decent', and show how both these characterisations carry political implications, indeed are "national allegories", before grasping and analysing the contradiction, the faultline, itself.

The sub-headings that follow derive from Connie Sachs' oft-quoted, little understood speech: "'It's not a *shooting* war any more, George. [...] That's the trouble. It's grey. Half-angels fighting half-devils. No one knows where the lines are'" (*Smiley's People*, p. 182). Typically this is taken as an articulation of the moral equivalence between Soviet Union and the West for which le Carré had become acclaimed. Closer inspection reveals that "half-angels" and "half-devils" are not the same. If there is a neutral moral line, then half-*angel* is halfway to beatitude, half-*devil* halfway to damnation: there remains a vast gulf between them. Which side of the line is Smiley, and thus Britain, on?

Smiley as Half-Devil

Throughout the book's last third, the text flags up Smiley's moral corruption, focused on the exploitation of Karla's daughter to bring about Karla's defection and defeat. This is textually effected by likening Smiley's behaviour to Karla's. The first such occasion is Connie's "'twin cities we used to say you were, you and Karla, two halves of the same apple'," speech. Smiley's aggressive reaction to Connie here begins to contradict the

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previous definitional certainty that "neither Karla's methods nor Karla's absolutism were his own" (p. 186). But the shift only really occurs at the two-thirds mark, when Smiley switches from investigating Karla to attacking Karla, from reacting to Karla's moves, to proactively moving *against* Karla. No longer in retreat. In Berne, Switzerland, plotting his tactics, Smiley asks himself the key question, "What would the absolutist do which we are not doing ourselves?" (p. 271) – explicitly using Karla as role-model, and so linking Smiley's, thus Britain's, hitherto 'decent' methods to Soviet Communism's supposed expediency.[589] In Berne, consequently, Smiley begins to confuse *himself* with Karla, declaring "I wrote it" of the Grigoriev "show"; then correcting himself, "No [...] Karla wrote it" (p. 273).

Le Carré, in an interview to publicise the *Smiley's People* televisation, flagged up this interpretation. "This was to be Smiley's confrontation with Karla that would destroy them both. Smiley, by an act of professional absolutism, Karla, by a lapse into humanity. It was to be a moral Reichenbach Falls."[590] This references Conan Doyle's *The Final Problem* (1893) where, tracking his nemesis, Moriarty, Holmes himself dies with Moriarty in the Swiss Falls. This use of Karla as (im)moral reference point for Smiley's corruption, is clinched by the book's climax:

> An unholy vertigo seized [Smiley] as the very evil he had fought against seemed to reach out and possess him and claim him despite his striving, calling him a traitor also; mocking him, yet at the same time applauding his betrayal. On Karla has descended the curse of Smiley's compassion; on Smiley the curse of Karla's fanaticism. I have destroyed him with the weapons I abhorred, and they are his. We have crossed each other's frontiers, we are the no-men of this no-man's-land (*Smiley's People*, p. 332).

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[589] Smiley will twice be referred to as "bureaucratic" in this section, once playing the part of a Soviet "commissar" in the Berne 'sting' against Grigoriev (p. 243; p. 294).
[590] Byron Rogers, 'Closing the File', *Radio Times,* 18 September 1982, pp. 88-92.

For many critics, this passage is an entirely negative verdict on Smiley. Cawelti &
Rosenberg put the case: Smiley "deploy[s] methods just as ruthless as his antagonist's [...]
Through a process of corruption [...] Smiley has become another Karla" (Cawelti &
Rosenberg, p. 179). This is widely echoed elsewhere.[591] The sense of a political conflict is
rather vague in critical accounts however, as it is in le Carré's Reichenbach Falls gloss.
These critics thus follow the text's inconsistent and misleading indications that the
Smiley/Karla conflict is a personal rather than political vendetta.[592] Yet the language is
entirely that of the Cold War conflict, as parlayed in Western culture, and le Carré's
fiction: "evil", "fanaticism" and inhumanity ("no-man") on one side, "compassion" and
decency on the other. This, then, is the case for the prosecution; let us now examine the
case for the defence.

Smiley as Half-Angel

A significant minority of critics assert the continuing untainted 'decency' of Smiley as
against his textually flagged corruption. Dobel asserts: "Smiley does not become Karla
[...] Smiley never kills his lover or his agents. Nor does he kill to cover his tracks" (Dobel,
p. 210). Wolfe concurs, "to say that Karla's defection blurs all moral differences between
himself and Smiley is to distort le Carré's meaning" (Wolfe, p. 255).[593] Monaghan claims,
"Smiley is, if anything, a more deeply caring person during the action of *Smiley's People*
than at any other time during his fictional career" (Monaghan, p. 141). While, again, a
sense of politics is absent here, it is not as if these critics lack evidence. Following the
mixed, contradictory mythologisation in *Schoolboy*, Smiley is ushered into *Smiley's*

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[591] See also: "in order to win, [Smiley] has had to use Karla's methods and ruthlessness [...] lowering Smiley
to Karla's level" (Rothberg, p. 62)l "By succumbing to Karla's methods, Smiley damages (if not defeats) the
beliefs he seeks to ratify" (Beene, p. 110). The same point is made by: Sauerberg (pp. 202-206), Panek (p.
246), Homberger (p. 88), Dobler (p. 45), Buzard (p. 186), Everett (p. 512), Cobbs (p. 146), Aronoff (p. 28)
and Bennett (p. 94), Atkins (p. 181), Wolfe (p. 234) and Oldham (p. 729) all cite Smiley's moral 'fall' but
don't explicitly cite Karla as his role-model.
[592] Curiously, Cobbs (p. 146) Sauerberg (p. 206), Dobler (p. 359) Everett (p. 511) and Beene (p. 109) all read
Smiley's dismissal of Ann as testament to his 'corruption'.
[593] Christian critic, Hughes concurs (Hughes, p. 278).

People in awed tones by the Superintendent's focalisation at Hampstead Heath, producing some of the worst writing of le Carré's career:

> An abbey, the Superintendent decided. That's what [Smiley] was [...] made up of all sorts of conflicting ages and styles and convictions [...] man as God's architecture [...] moulded by the hand of ages, infinite in his striving and diversity (*Smiley's People*, p. 40).

Secondly, a chapter before Connie's "half-angels" speech, Smiley has dubbed himself "Mr Angel" when visiting Toby Esterhase ("'Got an angel for you'" says the receptionist, p. 143). Thirdly, a chapter before, Circus courier, Ferguson, tells Smiley that although officially redundant, he is "'still on the side of the angels'" (p. 135), a line that links Smiley, thus, with Britain: the "right" side in the Cold War (with the same parallel of a misleading redundancy). Fourthly, seen in Paris, through a besieged Ostrakova's eyes, Smiley is characterised by "goodwill" and "his very air of humanity" (p. 227). "She sensed in him a passionate caring for herself that had nothing to do with death, but with survival, she sensed that she was looking at a face that was concerned rather than one that had banished sympathy for ever" (p. 227). Again, we should recall that in this scene Smiley makes his national link explicit: "'I have come from London to help you'" (p. 227). The personal here and the political merge: Smiley's compassion and decency is Western compassion and decency, as against the coldness and brutality of the Eastern representatives, Karla, and even more so, his thug-for-hire, Kirov. The individual is ideological.

Fifthly, in precise tandem to the two-thirds point 'change' in Smiley's characterisation, the text actually *steps up* the Smiley-mythologising. After meeting Smiley:

Collins and Enderby afterwards privily agreed – how everything that Smiley said seemed to pass through the room like a chill; how in some way they failed to understand, they had removed themselves to a higher order of conduct for which they were unfit (p. 244).

"A higher order of conduct" is quite the reverse of moral corruption, especially given the nature of the Enderby/Smiley meeting: the plan an illegal, at best amoral 'sting' and then blackmail against Karla, using his disturbed daughter as leverage. This reverence for Smiley, however, is just a taster: during the actual 'sting' in Switzerland, the action is regularly telescoped into a reverent, mythologised past, e.g. "the burning of Tricky Tony, as it afterwards became known in the Circus mythology" (p. 283). Later conversations with Toby Esterhase are quoted, all distinctly reverent: "George always bruised easy [...] you see a lot, your eyes get very painful" (p. 250). "Once again, Toby insists on bearing witness here to Smiley's unique mastery of the occasion [....] George held the whole scene 'like a thrush's egg in his hand'" (p. 301). The choice of words makes this not just a tribute to espionage *technique* (thus potentially to expediency), but to Smiley's *delicacy*, to a decency that needs to be understood in national terms.

Calling upon the author as unreliable witness, le Carré's statement at *Smiley's People*'s publication is instructive: "'I am myself absolutely satisfied that, by and large the West has a better record. I think it's quite wrong to say [...] that both sides in fact use the same methods'" (Vaughan, p. 340). Clearly this contradicts le Carré's later Reichenbach Falls comment. By 2004, le Carré would go even further, offering an unequivocal affirmation of Smiley as *moral* exemplar, and explicitly connecting him – and this exemplarity – to the British nation-state:

'[Smiley] is above all, some kind of arbiter of ethics, some kind of arbiter of morality and human behaviour. Some things are simply beyond the pale. I think that's also, of

course, as a generality, true [...] of the secret services. That although all kinds of wicked things are attributed to them, there were certain things you never fooled with.'[594]

This wholesale affirmation of fundamental British decency rather undermines le Carré's reputation as anti-establishment. But to return to Smiley, we can conclude that there is if anything, even more evidence for Smiley's continued decency than for his corruption: both judgements are present in *Smiley's People*'s text, and a black/white reading necessarily reduces and oversimplifies. It is the complexity – and yes, the contradictions – in le Carré's characterisation that makes him more satisfying among spy writers than the one-dimensional characterisation of, say, Charles Cumming. Moreover, in all this, positive and negative critical judgements of Smiley alike have been largely divested of political meaning. So the task now is to combine these two understandings of Smiley, to confront their contradictions and to grasp their political meaning.

Half-Angel *and* Half-Devil: Smiley's Contradiction

Smiley's behaviour in *Smiley's People* – endangering Villem; exploiting Connie; kidnapping and blackmailing Grigoriev; deploying Karla's disturbed daughter, Tatiana, as bait – is not a pretty picture. However neither is it quite at the level of Karla's string of murders in the same novel. Smiley's behaviour is, in fact, no better and no worse than in previous books. Smiley castigates his own "decency" after he kills Dieter Frey in *Call*, but Smiley is absolved by the reader, as acting in defence of self and country. Smiley's role in the exploitation of Leamas and death of Liz in *The Spy* is at best ambiguous. In *Tinker*, Smiley relies on violence to support his investigation, but, in protecting his country, is again absolved. Smiley is indirectly responsible for the deaths of Frost and Luke in *Schoolboy,* again accuses himself, and is again absolved: Connie compares Smiley's

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[594] *Smiley's People* interview (BBC DVDs; 2004).

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contrition with Karla's supposed inhuman lack of it. So we see that Smiley's behaviour has not changed, despite some critics' claims:[595] it has been consistently expedient, but, until *Smiley's People*, his 'corruption' has been either elided or absolved. This time it is flagged: why?

Smiley, at his most pessimistic about defeating Karla asks, "How can I win? [...] alone, restrained by doubt and a sense of decency – how can any of us? – against this remorseless fusillade?" (p. 220). That "any of us" sub-clause is important, as it ratifies the collective, the nation, in this war. Smiley's questioning is immediately followed by a meditation on "the Karla of the human heart after all" (p. 221). Thus the answer is that Smiley, as representative of the British nation, can only "win" against such an implacable, inhuman enemy, by setting aside "decency". It is worth citing a le Carré interview from two years previously: "'I certainly find myself committed more and more to the looser forms of Western democracy *at any price*. And I've become more and more disenchanted about the possibility of understanding the Soviet Union'" (Barber, p. 44: my emphasis). This is an anti-détente statement. Similarly, Smiley's decision is a rejection of the détente he has already challenged in the safe-flat scene, and is a suitably Second Cold War shift into containment of Communism. Thus the need to shroud Smiley's – and Britain's – actions in ambiguity, to elide them or 'resolve' them is lessened. Although le Carré's sixties Cold-War novels were not the statements of East-West equivalence claimed, Leamas's assertion, "London won – that's the point" (*The Spy* p. 229) revealed the cynicism of Cold Warriors, particularly as the price of this victory would transpire to be Liz's life. But in *Smiley's People*, with its Berlin Wall finale strongly echoing *The Spy*, the same message of British victory at the cost of expedient morality is conveyed instead as political *realism*, in the face of an implacable, remorseless enemy: Soviet Communism. Far from this being seen as the kind of bureaucratic instrumentalism that Smiley has previously stood against, Smiley, as shown, retains many of his saintly characteristics. Half angel and

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[595] E.g. Panek, p. 247.

half devil co-exist in a flawed human nature.

Indeed there is a hint of this in le Carré's original "moral Reichenbach Falls" statement. Contained within this reference (also in *Smiley's People*, p. 234; 237) is the fact that Sherlock Holmes was *not* destroyed, that he did *not* die in the Falls (although, crucially, Moriarty did). Such was Holmes' popularity with the British public that Doyle later contrived Holmes' escape from the Falls and, from 1901, wrote a new series of Holmes stories. In *His Last Bow* (1917), Holmes is presented as a spy and, for a country at war, an overtly national hero: that the story concludes with a warning about an "East wind", while ostensibly referencing Germany, can't help be significant in the year of the Russian Revolution. Pursuing this parallel, Smiley had certainly become a national cultural hero in Britain by *Smiley's People*, a tendency that continued with the book's 1982 televisation. As with Doyle and Holmes, le Carré wanted to drop Smiley,[596] but brought him back again for 1991's *Secret Pilgrim* (complete with Holmes reference, *Secret*, p. 8). In what is inevitably a valedictory post-Cold War novel ("'We won'", p. 17), Smiley, brought in to address student spies at Sarratt, is "a legend of the Service" (*Pilgrim*, p. 11), who sits on a "throne of *honour*" (p. 13, my emphasis). Even so, Smiley makes this key statement: "'The end may justify the means – if it wasn't supposed to, I dare say you wouldn't be here. But there's a price to pay, and the price does tend to be oneself.'"

We can read much the same message in *Smiley's People*. For even if Smiley/Britain is compromised in its Cold-War conduct, Smiley also remains a defender of British liberalism against Communist encroachment, and in *Smiley's People* brings about the ultimate fantasy victory for the British nation.[597] The contradiction of violence and expediency as against 'decency' cannot be resolved, because Smiley, like Western

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[596] Melvyn Bragg, 'A Talk with John le Carré, *New York Times Book Review*, 13 March 1983, p. 22.
[597] This is certainly how Stafford sees it: "by the end of his fictional career Smiley has surely won a place in the pantheon of British heroes by carrying off major coups against the nation's enemies that outrank the feats of Bond" (Stafford, p. 210).

liberalism, is contradictory.[598] If on this occasion, le Carré confronts rather than eliding this faultline, what we have in *Smiley's People*, is a highly *relative* critique of Smiley and of Britain. In comparison to Soviet nemesis, Karla, Smiley is a bastion of moral integrity and a beacon of consistent characterisation, thus the national Britain vs. Soviet Union antinomy remains, however complex. It is to this political enemy we will now turn.

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[598] Lewis comes closest to recognising this: "Smiley lives with the uncomfortable paradox that to defend the moral scheme he believes in he must resort to expediency" (Lewis, p. 177).

4. "We Must Combat Communism": Karla as the Political Enemy

Smiley's People features the most Manichaean portrayal of the Soviet Union in le Carré's fiction. For two-thirds of the book, the Soviet Union, "Communism" and "Karla" are synonymous: Karla continues as a ruthless, murderous political 'fanatic'. However during the book's final third, Karla is humanised, via his love for his schizophrenic daughter, Tatiana, and Karla's murders in *Smiley's People*'s transpire after all to be personally rather than politically motivated. This is a *fundamental* contradiction in Karla's characterisation, a faultline which complicates but does not sever the link between Karla and Soviet Communism. Nor does the humanising of Karla transform the presentation of Soviet Communism: rather, it provides a fresh flank of attack upon Communism. Let us now examine how the Soviet Union is initially presented and define Karla's relationship to it.

"Karla is a Fanatic": Karla as Political Enemy

Much of the condemnation of the Soviet system is provided, in *Smiley's People*, via the testament and treatment of Soviet émigrés, dissidents, who – ideologically intimidated, imprisoned, murdered – are lent huge moral authority. "It was your system which was immoral," thinks Ostrakova, in Paris, when accused of immorality by Soviet enforcer, Kirov (*Smiley's People*, p. 11). The "system" is Communism. Kirov speaks "in the brutal accents of Moscow officialdom" (p. 10). Ostrakova defines the Soviet system as a "soulless, numberless universe of brutalized functionaries" (p. 121); humanity eclipsed by 'ideology'. Her lover, Glikman's, imprisonment is a "slow, doctrinal prison death" (p. 71): again here 'ideology' is dominant. Ostrakova recalls typical anti-Soviet crimes being "[to have] questioned the *absolute* right of the authorities [...] worshipped some unacceptable god [...] painted criminally abstract pictures; or [...] published politically endangering love poems" (p. 16; my emphasis). While having historical basis, these satirical 'crimes' are selected as 'personal', located where the political, in Western, empirical terms, does not 'belong'. As Arendt wrote, "totalitarian bureaucracy, with a more complete

understanding of the meaning of absolute power, intruded upon the private individual and his inner life with equal brutality" (Arendt, p. 245). Ostrakova's Christianity links with the Catholic Polish Solidarity movement, which opposed Soviet control (Barley, p. 15).

The Soviet Union is defined throughout *Smiley's People* as dangerous: ostensibly to its dissidents, but also, by implication, to the West (rendering détente naïve). "'The danger is absolute,'" Otto Leipzig, another émigré, warns Ostrakova (*Smiley's People*, p. 67). "Absolute" recalls both Arendt, above, and le Carré's favoured term for Communism: "absolutism", merging ends and means. At the novel's beginning, another dissident, General Vladimir, "defender of the free individual [...] against faceless Communism" (Buzard, p. 167) has his face shot off by the Soviets (*Smiley's People*, pp. 27-120). Buzard convincingly suggests in this a textual contrast between (Western) subjecthood and (Eastern) facelessness. There is a Soviet attempt upon Ostrakova's life (*Smiley's People*, pp. 70-72), while the murders of Vladimir and of Leipzig (pp. 210-221) are *more* extreme than previous Soviet acts in le Carré's novels. That these murders will transpire to be committed to enable Karla's daughter to *escape* the Soviet Union, and are thus *themselves* dissident, is not revealed until two-thirds through the book (p. 221), and so the murders' association with political rather than personal extremity is never properly overturned via retrospect. Indeed Ostrakova opines, "They had been murdering the entire Russian people for centuries, whether in the name of the Czar, or God, or Lenin" (p. 70). The "Russian people", the nation, is herein itself defined as dissident: "*They*" conveys the Soviet state as a power elite that transcends professed 'ideology', a continuum of an ever-oppressive 'absolutist' ruling class through the Czar's monarchical absolutism to the Soviet totalitarian regime. This recalls *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where the only principle is *power* (*1984*, p. 152). Smiley's tribute to Estonian Vladimir makes a similar point: "'Vladimir witnessed the ruthless repression of his homeland by the government he had served [...] a population of a million sober, hard-working people, cut to bits'" (p. 53). Communism, the Soviet system and the Soviet state are thus defined in *Smiley's People* by state ideological

intimidation, imprisonment and murder in the pursuit of power. Let us now examine the specific character of Karla.

Karla is strongly linked with the Soviet Union and Communism. Although Karla is not named until p. 138, Smiley's early invocation of "Moscow Centre" as Vladimir's murderer (p. 63) is, we have seen, synonymous with Karla, thus the reader also attributes Leipzig's murder and Ostrakova's attempted murder to the Soviet state, a link which retrospect cannot entirely uncouple. Karla is later described as head of the Thirteenth Directorate, a "separate service within Moscow Centre" (p. 236), "the elite" (p. 301): this tallies with both Arendt's assertion of the secret police as bastions of power in Soviet society (*Totalitarianism*, p. 245) and Western culture's Soviet Union-as-prison motif. Karla's delusional daughter, Tatiana, describes Karla as "more powerful than the Czar" (*Smiley's People*, p. 283), again suggesting a Russian continuum of 'absolutism' beyond 'ideology'.

Smiley's only encounter with Karla, in a Delhi prison, occurred originally in *Tinker*, was revisited in *Schoolboy*, and is revisited again in *Smiley's People* (pp. 139-141): as such, it clearly represents an "awkward issue [which] has continually to be revisited, reworked, rediscovered, reaffirmed" (*Faultlines*, p. 74), a locus of political anxieties. Smiley anticipates Karla's execution upon Karla's return to the Soviet Union. Thus Karla's refusal to defect in Delhi – and thereby to act in self-interest – is defined as ideological fanaticism: "The more Smiley implored him [to defect], the more dogmatic [Karla's] silence became" (*Smiley's People*, p. 140). "Dogmatic" signals Soviet 'ideology', never that of the West:

> [Smiley] thought of Karla again, and of his absolutism, which at least gave point to the perpetual chaos that was life's condition; point to violence, and to death; of Karla for whom killing had never been more than the necessary adjunct of a grand design (p. 220).

The "grand design" is revered by Karla even as he falls victim to it: indeed later on Soviet Communism is described as the very "system he had helped create" (p. 329).

In this Manichaean context, with so much narrative energy devoted to depicting a 'fanatical', murderous Karla/Soviet Union, Connie Sachs' oft-quoted Cold War speech comes out of nowhere, and is a textual faultline: "'It's not a *shooting* war any more, George. [...] That's the trouble. It's grey. Half-angels fighting half-devils. No one knows where the lines are" (p. 182). The Soviet state has been evoked as nothing but malevolent: why *now* suggest moral equivalence between East and West? Looking at the plot's trajectory, the reason is surely that Connie's speech functions, at the novel's precise half-way point, to announce a shift of narrative gear. For immediately afterwards comes Connie's account of Karla's lover, which introduces a new, human, aspect to Karla. But this humanity exists in contradiction with Karla's continuing characterisation as ruthless ideologue. We see this contradiction in Connie's speech immediately:

'One day she ups and gets ideas above her station [...] soft on revolution. Mixing with bloody intellectuals. Wanting the State to wither away [...] He had her shoved in the slammer. In the end the old despot's love turned to hatred and he had his ideal carted off and spavined' (*Smiley's People*, p. 184).[599]

Here we have, for le Carré, the worst of ideological fanaticism – imposing the political on the personal – but at this extremity of inhumanity a human faultline is revealed. Karla has never previously had a personal life, and soon enough it is revealed that this union produced a daughter. This is a faultline; clear evidence of a rethink. The text will continue in this manner from here onwards, toeing this faultline by balancing the new "human" Karla with Karla the "fanatic", murderous representative of brutal Soviet Communism. So

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[599] Wolfe reflects his own prejudice when he suggests, "[Tatiana's] mother [...] was killed by Karla's own order for opposing the Marxist-Leninist view of history" (Wolfe p. 232).

Ostrakova continues to witness Karla's heavies' threat as Soviet state threat, "The men who had come to kill her were *the same men* [...] who had killed Ostrakov and Glikman, and would kill the whole poor world if she did not stop them" (p. 225; my emphasis). Ostrakova's moral authority prevents the reader questioning this association, even knowing now that these are *non-political* heavies, engaged by Karla the father, not Karla the head of The Thirteenth Directorate. This contradictory approach is continued by Lacon's drunken dinner with Smiley. Lacon is paraphrased as declaring, "The anti-Communist phobia was overdone [...] Communists were only people, after all. They weren't red-toothed monsters, not any more. Communists wanted what everyone wanted; prosperity and a bit of peace and quiet" (p. 258). In contrast to Ostrakova, careerist Lacon has *no* moral authority, so this ridicules his 'détente' message. But while Lacon's speech facilitates Karla's characterisation's shift from "red-toothed monster", the depiction of Soviet Communism also here acquires a new negative critique. Lacon's attributes to Communists Western liberal, capitalist, individualist desires ("prosperity"; separation from the state), implying Communism can take no real root within the self-interest of 'human nature', as per Schaub's analysis of post-war attitudes. *This* critique of Soviet Communism underlies the book's last third, but will conduct a contradictory pull-and-push with le Carré's established Manichaean vision, wherein the witness of Soviet émigrés and the trilogy's previous characterisation of Karla both cast a long shadow.

"Karla of the Human Heart": Contradictions in the Political Enemy

Having failed to elicit the "human" response of defection from Karla in *Tinker,* Smiley declares: "'Karla is not fireproof because he's a fanatic. And one day, if I have anything to do with it, that lack of moderation will be his downfall'" (*Tinker*, p. 224). Two-thirds of the way through *Smiley's People,* Smiley now decides that there are "two Karlas": Karla, the fanatic, but also "this other Karla, Karla of the human heart after all, of the one great love, the Karla flawed by humanity" (*Smiley's People*, p. 221). In *Smiley's People*, the

conclusion of the trilogy, it will not be Karla's *fanaticism*, his inhuman pursuit of the Communist cause, but his own *humanity* that will bring his downfall. This is contradictory. As Sinfield says, "Character is a strategy – one that will be abandoned when it interferes with other desiderata" (Sinfield, p. 78). Let us explore this.

The revelation that Karla has a troubled daughter, Tatiana, smuggled out of the Soviet Union, where she fell foul of the system, and ensconced at an expensive Swiss sanatorium, is textually flagged as humanising Karla:

> That adversary had acquired a human face of disconcerting clarity. It was no brute whom Smiley was pursuing with such mastery, no unqualified fanatic after all, no automaton. It was a man; and one whose downfall [...] would be caused by nothing more sinister than excessive love (*Smiley's People*, p. 315).

Using Karla's human "weakness' – his love for his daughter – as leverage, Smiley threatens to expose Karla's personal abuse of the Soviet political system: Karla's use of state resources and personnel (Grigoriev) to care for Tatiana in Switzerland; Karla's use of murder to cover his tracks. Smiley surmises that not only would this exposure lead to Karla's own execution; it would result in Tatiana being abandoned, or returned to the Soviet Union (p. 325). Karla defects to the West a mere nine pages later. But it is absolutely crucial to attest that this new understanding of Karla, very recently Communism's representative, does not offer a new understanding of *Communism*. Although Karla's murders transpire now to be unrelated to Soviet Communism's political agenda, potentially reasserting the virtues of détente, this does not cause Smiley to desist, indeed he goes on the attack. If Karla is acting for personal motives, however, then are critics right to depersonalise Smiley's assault upon Karla? Is *Smiley's People* ultimately

just a struggle between two old men who have injured each other's pride? "Nothing more than an acting out of personal obsessions"?[600]

Quite the reverse: this humanising of Karla represents a new flank of political attack on Soviet Communism, even if it exposes further contradictions in so doing. Karla's abrupt defection from textually established 'inhuman' East to 'human' West *rejects* the political system that Karla has lived by, murdered for, been imprisoned for, and by which he has for three and a half novels been textually defined. Indeed Karla has personified Eastern Communist ruthlessness quite as much as Smiley has personified gentle Western liberalism. The implication of Karla's new prioritisation of the personal over the political is that not only is the Soviet system flawed by *in*humanity, as we have previously seen, it is doomed by humanity. Communism is an infertile 'ideological' seed planted in stony human ground, which will ultimately reject it. Indeed Smiley will say precisely this in *The Secret Pilgrim* at the end of the Cold War:

'It was man who ended the Cold War in case you didn't notice. [...] not even Western man either [...] but our sworn enemy in the East, who went into the streets, faced the bullets and the batons and said: 'we've had enough' [...] and the ideologies trailed after these impossible events like condemned prisoners' (*Secret*, p. 332).

That Karla's dedication to the Communist cause transcended his own self-interest was incomprehensible to Smiley in Delhi: ("[Karla] would rather die at the hands of his friends than live at the hands of his enemies" p. 140). Now, however, Karla's self-interest is revealed after all: he defects, as Paulin uniquely points out, as much to save his own skin as to save his daughter, though both are forms of self-interest. For Paulin this "trivialises Western values" (Paulin, p. 60): but it actually *reveals* Western values – and their critique of Soviet Communism – in a less 'humanist' and more capitalist light that is entirely

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[600] Monaghan (p. 139) but see also: Barley (p. 127), Sauerberg (p. 186), Bennett (p. 85), Dobler (p. 14).

contiguous with contemporary Thatcherism, which also cited a Hobbesian "human nature" (Schaub, p. 7). Thus the actual defeat of Karla and the moral defeat of Smiley, unequal as they are, actually ratify exactly the same, (neo) liberal, capitalist world-view.

"Two Karlas": Karla's Contradictions Confronted

Inevitably, this shift in characterisation creates textual contradictions, and *Smiley's People's* "two Karlas" (*Smiley's People*, p. 221), ideological fanatic and fond father, are never satisfactorily reconciled. Characterisation is a faultline. Not only is the shadow of the former characterisation of Karla the fanatic, carefully established over two and a half books, a long one, but the text continues to append "Karla's" to actions that are brutal or expedient long after the 'human' Karla has been established. The torture and murder of Otto Leipzig then is "'Karla's way'" (p. 184), wherein "the killing comes first, the questioning second" (p. 211). Smiley, having deployed Tatiana to ensnare Karla, castigates himself for "resort[ing] to *Karla's techniques*" (p. 315; my emphasis). Even as Karla defects to the West, the armed guards on the Soviet side are "Karla's people" (p. 332), while it is "the curse of Karla's fanaticism" that falls on Smiley (p. 332) and "Karla's cunning" regarding Bill Haydon which has "stained" Smiley's marriage (p. 333). Karla is still being required to represent the evils of the Communist system, even as, technically, he abandons Communism and the Soviet Union by defecting.

Of course, silent, unseen, without personal details, Karla never really *was* a 'character' but rather what Sinfield calls "a fantasy arrangement of elements" that were "taken to typify", generically "the villain" and ideologically, Soviet Communism (*Faultlines*, p. 56). Karla lacked the "subjectivity", or "interiority" modern readers expect of a fictional character (*Faultlines*, p. 65). Judged only by his actions, the characterisation of the silent, invisible Karla reduced Soviet Communist ends to brutal means, making Karla a cardboard cut-out of brutally expedient Communism. This was contradictory enough, but via his abrupt humanisation Karla is rendered even more contradictory as a

character. He is now presumed to represent human, familial, personal values, but contrary to Smiley's assertion, this new "human face" of Karla's does *not* possess "disconcerting clarity" (p. 315). In go-between, Grigoriev's, accounts of his meetings with Karla, Karla is described in warmer terms as, "the priest" (pp. 303-314), while "Grigoriev had been impressed by the remarkable sense of feeling – he would call it even a sense of direct personal responsibility – that the priest [...] inspired" (p. 309) when discussing Tatiana. Later, we hear the hitherto incongruous description that, "[Karla] was emotional" (p. 311). However, quite apart from the fact that Karla's relationship with Grigoriev is underscored by very specific threat (p. 314), the new 'human' Karla *still* does not speak directly, and most of what he says, mediated via Grigoriev, is deception. Karla still has no interiority: he is still not a character, making the ideological functions of 'character' the more apparent. Karla is, in the novel's own terminology a "no-man", wherein the "no-man's land" is the fictional construct of a novel.

So given both this textual confusion and their own pro-Western agendas, Cold War-era critics tended simply to *ignore* the 'humanised' Karla (just as critics tended to pick the Smiley they preferred). Anatole Broyard claimed: "merciless, ascetic and amoral, Karla is a fanatic, the priest of a new Inquisition. Nothing matters to him but purity of doctrine, a passion for certainty, a Pavlovian hunger for cause, effect and control" (Broyard, p. 23). This is hardly borne out by the plot trajectory of *Smiley's People*'s last third. For Dobler, "Karla [is] the Prince of Darkness, ruling the night, the time of blackness and jealously destroying [Tatiana's] mother for trying to contact God. [...] Karla is a kind of anti-Christ" (Dobler p. 348). While being more revealing of Dobler's Western, Christian agenda than the novel itself, this does highlight how Karla the fanatic still persists in the text, without being eclipsed by the "Karla of the human heart after all".

After Communism's collapse, Western critics could acknowledge *Smiley's People*'s attempted humanising of Karla, but tended to criticise the novel for this. So Beene regards Tatiana as a "symbol of Karla's inhumanity" (p. 107), as do Wolfe (p. 240) and Martin (p.

46), who criticises a "worrying inability to deal with Karla's nature as a villain who destroys many human beings" (Martin, p. 48). Beene and Martin highlight a critical unease that *Smiley's People's* plot trajectory lets Karla off the hook. As Rothberg says: "for le Carré, lying, cheating, stealing even killing seem somehow more justifiable for personal reasons, for love, than for political or ideological reasons" (Rothberg, in H. Bloom, p. 61). These critical reactions suggest the confusions endemic upon Karla's contradictory characterisation. This contradiction in Karla's characterisation arguably occurs because of *diverging* ideological "desiderata". On the one hand there is the continuing and – in the combative contemporary turn of the Second Cold War – urgent need to present the Soviet Union as malignant and potent enough to deride détente and advocate a return to 'containment'. This explains the persistence of Karla the fanatic long after his supposed humanisation. But on the other hand there is also the need to suggest that Soviet Communism is weak enough to be inevitably defeated, for the Cold War to be winnable by the West, especially in this concluding volume of the *Quest for Karla*. The "Karla of the human heart" plot effects this by suggesting, as we have seen, that Communism is contrary to human nature. However these two characterisations are sufficiently contradictory that they even complicate the reading of Karla's concluding defection.

In one understanding, Smiley/Britain outmanoeuvres the Soviet Union and forces the defection of Karla, key exponent of the Cold War, to the West. This is the resolution Smiley failed to achieve in *Tinker*, and which, in the Karla trilogy, had become a symbol of British impotence in the face of Soviet expedience. Karla/Communism is sufficiently ruthless and implacable that aggressive means are demanded rather than what the book has established is the impotence of détente. Karla's defeat does not just suggest a victorious battle then, in which Britain defeats the Soviet Union, but invokes rather a victory in the larger (Cold) War, perhaps particularly from a post-Cold-War perspective, armed with the knowledge that the Cold War did indeed end, only nine years later, at the Berlin Wall. This knowledge that le Carré was 'right' should not distract us from seeing this 'defeat' as a

strongly ideological machination, particularly when at the time no such Western victory, let alone British role in such a victory, was likely. As such, this fictional, fantasised victory is almost crudely propagandistic.

On the other hand, if we read the ending from the point of view of the "Karla of the human heart", in rejecting Communism via defection, Karla *no longer* represents the Soviet Union. This however conveys an equally convenient, if contradictory, message. Because, as no such real world victory over Communism had occurred, the West needed to justify continued aggressive containment of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union has to be shown to be continuing, malevolently, even as Karla, its former representative, defects to the West. This explains the melodramatic, mythic imagery deployed during Karla's defection: "it was the tower that dominated everything, one iron-black rectangle at the bridge's centre. Even the snow avoided it" (p. 328). For Smiley the tower is a "black castle" (p. 332) a mythic invocation of almost supernatural evil and it is posed *against* Karla.[601] "The only ship was a grey patrol boat moored at the Eastern bank, and the only commerce that it offered was death" (p. 331). The East then represents "death", while, in inadvertently revealing capitalist terms, the West is "commerce": vital, alive. The over-writing here indicates the textual work involved to hold both these contradictory textual strategies in place: the Soviet Union is defeatable; the Soviet Union continues and must be contained.[602] Just as with Smiley, however, the point is that we do not need to 'choose' either of these characterisations or interpretations. Both judgements serve their purpose of damning Communism, and their contradictions are simply part of enduringly contradictory Cold War ideology.

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[601] Powell, (p. 15) Dobler (pp. 18-19) and Sauerberg (p. 44) invoke Frey's mythic criticism, whereby Karla's defeat is necessitated by psycho-cultural imperatives. Jameson demonstrated ideological resolution was inherent in the quest genre's origins, *Political Unconscious*, pp. 89-136.

[602] These understandings don't fit their endings, with the Karla-as-Soviet Union understanding seeing Communism defeated, and the 'human' Karla understanding leaving Soviet Communism in place.

5. Smiley's Last Bow: Conclusion

Smiley's People is, in retrospect, something of a valedictory affair. Valedictory for Smiley, except for a brief reappearance in *The Secret Pilgrim*; valedictory for le Carré's presentation of the Cold War, only laterally present in *The Little Drummer Girl* (1983), and relegated to background in *A Perfect Spy* (1986), before the Cold War itself ended nine years after *Smiley's People*'s publication, and the Cold War's – and novel's – potent icon, the Berlin Wall, was dismantled. *Smiley's People* is valedictory for the Berlin Wall. *Smiley's People* was also valedictory for the British post-War consensus, its chimes with Thatcherism regarding détente, bureaucracy, and an untameable "human nature" hailing the slow death of Keynesian welfare capitalism.

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated that *Smiley's People* goes to great lengths to separate Smiley from the British state, but, once again, beyond this covering fire, Smiley once again works for, defends, secures, and indeed, brings glory to the British state. Smiley comes, again, in *Smiley's People*, to represent the more populist concept of the nation. As such, the expedient strategies Smiley deploys to defeat Karla endanger the projected moral superiority of Britishness, foregrounding a contradiction in Smiley's representative British 'decency' which has underlain the previous books. By the end of *Smiley's People,* however, Smiley's expedient actions are largely posited as an absolutely necessary counterbalance to the political threat of Soviet Communism, represented in the most damning terms as an implacable enemy. The humanising of the Soviet state's prime representative, Karla, risks exposing a contradiction in such Manichaean tactics, but *Smiley's People* adroitly upholds the Soviet Union as a potent threat whilst also rendering it weak enough to be defeatable. In doing this, *Smiley's People* undermines its own admission of British decline, and repudiates its own putative critique of Smiley, and presents le Carré's headiest national fantasy yet to close off the 1970s: a defeat of Soviet Communism that, clearly, is to the glory of both Smiley and Britain.

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Conclusion: "No-Men in This No-Man's Land"

This aim of this thesis has been to show how John le Carré's Cold War novels are illuminated by history, and how history, in turn, is illuminated by le Carré's novels. This is a far from passive process: during a 30-year period of the 44-year Cold War, le Carré's espionage novels illuminated history as it was happening, and like all illuminations, his novels cast this or that light on proceedings – here a slant, there a framing – while keeping other areas dark. Consequently, this thesis has explored not just history as 'events' but history as *interpretation* of events: history as something that is *made,* not just materially but discursively. Fiction, especially popular fiction, is a key mechanism for such making.

The thesis has focused exclusively on le Carré's 1960s and 1970s novels, because they emanate from the peak years of the conflict. Second Cold War notwithstanding, Gorbachev's arrival in power in March 1985 began the processes of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* which, responding to internal Eastern Bloc pressure, foreshadowed the breakup of the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc and led, ultimately, to the end of the Cold War. Moreover, *Smiley's People*'s publication in late 1979 (in the US) marked the end of a definable era in British history, an era that had stretched from the conclusion of the War to the arrival of Margaret Thatcher and her termination of the post-war Keynesian welfare capitalist consensus.

The Cold War exerts an enduring influence not just on le Carré's own subsequent fiction (it wasn't until 2001's *The Constant Gardener* that he stopped being, in media terms, a "Cold War novelist"), but on spy fiction generally (see: Charles Cumming's *Trinity Six,* 2011),[603] and indeed on 'literary' fiction (see: William Boyd's *Restless, 2006*; Ian McEwan's *Sweet Tooth,* 2012). It is difficult for any subsequent writer to feature the Cold War – or just to feature espionage – without being le Carré-esque. Indeed, two War

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[603] Cumming appears to be getting his history from le Carré. "Donald [...] had a very deep and profound hatred of America" (Cumming, *Trinity*, p. 143) c.f. "[Haydon] hated America very deeply" (*Tinker*, p. 370). Philby's father, like Haydon's was a "monster" (*Trinity*, p. 100; *Tinker*, p. 380); "Philby spied "'not out of conviction rather than from some misguided sense of [his] own importance'", c.f. le Carré on Haydon (*Tinker*, pp. 359-380).

on Terror-era espionage television dramas, the UK's *Spooks* (2002-2011) and the US's *Homeland* (2011-2015), both regularly reference le Carré's Cold-War work. It is notable that not only are these drama series broadly reflective of dominant orthodoxies (left-wing activists and Muslims depicted as terrorists-in-waiting), but in *Homeland*, le Carré quotations are deployed to support hawkish US foreign policy manoeuvres.[604] So much for an enduring oppositional legacy.

The reasons for this continued Cold War echoing, however, do not purely emanate from the closed-circle of fiction. Contemporary politics continue to be moulded by what occurred during the Cold War. A prime example is US foreign policy, forged in the Cold War as interventionist, aggressively capitalising, creating markets, destabilising, removing or attacking regimes that interfered with US interests. In the Cold-War era those regimes tended to be Communist: now their political affiliations cover a wider spectrum, but are still parlayed in much the same manner in the Western press and popular culture, with residual implications of both Western neutrality and superiority in the face of a 'savagely' brutal, unscrupulous, faith or 'ideology'-blinkered 'other'. Moreover, Britain's Special Relationship with the US is a political legacy of the Cold War, a post-imperial shift for Britain from primary military world power to secondary military adjunct, but, possessed of a disproportionate ideological and propaganda voice, with a continuing tendency to proclaim its own 'decency' compared to both enemies and allies (see: Tony Blair on Iraq or Afghanistan).

The disavowals and distancings from institutions that this thesis has noted amongst le Carré's spies are a cultural current that remains potent into modern society: indeed sallies against "big government" have become paradoxically institutionalised under neoliberal governments, while – even more paradoxically – the power of the larger state, beyond visible bureaucracies, has increased. Moreover, as the language of "individualism" noted

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[604] E.g. Dar Adal (F. Murray Abraham) unattributedly quotes Lacon's "'We are pragmatists. We adapt. We are not keepers of some sacred flame'." Lacon's words advocate a softer, détente policy as against a more hardline strategy; Adal's words encourage Saul Berenson (Mandy Patinkin) to be more hawkish. The irony is presumably deliberate.

in post-war discourse as filtered through le Carré's fiction, has become an orthodoxy in contemporary Western politics, so 'individual' rights have continued to decline as against the state: e.g. the 2005 Prevention of Terrorism Act and the 2006 Terrorism Act. However, Howard Caygill suggests that, "the network of domination is as much a network of resistance":[605] into surveillance, for instance, is written the potential for *loss* of state control, as the 2013 Edward Snowden case revealed. Caygill's analysis is very much in the spirit of this thesis's dissident reading – exposing faultlines in fiction as evidence of contradictions in society, in order to suggest that the dominant is not necessarily permanent, the repressive not necessarily entrenched: to identify a locus of optimism.

* * *

It is worth reasserting the extent of the popularity of le Carré's Cold-War novels. Particularly as, in all the critical focus on of le Carré as 'popular fiction', there is almost nothing, bar Sauerberg's 1983 study, on the *economics* – let alone the political economy – of 'the popular'. For the purposes of this thesis the *popularity* of "popular fiction" is proof of its wide ideological dissemination. It is worth asserting again that popular fiction is not any *more* ideological than literary fiction. We have seen, already, in explorations of reviewers' reception of the books, and in surveys of critical commentary, how the designation 'popular' – or even 'mass' – is used by both right and left to depoliticise and to dismiss books marketed in this manner, as, respectively, crassly 'ideological' or as apolitical. Like all culture, popular fiction is imbricated in the political concepts and historical events of its era: popular fiction just gets a higher, broader, platform with which to do so.

So to briefly summarise: *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* was an international bestseller that put Ian Fleming's sales in the shade; the follow-up, *Looking Glass War,* was

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[605] Howard Caygill, *On Resistance: A Philosophy of Defiance* (London, Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 203.

an automatic international bestseller but presaged a popularity lull. As it happens, that (very relative) lull in popularity coincided with le Carré's attention turning away from the Cold War, and his return to the Cold War, with the 1970s Karla trilogy, marked a return to greater popularity. Clearly this Cold-War focused, espionage-concentrated work 'spoke' to its audience; answered a need. Thereafter *Tinker Tailor* achieved bestseller status, while *Honourable Schoolboy* and *Smiley's People* were immediate bestsellers. Add to that the film adaptations – the hugely successful *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1965), and the less successful *The Deadly Affair* (1966) and *The Looking Glass War* (1969) – which all shaped popular perceptions. Le Carré's 1970s resurgence was multi-media, with the 1979 *Tinker* television adaptation a kind of saturation-point. Even so, while the *Smiley's People* televisation in 1982 was less popular, *A Perfect Spy*'s 1987 televisation was not discussed on Terry Wogan's primetime radio show, and *The Russia House* movie (1990) was ridiculed, le Carré's vision of the Cold War still had an extraordinarily lengthy afterlife: for a time as heritage television (endless repeats of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*), then, with a new high profile after 2001's *Constant Gardener*, as heritage fiction (*Absolute Friends*, 2003), tapping into a Cold War nostalgia in the War on Terror era, capped by Tomas Alfredson's heritage film *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* film (2011) and that ever-rumoured *Smiley's People* follow-up. All this cumulatively represents a cultural intervention in the Cold War that was as extensive in its reception as in its conception. The purpose of this thesis has been to restore consideration of the political and historical to these widely read and hugely influential novels, removing them from their aestheticisation into 'genre fiction' on one hand and personalised humanist thematics on the other.

This thesis has, throughout, located critical preconceptions and presumptions within a normative 'empiricism' that derives, in literary studies, broadly from the work of F.R. Leavis in the UK and the New Critics in the US. However, empiricism, as demonstrated, is a deeper discursive mode in British culture: a proclamation of Western, specifically British 'neutrality' that is actually – and paradoxically – ideological. Leamas's "'I believe an

eleven bus will take me to Hammersmith'" is the manifesto here (*Spy*, p. 36). 'We' defend

our country for obvious, common sense reasons, this manifesto declares: political analysis

or justification is not necessary. "'Sport [...] For Heaven's sake!'" cries Jerry Westerby

when Smiley attempts to formulate an ideological, anti-Communist, motivation for Cold-

War espionage: "'You point me and I'll march'" asserts Westerby (*Schoolboy*, p. 123).

Just as Switzerland, a regular location in le Carré's books, and a major capitalist

centrifuge, was not in reality 'neutral' in the Cold War (it was on the Western side), such

ideological neutral zones, or no-man's lands are a fantasy. Even le Carré's espionage

controllers are wary, hesitant in pushing ideological imperatives – thus Smiley allows

himself to be cut off mid-flow by Westerby; thus also Control's equivocal *The Spy* speech

(*Spy*, pp. 17-23). Communists, by contrast, have no such qualms about professing their

caricatured 'ideology' (Fiedler), or, if never articulating any precise philosophy (Karla),

Communists are *defined* in the text by their 'fanatical' ideology.

What is being denied in these empirical positionings – whether by critics, by le

Carré's protagonists, or by le Carré himself – is not just the ideology that undergirds a

choice to serve British intelligence, but the ideological concept of "ordinary life" itself in

Britain during the Cold War: a defence of the British 'system' of consensus centrist

liberalism (and so of the British state); an assertion of the virtues of the British national

'way of life' (the nation); and a forthright anti-Communism (the political enemy).

To sum up, let us reconsider these three faultlines one at a time. The state in le Carré's

Cold-War fiction is an area of particularly intensive focus – and yet it is also almost

invisible. Of the institutions of the state, we see only the bureaucracy that administrates le

Carré's particular *branch* of the state, the intelligence services, the men of the files and

dossiers, cabals and careerism. In fact the term "secret state" (Hennessy: passim) is itself a

misnomer: we hear more about this 'secret' branch of the state than many others, which

remain secret. Sometimes bureaucracy is decried for its ineffectuality; at other times for its

over-effectuality, an expedient instrumental rationality that subjugates people to political objectives. But this anti-bureaucracy trope, is, this thesis has argued, an inoculation with "a contingent evil", as Barthes says of Operation Margarine (*Mythologies*, p. 41), and so the 'evil' of bureaucracy distracts the reader from the way these novels actually *uphold* the deeper state's structures. The intelligence bureaucracy is only the visible tip of the state's iceberg: submerged is the violence, the incarceration, the imperial plunder, the capitalist profit, all the things the liberal state does not care to admit to, and le Carré's novels do not care to imagine can be changed. So the deep state in this way is quietly restored and reaffirmed, whilst the text, and the text's protagonists, contrive to sound anti-state, anti-establishment, but being simply anti-bureaucratic: indeed, often, not even that. For in *The Honourable Schoolboy,* le Carré readers' favourite anti-bureaucrat, Smiley, even heads up the bureaucracy. Smiley is a professional in amateur's clothing; a bureaucrat in individual's clothing. Smiley, for all his regular retirements, resignations and sackings, for all his anti-establishment murmurings and anti-bureaucratic seethings, is the state's reliable executor, the state's saviour, the state's champion. Yet, in all these decryings and disavowals, these contradictions and resolutions, there is a different understanding of "we are defensive" discoverable: surely here is also an anxiety, an unease, about the state, about the system, that is being laterally, contradictorily, expressed?

Smiley is also the champion of the British *nation*. Unlike the decried, normatively negative – but secretly upheld – state, the British nation is less controversial: the nation is non-political, 'innocent', neutral, a shared landscape, a united citizenry, a collective national 'character'. To protect the British nation against cynical, unnatural Communism also *projects* the British nation: as an "ordinary", 'decent' way of life. These proclaimed national qualities all contain faultlines, as nationalism arguably always will: to lionise an 'us' is almost always to demonise a 'them' – or just dehumanise that 'other' that is being repressed. As Charles Taylor says, "no human identity is purely inwardly formed. The 'other' always plays some role. But it can be just as a foil, a contrast, a way of defining

what we were not".[606] The "nation" became considerably less normatively positive after the collapse of Eastern Communism permitted vicious national tensions to erupt in former Eastern Europe. So assertions of Cold-War British nationalism involve implicit assertions of or reminders of British empire, invoking violence and plunder on one hand, nostalgia for geopolitical power on the other. Consequently Britain's role and potency in the Cold War is again, while apparently realistically appraised, actually reasserted, inflated. In these national faultlines we can see le Carré's novels operating as the British nation's unconscious, conducting a national conversation in which anxieties and reassurances sit contradictorily alongside one another.

Turning to the political enemy, every le Carré Cold-War novel, bar *The Looking Glass War*, depicts not just a tactical defeat of the Soviet bloc by the British nation-state, but a 'moral' victory over a political enemy, Communism, which enemy is always presented as *more* indecent than Britain at its worst. This anti-Communism, reliably elided or denied by almost all critics, is a central, defining facet of le Carré's work. Moreover, contrary to Control's claims in *The Spy*, this British anti-Communism is by no means innocently 'defensive'. The plots of *The Spy*, *Looking Glass War*, *Honourable Schoolboy* and *Smiley's People* all feature aggressive anti-Communist operations on Britain's part, even if their protagonists convince themselves they are reactive: an aggressive defence. The fiction here simply reflects historical Cold-War reality of British anti-Communist actions in Malaya (1948-60), Kenya (1952-60), Borneo (1963) and Aden (1963-67).[607] Covert British support of right wing, anti-Communist dictatorships against leftists in Greece and Indonesia also did literal violence to the definition of 'defensive'. In all these novels – again reflecting Cold-War geopolitics – Communism's very existence is an original sin, a provocation: an aggressive act. Why *wouldn't* there be Soviet rockets at

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[606] In John A. Hall (ed.), *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), *p. 208*.
[607] See also: combined British/US action in Korea (1950-53) and the Congo (1960-61), US action in Vietnam (1955-75) and covert action in, for example, Chile (1970-73), Nicaragua (1981-91) and El Salvador (1979-92).

Rostock? Why *wouldn't* the Soviet state be murdering Estonian émigrés on Hampstead Heath? Even in the fiction neither of these assumptions proves to be true however. Defensiveness is thus a rhetorical not a practical position, a proclamation of Western innocence, paralleling those pseudo-empirical proclamations of ideological neutrality previously discussed, whilst undermining those same proclamations on their own empirical, evidence-based, ground: on their own proclaimed, no-man's land. In this, of course, 'defensive' ends up drifting into its secondary meaning of 'protesting too much'. Moreover, while Communist characters throughout these books are described as "fanatics" and "absolutists", and decried as inhuman ideologues, we hear barely a word of this ideology in the books, and when we do, as in Fiedler's speech to Leamas in *The Spy*, we hear only the expedient *means,* not the ends that, for the ideologists, justify those means. The result is to suggest a Communism that is essentially cynical, whose expansionism abroad and repression at home is pursuant of a 'principle' solely of *power*.

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This thesis will end, as these Cold War novels end (and indeed, began) with George Smiley. Specifically, we will end where we last saw Smiley, standing, pointedly, at that most potently symbolic – and over determined – of Cold War icons, the Berlin Wall. In all six of the novels discussed in this thesis, Smiley is present: he is the primary protagonist in three, with a major secondary role in one, and is ancillary in two. Smiley is always if not a state employee, then still pursuing and fulfilling the objectives of the British state. Smiley is a *benign* patriarch, but still a patriarch – a shift of emphasis rather than a rejection of patriarchy itself. In this, le Carré's rationale is somewhat akin to that of Dickens in Orwell's analysis: there are good humans and bad humans – the evil is not within the structure itself, the society or the system, it is in human nature. "If men would behave decently the world would be decent. Naturally this calls for a few characters who are in

positions of authority and who *do* behave decently" (Orwell, *Dickens*, p. 458). Such a character then, is, in our case, George Smiley. In le Carré, Smiley is the compassionate state, the rational nationalist (whose "deep love of England" is free of xenophobia or chauvinism), and the moderate anti-Communist. These are all contradictions, faultlines, but that is Smiley's *job*, his function in these novels: to 'resolve' contradictions. But, as this is an impossible task even for this arch-fulfiller of impossible tasks, to at least embody and channel those contradictions.

So, we return to Smiley at the Berlin Wall, in *Smiley's People*, where Smiley is characteristically embodying and channelling key contradictions in British liberal and national ideology. Smiley describes himself as a "no-man" in "no-man's land". Ostensibly, this is a mordant declaration of the negation of Smiley's humanism by the demands of the long battle against an implacable enemy: Karla – but really Soviet Communism. We see already how the odds are stacked against *truly* condemning Smiley here. Smiley is being modest, avuncular, decent in the patented British manner. Rather, we might think of this imagery of "no-man's land" as evoking the established idea of *neutrality*. Especially as, in this very same "no-man's land" of the Berlin Wall, in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, Alec Leamas demonstrated the *impossibility* of neutrality. Leamas truly *did* become a "no-man" in no-man's land, both by refusing to choose a side – and return to the West – but more to the point, by *dying*. Equally, Westerby, on the southernmost Hong Kong island of Po Toi, borderline between British and Chinese authority, between West and East, refuses to choose a side, and, again, is killed. These actions – asserting 'neutrality' and being killed – are both literally and epistemologically connected: when the chips are down, the neutrals, the no-men, will simply be shot by both sides, and a cold corpse in no-man's land provides cold comfort for neutrality in a Cold War. Smiley, by contrast, *has* chosen a side: indeed, in *The Spy* he is calling Leamas over from the *West* side of the Wall, hailing – interpellating – Leamas as a Western subject: "'Jump, Alec! Jump man!" (*Spy*, p. 240). Leamas refuses: Leamas dies. In *Smiley's People* some 16 years later, Smiley has just gone

to considerable lengths to manipulate his Communist arch-enemy, Karla, into defecting to the West. This thesis's suggestion is another – dissident – reading of these lines, proposing that rather than *condemning* himself as an "no-man" who has forsaken his humanity for politics, Smiley is asserting that he is ideologically neutral. And, of course, this is a contradiction, a faultline.

In fact, one novel previously, in *The Honourable Schoolboy*, Smiley makes the following speech to Jerry Westerby:

'A lot of people see *doubt* as a legitimate philosophical posture. They think of themselves in the middle, whereas of course really, they're nowhere. No battle was ever won by spectators, was it?' (*Schoolboy*, p. 122)

This is an uncharacteristic speech of Smiley's, or indeed of anyone's in these novels, undermining the empirical neutrality asserted elsewhere and, crucially, Smiley is cut off in mid-flow by arch-empiricist, Westerby. It is not just Westerby who's embarrassed, however. Smiley does not attempt to revive the conversation: Smiley himself has "always been a little embarrassed by professions of anti-Communism" (*Tinker*, p. 160): indeed Smiley has been equivocal about *any* expressions of Western ideology, in the English 'neutral', empiricist tradition. We might recall here the key scene with Karla in the jail in Delhi, where Smiley makes a half-hearted attempt to 'sell' the West to Karla and persuade him to defect. Smiley later declares, almost as an article of faith, "'I was in no clear ideological state myself. 'I felt I lacked philosophic repose. Lacked philosophy, if you like'" (*Tinker*, p. 216). But in the *Honourable Schoolboy* speech, where Smiley does articulate a philosophy, Westerby interrupts, the scene moves on and neutrality is restored. "The point at which the text falls silent is recognised as the point at which its ideological project is disclosed," as Sinfield parlays Macherey (*Faultlines*, p. 74). This speech to Westerby is a faultline in these Cold-War books, thereafter papered over. No one will ever

make such a speech again in these novels. But, as Macherey says of the "not said", such silences have a way of making their presence felt: Macherey described "a determinate absence [...] an eloquent silence" (Macherey, p. 79). So the language of Smiley's Westerby speech – "nowhere", "in the middle" – *haunts* the rest of *Honourable Schoolboy*, and haunts this final vision of Smiley in *Smiley's People*, linking epistemologically with the invocation of "no-man" and "no-man's land" and suggesting that neutrality is a mirage.

Faultlines are not flaws: they are what give a text enduring life. It is one of the virtues of a dissident reading that it can reveal – and dissident readers can enjoy – such faultlines and expose the ideological contradictions that underlie them. So, the contradiction is that the expression "no-men in no-man's land" is a reassertion of Smiley's/Britain's ideological neutrality, but it is made on the very ground, the Berlin Wall, where neutrality has previously been declared – by Leamas – and where neutrality has been demonstrated – by Leamas's death – to be an impossibility. Indeed, the Berlin Wall, far from being a "no-man's land" is, in Western Cold-War ideology and in le Carré's fiction, a symbol of intransigent, fanatical, Soviet bloc ideology. Into this no-man's land then comes Karla, Soviet arch-ideologist, who leaves Communism behind him and so also becomes a "no-man" by abandoning that 'ideology', and entering the 'natural', neutral state in which Smiley – and by extension, Britain – has always existed. Except that Karla has defected to the West: a huge political victory for the *West*, and a long-delayed 'resolution' of Smiley's failed attempt to achieve just that objective in that jail in Delhi. This then is a contradictory, untenable, assertion of British ideological innocence, at exactly the moment when British ideological imperatives are at their most unequivocally victorious. Within that proclaimed 'neutrality', that common sense "no-man's land", the British state is simultaneously and contradictorily upheld, the British nation is championed and magnified, and the 'ideologically' saturated Communist political enemy is trenchantly condemned, and triumphantly, resoundingly, defeated. This is John le Carré's Cold War.

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