

# In Victory, Defeat

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Olivia Manning's Balkan and Levant trilogies and  
Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour*

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By

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## Abstract

Olivia Manning's Balkan and Levant trilogies (1960-65, 1977-80) and Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour* trilogy (1952-61) are sequences of historical novels set during the Second World War. This thesis compares and contrasts these sequences as conservative fictional voices from a period of social and literary transition.

My first chapter discusses how ideas of heroism and sacrifice prove outmoded and unsupported by institutions during the war. Particularly in Waugh's trilogy, but to a lesser extent also in Manning's sequence, models of heroism taken from past texts—such as colonial adventure stories—are shown to be inadequate. Heroism is only possible on a small scale and involves moral compromises.

The second chapter considers the treatment of being English outside England. Depictions of foreign countries are considered in the context of the fading of the British Empire and British global power. Colonial life is attractive in a nostalgic sense but is problematic in the present. Episodes about Jewish refugees in both sequences are discussed as symbolising defiance of the entropy of imperial decay as well as attempts to find post-imperial models for intervention.

The third and final chapter examines the uses of literature and culture in the novels and how they hint at ways out of the historical binds discussed in the first two chapters. Literature and the teaching of literature have a propagandistic function but also subvert this function by offering escape from the realities of wartime. I also touch on the connection between literary creativity and the subversion of gender roles.

I argue that while these sequences construct a generally negative perspective on social changes during the war, this is not unchallenged by subversive undercurrents such as these. The conservative Catholic morality of Waugh's trilogy contrasts with Manning's willingness to raise questions about gender, class and colonialism, but in both authors' works the war is presented as a time in which initially optimistic ideals and hopes are disappointed, while the validity of these ideals in the first place is also questioned.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	1
Acknowledgements.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Why choose Manning and Waugh?.....	4
The critical field.....	7
An outline of my approach.....	11
Chapter One: Heroism and Sacrifice.....	15
Ideals of heroism and sacrifice in <i>Men at Arms</i> .....	15
Fractious marriage, vexed politics, and untouchable heroes in the Balkan trilogy.....	19
The failure of institutions.....	23
The failure of old colonial heroes: the past unredeemed.....	27
The failure of military heroism: class, courage and cowardice.....	30
Crouchback’s redemption: the moral of the tale in <i>Sword of Honour</i> .....	37
The lack of closure in the Levant trilogy.....	42
Chapter Two: Being English Abroad.....	45
Images of abroad: romantic nostalgia and “death objects”.....	45
Engaging with the natives in the Balkan and Levant trilogies.....	51
Disengagement from the natives in <i>Sword of Honour</i> .....	56
Personalising the Holocaust (1): the Pringles and Sasha Drucker.....	59
Personalising the Holocaust (2): Crouchback and the Jewish refugees.....	62
Escaping the empire.....	65
Chapter Three: The Uses of Literature.....	69
Ludovic the romantic author.....	69
Everard Spruce and state-sanctioned literature.....	74
<i>Troilus</i> in Bucharest (1): the historical and political context.....	77
<i>Troilus</i> in Bucharest (2): acting out desire.....	80
The attractions of a literary career in the Levant trilogy.....	86
Education, elitism and propaganda in Manning’s and Waugh’s sequences.....	88
Conclusion.....	91
Works Cited.....	94

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## Introduction

Olivia Manning's Balkan and Levant trilogies and Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour* trilogy have been described as the best novels by, respectively, an Englishwoman and an Englishman about the Second World War.<sup>1</sup> This thesis compares and contrasts the two sequences. By examining the similarities and differences in Manning's and Waugh's historical narratives, I hope to show how they can be read as attempts to deal with a period of social upheaval.

In terms of both world and literary history, these novels come from a period of transition. The war years in which the novels are set saw victory coincide with the start of the loss of the empire and massive social change. They were published over long periods some years after the war: Waugh's trilogy appeared between 1952 and 1961, the Balkan trilogy between 1960 and 1965, and the Levant between 1977 and 1980. Even by the time Waugh's trilogy was completed, waves of change had moved through the consciousness of the novel: the social realism of the "Angry Young Men", the rise of a new generation of women novelists. The beginning of what is now generally identified as the postmodern period was countered by an attempt to return to earlier, arguably pre-modernist, styles of narrative by artistically conservative authors such as Manning and Waugh.

### Why choose Manning and Waugh?

Novels from the post-war period, about the war, seem to have been critically neglected. In their introduction to a collection of scholarly articles on *British Fiction After Modernism* (2007), Marina MacKay and Lyndsey Stonebridge describe the post-war period as "a critically awkward phase of twentieth-century writing" (1). In his critical survey, *English Fiction of the Second World War* (1989), covering both literature published during the war and literature about the war published later, Alan Munton also writes that "it is worth remarking that as a *period* the Second World War has been refused critical recognition" (3). The publication of

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<sup>1</sup> For example, in his critical survey *Wartime and Aftermath* Bernard Bergonzi declares that "*Sword of Honour* is generally and rightly regarded as the finest English novel to come out of the Second World War" (117). In *The Novel Now* (1967) Anthony Burgess states that the Balkan trilogy is "one of the finest records we have of the impact of [the] war on Europe" (qtd. in Braybrooke and Braybrooke 179). Jeremy Treglown is slightly more reserved in admitting that the Balkan and Levant trilogies "can claim to be, apart from books set on the 'home front', the most vivid and durable novels about the Second World War by any British woman writer" (154).

works such as *British Fiction After Modernism* indicates a rising interest in works which fit neither of the convenient classifications of “modernist” and “postmodern”. Indeed, Munton partly concurs with David Lodge’s evaluation (of Waugh specifically) in *Working With Structuralism* (1981) in terming war fiction “antimodern”: “[i]t is certainly the case that war fiction shares the attributes of ‘antimodernism’ in not being concerned with literary experiment or the troubled individual subject” (4). Waugh’s work as a whole has retained steady scholarly interest since his death, Manning’s less so, although there was a burst of interest in the 1990s and 2000s due to the popularity of the BBC television adaptation *Fortunes of War* (1987). Critical ambivalence perhaps reflects the status of works which have not been claimed as canonical despite being critically praised, and perhaps also is part of the general literary neglect of the Second World War by comparison with the First.

Manning’s and Waugh’s sequences appeal to me partly because their problematic relationship with literary period mirrors their problematic relationship with history. They are stories set during the most destructive period of modern human history, during which popular political response to the perceived causes of war led to huge social reforms in the United Kingdom, yet they are written from conservative viewpoints. They cover a period which saw the United Kingdom’s greatest ever military victory, yet they do not celebrate it. They deflate Victorian imperialist values—and I will explore how they do this in the first and second chapters—yet seem to be written in a style which borrows more from that period than from literary modernism. There is something intriguing going on which is a product of their composition some time after the war, their attachment to the reality of history as an external narrative framework, and their basis in the authors’ own experiences. Their implicit claim to historical reflection makes them of more enduring interest than the often more literarily progressive and historically speculative works of the avant-garde during the war itself. And their awkward position with respect to literary period makes them apposite to our own arguably post-postmodern or anti-postmodern period.

Given that a selection of such post-war war novels might be rewarding, why have I chosen Olivia Manning and Evelyn Waugh? There is a pleasing symmetry in the selection of one sequence written by a woman, one by a man. (This gender balance is reflected in the protagonists’ genders, though Guy Pringle tilts the scales somewhat—and this is not to suggest that Manning is ultimately particularly challenging in her treatment of gender roles.) I wanted to avoid classic “war stories”, popular fiction or fictionalised “true story” novels about military adventures or prisoner of war camps such as those by Paul Brickhill, Alastair MacLean and Nicholas Monsarrat, which, enjoyable though they may be to read, tend to be

politically bland and violently patriotic, and would be more at home in a larger more sociologically focused study.

On the large scale, Waugh's and Manning's sequences seem quite different in subject matter and sympathy. Waugh's trilogy follows the experiences of an infantry officer, while Manning's trilogies focus on the relationship of a married couple employed in civilian occupations. Waugh's protagonist is a pious Anglo-Catholic, and Catholicism forms a key aspect of the novels, while Manning's characters are, if not completely uninterested in spirituality, completely uninvolved with organised religion. Yet both sequences chronicle seemingly realistic experiences, combining a large amount of mundane day to day life with episodes of danger or stress. They both cover a large swathe of the war years. In each case, the narrative deals with about four years: the Balkan and Levant trilogies from the outbreak of war to October 1943; *Sword of Honour* the entire war plus a small epilogue set during the "Festival of Britain" in 1951, though with a large gap between autumn 1941 and August 1943. Both are concerned with those in the lower officer or professional classes of their respective services. Both set their action substantially in the Balkan and Mediterranean region and are therefore of interest in their depiction of English people's relationships with foreigners during the last years of the British Empire. Despite mostly concerning herself with civilian life, Manning also, in the Levant trilogy, tells the story of a young English army officer; while a considerable amount of Waugh's narrative deals with civilian life, albeit on the home front.

It is worth briefly noting a number of other similar British novels and novel sequences set during the Second World War. There are more by male than female authors, perhaps a consequence of the stereotypical masculinity of interest in war. C. P. Snow and Anthony Powell both cover the Second World War as part of their long novel sequences (*Strangers and Brothers* and *A Dance to the Music of Time*, respectively). Snow's novels, though, are set in England and concerned with the scientific, bureaucratic, and political elites, which does not seem particularly germane to comparison with the exotic settings and shambolic "Organization" in Manning's work. Powell's three volumes dealing with the war would make a nice comparison with Waugh's, both featuring a slightly-too-old, upper-class but low-ranked infantry officer as protagonist, but again, the action is mostly restricted to the United Kingdom (with a small portion in liberated France). These novels rely, too, on their places in larger stories, introducing the danger that the number of novels to be studied would surpass the time and length constraints of this thesis. There are other novels by women, such as Elizabeth Jane Howard's *Cazalet* sequence and *The Heat of the Day* by

Elizabeth Bowen, but they are very much focused on the home front. Manning's trilogies are unusual among British war novels by women in being set in Europe and Africa. Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* would make a good comparison with Manning's Levant trilogy, but it is stylistically less similar to Manning than Waugh's novels are, lacking Waugh's satirical tone and Manning's more restrained humour. The chronology is also quite different from the straightforward (near) linearity of Waugh's and Manning's sequences: the first three volumes of Durrell's quartet cover the same events from different perspectives. It does not have the same sweep of settings, the sense of a journey, as Waugh's and Manning's trilogies, and it does not have the same focus on the war. Paul Scott's *Raj Quartet* and J. G. Farrell's *The Singapore Grip* would also make an interesting comparison with Manning's novels, though they would encourage a more post-colonially-conscious study: the end of empire is central to them, whereas Manning's trilogies are about recent arrivals in countries with an ambivalent relationship to the empire.

### The critical field

There are not many studies which discuss both *Sword of Honour* and the Balkan and Levant trilogies, and those that do tend to be surveys of a number of Second World War novels. Alan Munton's survey operates under the rubric of "the historians' term 'the People's War'" (1). His diagnosis of a group of post-war novels, including Manning's and Waugh's, is generally scathing, as he notes that

[t]he post-war "epics" offer themselves as a form of knowledge about the war, a version of history. ... This fiction covers a very wide range of diverse experience, but it has one broad tendency: to suppress or to limit all those hopeful political expectations and personal freedoms that the war years made possible. (74)

While I think Munton's conclusion is reasonable, I hope to show that a close reading of the sequences reveals some undercurrents running contrary to the bleak version of history he identifies in them.

Studies of the Balkan and Levant trilogies tend to approach them from one or more of three angles: an interest in the relation of the novels to greater narratives of history or epic; a feminist perspective; or a postcolonial approach. Robert Morris's *Continuance and Change* (1972) is an example of the first approach. He examines a number of novel sequences, including the Balkan trilogy, in terms of their treatment of personal change linked to history, "a backdrop flowing on relentlessly and continually" (xiii). Morris's study of the connections between autobiography and fiction, individual life and history, in the novels leads him to conclude that the Balkan trilogy is "antiromantic" (48). His later (anthologised



1986) article on both trilogies, “Olivia Manning’s *Fortunes of War*”, praises the trilogies for being “unwavering in [their] depiction of the human condition as open-ended” (234). His thesis is that while the Balkan trilogy is mainly about “breakdown”, the Levant trilogy is built around the subject of death (238).

Theodore Steinberg’s *Twentieth-Century Epic Novels* (2005) makes a bolder claim, studying a handful of novels as modern reworkings of the epic form. By classifying Manning’s work as an example of a new form of an old tradition, Steinberg avoids the problem of fitting it into more recent literary periods. Although his definition of the epic novel genre seems mostly reasonable, I am not entirely convinced by the usefulness of including Manning’s sequence in it, or by the few specific comparisons he makes to the *Iliad*, such as “Guy and Harriet may not be the precise counterparts of Hektor and Andromache, but, as we shall see, Guy does put everything else ahead of his wife’s well-being” (93). It should also be noted that the *Odyssey* is not an epic poem in Steinberg’s view, and *A Dance to the Music of Time* is excluded from the ranks of epic novels, being instead a “chronicle”, describing “an era rather than ... a moment” (48).

I hope it will become clear in this thesis why I do not think “epic” is quite the right term for Manning’s, or Waugh’s, works. Surely Anthony Powell’s sequence is more “epic” than Manning’s or Waugh’s: there is a scene portraying General Montgomery in *The Military Philosophers*, after all, though “mock-epic” might be a better term for Powell’s sequence. Where these novels differ from the classical epic, and the reason why Steinberg’s extended analogy with classical epic sometimes seems to be stretching too far, is that they are about ordinary people caught up in great events, not warlike heroes sitting at the pinnacle of the social hierarchy. Their matter is the bureaucratic and domestic minutiae of wartime life outside the corridors of power. Indeed, as I will discuss in the first chapter, both Manning and Waugh treat exploits of military heroism, and characters who would seem to fulfil conventionally heroic expectations, as flawed, propagandistic or personally tragic. It is such “literary” novels’ willingness to critique values still generally taken for granted in the “war stories” I mentioned above which makes them interesting. But the war stories are probably closer to the classical epic model; Manning and Waugh could be accused of attempting to create myth out of history, but it is a subtler kind of myth.

Jenny Hartley’s *Millions Like Us* (1997) is primarily a study of novels written during the war by women, but includes a discussion of Manning’s work in the final chapter which treats the novels from a feminist perspective as well as claiming them as epic narratives. Hartley

responds to Munton's negative assessment by pointing out that Manning's sequence (at least in the Balkan trilogy) is unusual in being set within Europe at war:

Alan Munton's recent assessment of the two trilogies as belonging "to the conventional novel of manners, made significant by the proximity of war" needs to be tempered by the appreciation that Manning's war is very much *in* Europe, and that her cast are characters of history. History is not only in her fiction, it is in her characters; they carry the spirit of the times in them. (179-80)

She also raises an interesting possible reason for women's war novels' neglect by critics:

Even when it is critical, this is a literature of commitment and citizenship, and this may be why it has received comparatively little attention. Feminist criticism has favoured fictions of subversion, opposition and negotiation. The heroine of the People's War does not start fires in attics; she is more likely to stay up all night fire-watching in a cold garage. (15)

By stating that Harriet Pringle is engaged in a "female odyssey" (183) and on a "front line of one" (181) Hartley seems to claim that even if Harriet is not in the "People's War", she is an admirably independent heroine. Her discussion of the details of the books implicitly admits that this is a problematic project and ends up leaving Harriet, in terms of the image above, neither lighting a fire nor trying to put one out. The cogency of her analysis suffers, too, from her examining the novels in sequential order. Hartley admits that "what restores [Harriet] is not so much her husband as her own development" (193) but there is disappointingly little discussion of the specifics of Harriet and Guy's relationship, and no mention of the importance of their quasi-colonial position as English abroad. Nevertheless, her project of reclaiming the historical significance of such novels is admirable, her attention to gender politics forming an important revision of Munton's "People's War" perspective.

Janice Rossen's *Women Writing Modern Fiction* (2003) also adopts a feminist approach, but from a slightly different starting point, as it is a study of a number of women writers who attempted to bypass the influences of modernism and feminism. While her study of a selection of these writers, ones who "while not being intellectual (except in a very few cases) ... have a passion for ideas, and for dramatizing the workings of the mind" (5) uses an intriguing thematic connection, the chapter covering Manning's trilogies suffers somewhat from the strange inclusion of Baroness Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (alongside Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*, which seems an eminently reasonable choice). There are good insights into Harriet and Guy's relationship, but her analysis is very character-focused and her claim that "Bowen, Manning and Orczy use wartime in a way which they

feel will lend automatic weight to the emotional components of their novels” (14) makes it seem as if the course of the war is manipulated by the Pringles’ relationship rather than the other way around.

Phyllis Lassner’s two studies, *British Women Writers of World War II* (1998) and *Colonial Strangers* (2004), approach the Balkan and Levant trilogies (respectively), along with several other novels by women writers, using a combination of postcolonial and feminist analysis. Lassner focuses in particular on the significance of the Sasha Drucker episode, relations between British and Egyptians, and Harriet’s position as a woman, and I will make substantial reference to her arguments in the second chapter. There is a tendency in Lassner’s work, and in that of other critics such as Jeremy Treglown’s chapter in *British Fiction After Modernism*, as well as critics writing about Waugh, to treat the novels autobiographically in the final instance. This is certainly valid given the close relationship of these stories to the authors’ own experiences during the war, but it is an approach I have generally (but not completely) avoided, as I will discuss briefly in the final section of this introduction.

Perhaps due to the greater commercial and critical success Waugh achieved in his lifetime, and the continuing popularity of more of his novels, there are many more studies of his work. It also seems to be easier to draw neat conclusions about his trilogy: perhaps due to its more opinionated narrative voice, readily identifiable themes, and balanced, closed structure. Studies of Waugh tend to be less (openly) theoretically driven. Both Bernard Bergonzi’s earlier and more recent surveys, *The Situation of the Novel* (1972) and *Wartime and Aftermath* (1993), briefly discuss *Sword of Honour* (Manning is not included), focusing in both cases on the trilogy’s treatment of the “myth of the Gentleman—Christian, conservative, soldierly, of an ancient family” and its collapse (*Wartime* 117). David Lodge’s early study *Evelyn Waugh* (1971) similarly focuses on the importance of Catholicism and the “myth of decline” (6; 11), a key concept I will return to from a number of angles.

Steven Trout’s excellent article on “Miniaturization and Anticlimax” (1997) analyses the trilogy with attention to its style and tone: “[u]nderlying most of the critical commentary that the trilogy has attracted to date is an assumption that I intend ... to modify: namely, that *Sword Of Honour*, like the more openly nostalgic *Brideshead Revisited*, constitutes an almost complete departure from the manic farce in Waugh’s early fiction” (125). Trout’s close reading of the trilogy’s use of irony, under categories of “Language” and “Setting”, leads him to conclude that *Sword of Honour* is a kind of “spiritual *Bildungsroman*” (140-1).

Richard York's article "Evelyn Waugh's Farewell to Heroism" (2004) comes to similar conclusions, but through a more conventional analysis of character and with reference to Waugh's letters and diaries. George McCartney's *Confused Roaring* (1987) concentrates on Waugh's problematic relationship with literary modernism. His analysis of the artistic conflict apparent in Waugh's work is a perceptive extension of the "myth of decline" concept:

For all his disapproval ... Waugh's response to the modern was marked by [a] certain fruitful ambivalence. In his official pose he was the curmudgeon who despised innovation, but the anarchic artist in him frequently delighted in its formal and thematic possibilities. He was never quite the scourge of the new he pretended to be, though he did work on the role. (3)

William Myers's *Evelyn Waugh and the Problem of Evil* (1991) covers all of Waugh's novels, in chronological order of publication. Myers is interested in Waugh's novels primarily from a biographical and moral (Catholic) point of view. He is very strong on the Catholic philosophical aspects, but tends to write about the novels as if they fit together into a pre-planned body of work. Also somewhat disappointingly, he makes some good points about the importance of imperialism in earlier books, and contrasts Kipling's, Forster's, and Waugh's depictions of it, but does not bring this aspect into his discussion of *Sword of Honour*, which instead focuses on Catholicism and social class. The introduction to his study, though, contains a crucial reminder of the importance of considering the historical specificity of Waugh's works:

I believe that Waugh's sense of the human person and of divine Providence are irreducibly present in his work, but that what he affirms about them can only be adequately understood in the context of the actual phase of world history in which his books are set (the closing years of the age of Imperialism) and the actual form of the religious convictions (anti-Modernist Catholicism) which enabled him to cope with the evil of those times. (x)

## **An outline of my approach**

These novels are set during the largest war ever, the war which perhaps more than any other previously or since can be defended, despite the unimaginably enormous loss of life and suffering it caused, as a "just war". The struggle against German Nazism, and Japanese brutality in China and Korea, is perhaps the closest humanity has ever come to a struggle against an incarnation of evil. The period between roughly 1930 and 1945 also saw, in the United Kingdom and in other Anglophone democracies, huge social changes. Three important examples of these changes relevant to these novels are changes in the power balance between the working class and the traditional and new ruling classes, changes in the

career and educational aspirations of the middle and working classes, and the beginning of the end of the British Empire.

These novels offer a personal version of, a personal journey through, historical events. They are long narratives, covering several years, containing various narrative strands which do or do not resolve, and large casts of characters of various levels of caricature and believability. There is a double focus in reading these novels, as they were written about the war, after the war. Particularly in the case of Manning's two widely-spaced trilogies, there is considerable development in the style and themes between the first book and the last. In their writing as well as their content, they can claim a broad historical perspective. They present a fictionalised version of historical "fact" modified with the benefit of hindsight. Treglown identifies part of the appeal of Manning's novels as being "vicarious tourism" (145), and there is certainly what might be called an aesthetic dimension to their appeal, the description of various colourful settings and characters from a period increasingly outside living memory of their readership. I too am a kind of vicarious tourist in being interested in how the texts present their settings, but I am even more interested in how their stories relate to what was happening in the world beyond; and although the structure and style of the texts is an important underpinning of my study, it implicitly remains secondary to the ways in which they reach beyond themselves.

The "tremulations on the ether", to use D. H. Lawrence's term (195), these novels pick up on, and the ones they have produced, are the objects my study is trying to reach. Although the contention that fictional narratives can communicate or generate "truth" about the objective state of the world is eternally vexed, I believe that the basis of these novels in experience, in a personal view of a historically important period, gives them a certain weight which I have tried to respect by ensuring that my own critique is grounded in an awareness of history. The most appropriate literary-theoretical classification for my approach therefore seems to be that it is neo-historicist. Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, in their introduction to *Practicing New Historicism* (2001), summarise my feelings about the desirability of a theoretically eclectic and culturally focused approach:

... [B]oth of us were and remain deeply sceptical of the notion that we should formulate an abstract system and then apply it to literary works. We doubt that it is possible to construct such a system independent of our own time and place and of the particular objects by which we are interested, and we doubt too that any powerful work we might do would begin with such an attempt. (2)

I have read a number of different scholars' works, ranging in publication date from the early 1960s to the late 2000s, partly in order to avoid becoming too concerned with the burying or praising of a particular kind of literary theory. I hope that my approach, growing from the texts themselves and drawing on a variety of scholarship, has helped me avoid falling into constructing what Mark Currie, in *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (1998), terms a "theoretical fiction" (51), that I have not ever "pretended to discover a truth which I [have] at least partially invented" (134). My methodological aspiration in analysing these novels has been for my analysis to grow out of an attentive reading of the novels themselves, rather than starting from a predetermined critical position. Of course, without having embarked on a kind of Barthesian textual analysis which discusses *every* part of the texts, a project which taken to its logical conclusion is akin to the attempt in Borges' short story "On Exactitude in Science" to create a perfectly accurate map, my discussion will inevitably be reductive. The three thematic chapters which make up the body of this thesis cover some of the more important aspects of the texts which have occurred to me, but there are certainly many more themes which could be examined in depth, such as the importance of comic characters and incidents juxtaposed with serious subjects. As approaches which could be applied across my thematic analyses, two common ways of reading Manning's and Waugh's novels seem worth mentioning in particular in this introduction: those drawing on postcolonial theory, and biographical analysis.

I have built a substantial part of my thinking on other scholarly readings, such as Phyllis Lassner's postcolonial reading of Manning, which I refer to extensively in the second chapter. While I appreciate the incisive clarity that can result from a good theoretically-led reading of a text, I feel that, particularly with large narratives such as these, such readings are in danger of doing the complexity of the texts a disservice. Mark Currie is scathing about this particular criticism of theory-led analysis, praising Edward Said for "[t]he ease with which [he] passes from formal to political issues throughout his work [which] is exemplary of the recent move away from those tedious demonstrations that a narrative exceeded the significance that any analytic model imposed on it" (150). In response I can only express hope that in a study such as this one which is based primarily on the texts, the contradictions and obstacles to straightforward conclusions thrown up by considering a large amount of textual evidence have helped produce points which are not invalid.

There is often an assumption of intellectual and moral superiority to the text in postcolonial analysis which I find uncomfortable. Postcolonial theory is inclined to judge prejudices of the past harshly, which may be entirely reasonable from a moral point of view,

but can seem like a too-easy critical option. While one can certainly take exception to Waugh's treatment of any kind of left-wing political belief, or Manning's characters' anti-Semitism, it is more useful to think about such unappealing aspects in terms of the positions they represent in the social groups depicted in the novels. For neither Manning nor Waugh is by any means a poor enough novelist to completely elide points of view which disagree with her or his narrative prejudices. Can criticism really sit so far above the literature it examines that it can condemn entire large and complicated texts based on a partial (in every sense of the word) analysis? But, on the other hand, if criticism is not prepared to criticise anything, then what use is it – surely criticism must be able to advance some kind of ideal? I have tried to steer a course between condemning and celebrating these texts.

I do not believe in the application of a single theoretical model, but nor am I advocating a return to biographical criticism. I only occasionally draw on biographical knowledge about Manning or Waugh. (Mostly in the third chapter, where the best way to look at some particular features of the novels seems to be in terms of the intentions of their authors.) A biographical analysis of these texts seems to me to be flawed for both general theoretical and specific practical reasons. Like monotheoretically-driven reading, biographical analysis can distract one from a concentration on the texts as a starting point; while also increasing the risk of disregarding those advances in thinking about texts and where their meaning resides which we owe to theory. There is danger of blurring the boundary between evaluation of what is represented in the text, and evaluation of the supposed beliefs of the author; of reading novels, as Mark Currie criticises Edward Said for doing, as “covert autobiographies” (150). On a practical level, this theoretical decision fits in with my interest as a scholar of literature in the content of Waugh's and Manning's novels, rather than the details of Waugh's and Manning's lives, how much the novels can tell us about their lives, or the process by which their novels were composed.

I believe that these novels are interesting primarily in what they can tell us about developments in English cultural identity in the mid-to-late twentieth century precipitated by the war: how they transform history into myths about the changes brought about by the war. In the chapters that follow I will discuss how Manning's and Waugh's sequences depict heroism and sacrifice in the war; the problems of being English abroad during the decline of British global power; and literature and the literary scene.

## Chapter One: Heroism and Sacrifice

The start of the war finds Guy Crouchback, the protagonist of *Sword of Honour*, and Harriet and Guy Pringle,<sup>2</sup> central characters of the Balkan and Levant trilogies, in motion, but they are travelling in different directions, and with different motivations. Harriet reflects later that “[s]he married for adventure. ... [S]he and Guy had set out expecting danger and not unprepared to die” (Manning, *Friends* 670). While the Pringles are en route to Romania, Crouchback travels “back to his own country to serve his King” (Waugh, *Men at Arms* 9). Both Crouchback and the Pringles might seem heroic in that the war comes as a time of excitement in which personal safety is forgotten, but these contrasting statements of their motivations—service for Crouchback, adventure for Harriet—hint at differences in the sympathies of the two sequences.

In this first chapter I will discuss the ways the sequences construct and test ideals of heroism and sacrifice. These concepts are more directly relevant to Waugh’s trilogy, with its predominantly military setting, and Simon Boulderstone’s story in the Levant trilogy, but I will also apply them in a broader sense to the Pringles. The analysis of the novels in this chapter focuses particularly on characters: the moral positions that they represent, and the development of the central characters. My discussion of these characters allows me to identify some of the moral themes of the novels, and start establishing connections to cultural and historical context which will be expanded on in the subsequent chapters.

### Ideals of heroism and sacrifice in *Men at Arms*

At the start of *Men at Arms* the outbreak of war is welcomed by Guy Crouchback. Even more importantly than allowing him to “serve his King”, the war is presented as a battle against what he sees as the two great post-Christian ideologies which have alienated him from modern society:

Just seven days earlier he had opened his morning newspaper on the headlines announcing the Russian-German alliance. ... For eight years Guy, already set apart from his fellows by his own deep wound, that unstaunched, internal draining away of life and love, had been deprived of the loyalties which should have sustained him. He lived too close to Fascism in Italy to share the opposing enthusiasms of his countrymen. ... The German Nazis he knew to be mad and bad. Their

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<sup>2</sup> To try to avoid possible confusion caused by this shared first name, I will usually refer to Guy Crouchback by his surname and Guy Pringle by his first name.



participation dishonoured the cause of Spain .... But now, splendidly, everything had become clear. The enemy at last was plain in view, huge and hateful, all disguise cast off. It was the Modern Age in arms. Whatever the outcome there was a place for him in that battle. (9-10)

This passage reveals a number of important factors in the moral scheme of the trilogy. Crouchback's idiosyncratic political position sees Italian fascism as relatively innocuous and Franco as *almost* in the right. Communism and Nazism are in equivalence as constituents of "the Modern Age", with Crouchback's desire to fight against it, on behalf of his country, implying that both he and England somehow want to return to an earlier era. The "deep wound" imagines him as a Christ figure; the image also suggests the Fisher King (Pellam) of Arthurian legend, whose injury is linked to the suffering of his kingdom. The war is an opportunity to heal this wound and reconnect Crouchback to England. The idiosyncrasy of this moral philosophy is reinforced by the description of Crouchback's father:

He had an ancient name which was now little regarded and threatened with extinction. Only God and Guy knew the massive and singular quality of Mr Crouchback's family pride. He kept it to himself. That passion, which is often so thorny a growth, bore nothing save roses for Mr Crouchback. He was quite without class consciousness because he saw the whole intricate social structure of his country divided neatly into two unequal and unmistakable parts. On one side stood the Crouchbacks and certain inconspicuous, anciently allied families; on the other side stood the rest of mankind .... It was not an entirely sane conspectus but it engendered in his gentle breast two rare qualities, tolerance and humility. (31)

For Mr Crouchback, Uncle Peregrine, and the few other members of "landed recusant families" (Waugh, *Unconditional Surrender* 672) we glimpse in the trilogy, protestant or secular government of England is an accident of history, invalid compared with the enduring Catholic faith. Yet despite this, Mr Crouchback's pride in his ancient lineage leads to "tolerance and humility" in his dealings with an increasingly secularised world. If we attempt to read Mr Crouchback as a realistic character, he comes across as not just holding "not an entirely sane conspectus", but as a paradox, for his entire way of life is founded on historical class privilege, yet we are told he is "quite without class consciousness". As Myers observes in response to Kingsley Amis's complaining about the "souped up traditionalism" in the trilogy, "[t]he problem with Mr Crouchback is that he is a saint" (115).

It is later made clear that his father is an ideal Crouchback always aspires to: "[t]o Guy his father was the best man, the only entirely good man, he had ever known" (*Unconditional Surrender* 539). In the moral scheme of the trilogy, Mr Crouchback resides in a kind of Platonic realm of the ideal of piety, and his function as a signifier of Catholic virtue is one to which I will return later in the chapter. Tension between Crouchback's inherited

philosophy and the mainstream of English culture is illustrated several times in the trilogy. An early example is a drunken conversation with an Anglican chaplain: “[d]o you agree ... that the Supernatural Order is not something added to the Natural Order, like music or painting, to make everyday life more tolerable? It *is* everyday life. The supernatural is real; what we call ‘real’ is a mere shadow, a passing fancy” (*Men at Arms* 71-2). From the start of the trilogy, it is hinted that the disconnection between spiritual and material, the loss of (Catholic) faith, has caused the malaise of the modern world. It is also clear that the Crouchbacks’ idealistic belief system does not permit understanding of, or even a will to understand, political realities.

Crouchback’s desire to fight against the “Modern Age” is inspired by three models of heroism. Two of these are from real wars and associated with Catholicism. The most popular local saint at Santa Dulcina delle Rocce, his pre-war Italian home, is Roger of Waybroke, an English knight who set off on the second crusade but was shipwrecked and made it no further than the town: “[t]here he enlisted under the local Count, who promised to take him to the Holy Land but led him first against a neighbour, on the walls of whose castle he fell at the moment of victory. ... [A] man with a great journey still all before him and a great vow unfulfilled ...” (11). This heroic yet futile death is reprised in Crouchback’s recollection of his older brother Gervase, named for a beatified martyr for the faith during the reformation, who was “picked off by a sniper his first day in France, instantly, fresh and clean and unwearied, as he followed the duckboard across the mud, carrying his blackthorn stick, on his way to report to company headquarters” (15). Like the crusader, Gervase unites martial and religious virtue. Crouchback invokes the image of Gervase’s futile First World War sacrifice when, attempting to get into the army, he jocularly presents himself as “natural [cannon] fodder” (21). His brother’s legacy as a specifically Catholic martyr is symbolically bequeathed on him when his father gives him Gervase’s devotional medal. While Roger and Gervase may bode well for the spiritual purity of Crouchback’s intended heroic sacrifice, they are not at all encouraging in terms of longevity or efficacy.

Roger and Gervase are Crouchback’s ideals of the sacred warrior. His third model of heroic bravery, though, is secular and patriotic, the hero of a series of Victorian or Edwardian

boys' adventure stories, Captain Truslove.<sup>3</sup> It is Truslove who comes to Crouchback's mind when, in training with the Halberdiers, he is most fired with martial zeal:

Those two phrases, "the officers who will command you ...",<sup>4</sup> "the men you will lead ...", set the junior officers precisely in their place, in the heart of the battle. For Guy they set swinging all the chimes of his boyhood's reading ...

'... "I've chosen your squadron for the task, Truslove." "Thank you, sir. What are our chances of getting through?" "It can be done, Truslove, or I shouldn't be sending you. If anyone can do it, you can. And I can tell you this, my boy, I'd give all my seniority and all these bits of ribbon on my chest to be with you. But my duty lies here with the Regiment. Good luck to you, my boy. You'll need it" ...'

The words came back to him from a summer Sunday evening at his preparatory school [...]

That was during the First World War but the story came from an earlier chapter of military history. Pathans were Captain Truslove's business. Troy, Agincourt and Zululand were more real to Guy in those days than the world of mud and wire and gas where Gervase fell. Pathans for Truslove; paynims for Sir [Roger]<sup>5</sup> de Waybroke; for Gervase, Bernard Partridge's flamboyant, guilty Emperor, top-booted, eagle-crowned. (156-7)

Truslove connects Crouchback's boyhood dreams of adventure to his army career; and he also represents a childish certainty about England's moral position in the war, a certainty the adult Crouchback increasingly lacks. Like Sir Alastair Digby-Vane-Trumpington in *Put Out More Flags* who is excited at the thought of "turning a page in his life, as, more than twenty years ago lying on his stomach before the fire, with a bound volume of *Chums*, he used to turn over to the next instalment of the serial" (216-7), Crouchback is most excited by the army in imagination, in which the potential for "schoolboy heroics", as Bergonzi terms them (*Situation* 134), has not yet been hampered by actual experience.

In *Juvenile Literature and British Society 1850-1950*, Charles Ferrall and Anna Jackson drily observe that "the Victorian and Edwardian schoolboy must have longed for a premature and violent death" (37). There is strong irony at work in the Truslove "quote" here when we read it bearing in mind the progression from the patriotic and pro-imperialist message of texts such as those studied by Ferrall and Jackson, to the message of widespread breakdown of belief in military leadership of much First World War poetry. Siegfried

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<sup>3</sup> Waugh removed references to Truslove from the single-volume edition of *Sword of Honour* (1965) (Bergonzi, *Situation* 128). The Truslove material appears in the Everyman edition (1994), which is presumably based on the first editions of the novels.

<sup>4</sup> All ellipses in this quotation are in the original except the one in brackets.

<sup>5</sup> Misprinted as "Robert" in the Everyman edition.

Sassoon's "Base Details", which sneers at the hypocrisy of figures such as "scarlet Majors at the Base [who] speed glum heroes up the line to death" (ll. 2-3), seems particularly to loom over this passage. Crouchback's preparedness to martyr himself is undermined by the inevitable association of the senior officer appearing in this passage with the hollow rhetoric of those who "toddle safely home and die—in bed" (l. 10).

Crouchback's models of heroism are therefore problematic from the start. Truslove represents the "'civil religion' of nation and empire" – patriotism, in its broadest sense – which Ferrall and Jackson identify as largely subsuming Christian duty in later Victorian and Edwardian stories (34). The tension between this "civil religion" and the Catholic faith of Gervase and Roger hints at the difficulty of Crouchback's achieving his dream of healing both himself and England. Catholic and secular models do have something in common, though. For Gervase and Roger, premature and futile sacrifice is inextricably linked to their heroism, and Truslove too is willing to brave death. Later in the chapter I will return to the consequences of Crouchback's ideal of heroism combining self-sacrifice for spiritual and national ends. For now I turn to the less straightforwardly moralistic and militaristic ideology of Manning's central characters.

### **Fractional marriage, vexed politics, and untouchable heroes in the Balkan trilogy**

As non-combatants, Guy and Harriet Pringle expect a very different war to Crouchback's. In the Balkan trilogy, Manning's most important characters are the teachers, embassy staff, journalists, and other hangers-on of the English colony in Bucharest. In their ideology as well as their occupations, Guy Crouchback and Guy Pringle are very different creatures. While Crouchback sees communism and fascism as opposite sides of the same false coin, Guy Pringle is a left-wing "Progressive" (*Friends* 718). As an anti-fascist yet one who has ambivalent beliefs regarding the justice of war, excluded from the army due to his eyesight yet determined to work hard, politics play a comparable role in complicating Guy's feelings about duty to nation to Crouchback's Catholicism.

An attempt to generalise about the political position of Manning's novels based on Guy's character is complicated by Harriet's scepticism: scepticism echoed by the narrative voice which is generally closely aligned with Harriet's consciousness. The force of Guy's idealism produces in Harriet, and the narration, an equal and opposite reaction of sarcasm and cynicism, as when Guy "expose[s] his ... belief that had the forces that brought about the war used their wealth and energy to further the concepts of Marx, the earthly paradise

would be well established by now” (787). The novels abound in these scenes of conversation, generally set in restaurants – as Munton notes, there are an “enormous number of meals consumed in *The Balkan Trilogy*” (102) – in which Harriet suffers as a bored spectator of the political discussion of her husband and his friends:

[David Boyd’s] interests were, like [Guy’s] own, impersonal, social, economic and historical. She sighed at the thought of so much talk. It was not, she told herself, that she was unappreciative, but the impersonal quality tired her. She felt a little out of it, a little jealous.

Perhaps sensing this, Klein turned smiling to her to include her. He said: “So here we all are Left-side men, eh? And Doamna Preen-gel? She, too, is Left-side?”

“No,” said Harriet, “I am fighting the solitary battle of the reactionary.”

Guy laughed to prevent Klein taking this seriously, and squeezed her hand. (Manning, *Great Fortune* 177)

This portrayal of political and philosophical debate through a vexed personal relationship is perhaps the central conceit of the Balkan and Levant trilogies, and the constant conflict between Guy and Harriet is an important factor in creating what Phyllis Lassner identifies as “Harriet’s pervasively depressed perspective [which] questions not only her marriage, but the grand operatic register of the traditional war epic” (*British Women Writers* 238-9). While I do not want to suggest that Guy is a figure at all associated with “traditional war epic” in terms of military heroism and sacrifice, his interest in global political and economic forces does represent an attempt to see the course of the war in terms of a grander narrative. Guy’s “impersonal” interests contrast with Harriet’s, and the narrator’s, interest in character-sketching. This is not to say that Harriet, or the narrator, is uninterested in the large scale of events. Morris draws analogies between the war, always in the background, and the goings-on of the English colony, reflected in the titles of the sections of the novels (*Continuance* 44-5). For example, the final part of *Friends and Heroes*, “The Funeral”, describes Yakimov’s death as well as the defeat of Greece. While Morris may be overstating his interpretive case somewhat, the connection between events on the large scale of history and events on the small scale of individual lives is certainly central to Manning’s sequence. And this connection relates to the two sides in the Pringles’ conflicted relationship, in which Guy’s concentration on the large scale blinds him to the anxiety Harriet constantly suffers over the effects of the war on them personally.

Crouchback and Guy Pringle are ideological opposites in one sense, but similar in that they are both idealists. Harriet’s self-styled “reactionary” opposition to her husband’s beliefs may suggest a similarity to Crouchback’s rejection of the “Modern Age”, but Harriet lacks the spiritual and patriotic nostalgia which motivates Crouchback. Nevertheless she retains a

kind of cultural religious faith. When Guy reveals that he was never baptised, she is distressed for the differing fates of their souls after death:

“... My father would not let me be baptised.”

“This means when we die we’ll be in different places. You’ll be in limbo.”

Laughing, Guy said: “I don’t think so. We’ll be in the same place, don’t worry. A hundred years from now we shall be exactly where we were a hundred years ago—which is nowhere at all.”

But Harriet was not satisfied. She brooded over their post-obitum separation ... then suddenly ... lifted the teapot and poured cold tea over Guy’s head. While he sat stolidly acceptant of her follies, she said: “I baptise thee, Guy, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,” which was all she knew of the baptismal service. (Manning, *Spoilt City* 386)

Harriet’s concern at Guy’s lack of spirituality is generally revealed in such more or less harmless exchanges, but insurmountable differences of opinion also emerge, such as when Harriet has been reading a propaganda pamphlet about the executed Romanian fascist leader, Codreanu. She is “stimulated ... by the revelation of a mystical strain in this pleasure-loving people”:

“You must admit,” she said, “that the Iron Guard concepts are not so very different from your own.” [...]

[*Guy*:] “Before the war there were quite a lot of sentimentalists like you. They did not realise that while they were being mesmerised and misled by the romantic aspects of fascism, they were being made to sell their souls ...”<sup>6</sup>

Having used this phrase inadvertently, he paused, and Harriet, feeling ignorant and something of a fool, leapt in with: “If the fascists make you sell your soul, the communists make you deny it.” (390)

Like the description of a communist world as an “earthly paradise” quoted earlier, and Harriet’s stating that “Guy read *Das Kapital* as the padre might read his Bible” (*Friends* 787), there is an attempt here to impose a spiritual aspect on atheist beliefs. It is worth noting Munton’s comment on this episode, and Harriet and Guy’s relationship in general:

The two forces ... are kept in balance; Harriet has almost exclusive possession of the narrative point of view and is engagingly sharp and perceptive, but Guy is more intriguing, always politically and personally sympathetic, and an enigma that the reader, as much as Harriet, would like to understand. This equivalence should not distract us from the conservatism of Manning’s position. No other politics would for a moment tolerate a sympathetic consideration of Romanian Fascism. The notion of a “balance” between that and a then-popular form of Marxism is itself dubious: how does one take a balanced position when Hitler and his Balkan enthusiasts are on one side of the scales? (105)

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<sup>6</sup> Ellipsis in original.

As I noted in the previous section, *Sword of Honour* seems straightforward in its way of dealing with the problem of reconciling religion with political ideology. Crouchback is opposed equally to fascism and communism because he sees them as equally irreligious and modern. An even more extreme point of view is expressed by Crouchback's Uncle Peregrine, who is displeased when the Soviet Union begins to push Germany back: "I'd sooner see the Japanese in Europe – at least they have a king and some sort of religion. If one can believe the papers we are actually helping the Bolsheviks" (*Unconditional Surrender* 598). Peregrine is eccentric, but his statement is not unsupported by the narrative sympathy of Waugh's trilogy. Secular politics is presented as irrational, suggesting that it is in no position to make this criticism about religious belief. In Croatia, Crouchback suggests to his colleague Frank de Souza that communism is "a sect" just as much as Catholicism is (676), which is denied by de Souza. In Harriet's "stimulation" by evidence of spirituality, while the avowedly atheist Guy inadvertently talks of "souls", Manning's sequence establishes, in a more tentative way, a conflict between spiritual and material values, but one in which Harriet's position is defined by reaction, and the materialist Guy is undermined by his own terminology. As Munton notes, the privileging of Harriet's voice in this conflict can result in a somewhat bizarre moral position, but it is less bizarre than the position of Waugh's trilogy.

Although Manning's sequence does not muse on heroism and sacrifice to the same extent as Waugh's trilogy, it is worth noting the importance of the intersection between this vague spirituality and military heroism. As well as the extended treatment of Simon Boulderstone in the Levant trilogy, to which I will return later in the chapter, in *Friends and Heroes* Harriet has a brief involvement with a young liaison officer named Charles Warden:

He was a different order of being. His function was not to preserve his own life but protect the lives of others. In this present situation, he might run no greater risk than she herself; he was not more likely to lose his life—and yet, against reason, glancing sideways in the twilight, she saw him poetic, transfigured, like one of those sacrificial youths of the last war whose portraits had haunted her childhood. With his unmarred, ideal looks, he was not intended for life. It was not his part to survive. She was required to live but he was a romantic figure, marked down for death. (752)

In this description, Charles seems to encapsulate Crouchback's ideal heroic attributes. But Harriet, over the course of this short passage, works through disillusionment with First World War ideals which plays out over the course of Waugh's entire trilogy. Charles, "unmarred", "poetic, transfigured, like one of those sacrificial youths of the last war", is reminiscent of Gervase's combination of spiritual purity with sacrifice, in this case for the

sake of the “civil religion” without a truly spiritual aspect. Harriet’s crush on Charles, and her later friendship with Simon and admiration of the Women’s Auxiliary drivers Mortimer and Phillips in the Levant trilogy, show the attraction of military heroism. But her placing of Charles in a “different order”, her (constantly wavering, it must be admitted) determination not to become involved with him, argues that although she is attracted by the kind of sacrificial heroism Crouchback tries to achieve, the Pringles have a different goal in the war, one to which she ultimately remains loyal. While Crouchback seeks initially to regress to being a “sacrificial youth”, the statement that Charles is “marked down for death” directly contrasts with Harriet’s narrative function. The centrality of anxiety about survival to Harriet’s story reveals the superficiality of her profession of the Pringles’ preparedness to die which I quoted at the start of the chapter. She may disagree with her husband’s political views, but they are united by a will to survive.

### **The failure of institutions**

The initial enthusiasm, whether for heroism, work, or adventure, of Crouchback and the Pringles is put to the test by their wartime careers, which are dominated by unsympathetic institutions. While Guy Pringle spends the war teaching, Crouchback initially takes on the role of pupil. At first his army life in the Halberdiers is rejuvenating: “[i]t seemed to Guy that ... he had been experiencing something he had missed in boyhood, a happy adolescence” (*Men at Arms* 43). Again appropriately given his fondness for Truslove, his regiment is a capsule of Victorian custom: “[n]owhere in England could there be found a survival of a Late-Victorian Sunday so complete and so unselfconscious, as at the Halberdier barracks” (56). This immersion in a Victorian environment is continued when his battalion is billeted at a run-down preparatory school. Here, though, a melancholy note appears as he contemplates the bleak accommodation, which captures only the bad side of the school experience:

Well, he reflected, he had not joined the army for his own comfort. .... Life in barracks had been a survival from long years of peace, something rare and protected, quite unconnected with his purpose. That was over and done with; this was war.

And yet on this dark evening, his spirit sank. The occupation of this husk of a house, perhaps, was a microcosm of that new world he had enlisted to defeat. Something quite worthless, a poor parody of civilization, had been driven out; he and his fellows had moved in, bringing the new world with them; the world that was taking firm shape everywhere all about him, bounded by barbed wire and reeking of carbolic. (86)



This description of the school introduces an important theme that is developed throughout the trilogy. The past is devalued as “a poor parody of civilization”, but the “new world” of the future also looms as a sinister place “bounded by barbed wire and reeking of carbolic”. The school is named Kut-al-Imara House, but this is not the only reference to an ignominious defeat of the First World War: “[t]he sleeping quarters had plainly been the boys’ dormitories. Each was named after a battle in the First War. His was *Paschendael*. He passed the doors of *Loos*, *Wipers* (so spelt) and *Anzac*” (84). These references cast a pall over Crouchback’s army experience: memory of the bloodshed of the First World War is broadened from the specific case of Gervase to the general case of some of the worst battles of that conflict.

The army causes Crouchback to doubt whether he is on the right side in his fight against the “new world”, and an important aspect of his disappointment is instability in the class system as it functions in the army. Anxiety about the crumbling of social stratifications runs throughout *Sword of Honour*. Ritchie-Hook tells the trainees they are the last officers to be selected “in the old way” (in Crouchback’s case, through a fortuitous acquaintance with Colonel Tickeridge), rather than by promotion from the ranks and training at an OCTU (110). A new meritocracy is rising, typified by Crouchback’s first sergeant, Soames, who seems very similar to Hooper in *Brideshead Revisited*:

The normal relationship in the Halberdiers between platoon commander and sergeant was that of child and nannie. The sergeant should keep his officer out of mischief. The officer’s job was to sign things, to take the blame and quite simply to walk ahead and get shot first. And, as an officer, he should have a certain intangibility belonging, as in old-fashioned households, to the further side of the baize-doors. All this was disordered in the relationship of Guy and Sergeant Soames. Soames revered officers in a more modern way, as men who had been sharp and got ahead .... Soames wore his moustache in a gangster’s cut. (162-3)

His appearance suggesting a character from Graham Greene’s *Brighton Rock*, Soames is a creature of cut-throat modernity, the kind of man who will “[get] ahead” in the new army. But, even more clearly than in the remembered Truslove story, there is also a strong suggestion here that there is something ridiculously wrong with the old system too, in which the officer is infantilised, reduced to an even more dependent state than adolescence. Those who can function successfully within the modern army while maintaining traditional approaches to duty and moral certainty, such as Major Tickeridge and “Jumbo” Trotter, do so by remaining blind to this reality and adhering to First World War standards of bravery: “[i]s this a last-man, last-round defence?” ask[s] Colonel Tickeridge cheerfully” on Crete (Waugh, *Officers* 408). The cosy class system is being disordered in the Halberdiers; the

more club-like atmosphere of the Commando promises another sanctuary for Guy in *Officers and Gentlemen* but this, too, fails on Crete. The failure of the army to live up to Crouchback's expectations is, like the description of Kut-al-Imara above, an example of a bind or conundrum identified by Lodge as a recurring theme in Waugh's work:

When culture is seen as a process of continual decline, nothing is invulnerable to irony. The modern is ridiculed by contrast with the traditional, but attempts to maintain or restore the traditional in the face of change are also seen as ridiculous; and in any case the traditional usually turns out to be in some way false or compromised. (9-10)

Throughout *Sword of Honour* Crouchback, like Paul Pennyfeather in *Decline and Fall*, is suffering from "a growing conviction that there was something radically inapplicable about [the] whole code of ready-made honour that is the still small voice, trained to command, of the Englishman all the world over" (Waugh, *Decline* 208). But while in Waugh's earlier novels the conundrum of progress identified by Lodge is mostly explored for its comic potential, in *Sword of Honour*, continuing a trend that can be seen developing in *A Handful of Dust* and *Brideshead Revisited*, the narrative is less anarchic, the comedy darker. The early comic failures of the army are followed by the tragedy and pathos of Crete. On Crete, military traditions of heroism are let down, but it is also suggested that military traditions were inadequate to deal with the situation. A number of soldiers in Waugh's trilogy, at a number of points, starting with Major Erskine on Crete, express dissatisfaction with the orders they are having to carry out in terms of their military education: "[i]t's not soldiering as I was taught it" (*Officers* 436). This trope recurs later with regard to the Croatian mission: "[t]his isn't soldiering as I was taught it," said Cape" (*Unconditional Surrender* 636). Soldiers should never surrender, and never have anything to do with politics: the modern army is draining their capacity for straightforward martial glory, but it is acknowledged too that there was something wrong with the Victorian approach.

Crouchback's alienation from the army, due to his religion, his age, his injuries, his ill fortune, continues the alienation from which he initially suffers, and which he hoped the war would overcome. At the start of *Men at Arms*, Crouchback has an inherited connection to Santa Dulcina, but feels "he was not *simpatico*", that "[he] alone was a stranger among them" compared to the other, generally disreputable, non-Italian residents (13). The initial promise the Halberdiers offer of a new surrogate community is withdrawn; he ends up serving in various units wearing his Halberdier uniform but always excluded in important ways from both his original and his temporary military communities. There is tension between joy in solitude and sadness at exclusion. In parachute training, spiritual rapture is

followed by a literal return to earth with a bump: a broken leg and removal from the training course. An earlier and less spiritually weighty example of this disappointment and exclusion occurs on Crete:

A few hours earlier he had exulted in his loneliness. Now the case was altered. He was a “guest from the higher formation”, a “Hookforce body”, without place or function, a spectator. And all the deep sense of desolation which he had sought to cure, which from time to time momentarily seemed to be cured, overwhelmed him as of old. (*Officers* 438)

As Crouchback’s career is hampered by the unsympathetic army, so too is Guy Pringle’s under the capricious control of the “organisation” (*Great Fortune* 87),<sup>7</sup> a very thinly disguised and, as soon becomes apparent, rather sarcastically named, version of the British Council. *Sword of Honour* and the Balkan and Levant trilogies are largely about the interaction between personal integrity and institutional injustice; injustice caused by institutions falling under the control of the wrong people.

*Sword of Honour* is structured around a series of anticlimactic military defeats, and similarly the Balkan trilogy is dominated by a series of retreats, as the Pringles are forced to move from Romania to Greece to Egypt. As in Waugh’s trilogy, in which Crouchback’s own personal courage is never in doubt, Manning’s sequence expresses an admiration for courage in these retreats: there is always a distinction in narrative sympathy between those who stay loyal to their colleagues and friends, and those who behave jealously, yet who often manage to promote themselves. Toby Lush and Dubedat’s selfish arrangement of their escape from Romania, and Major Cookson, Professor Lord Pinkrose and Gracey’s attempt to arrange their escape from Athens, establish a moral division in the novels which elevates Guy (and Harriet) above most of his colleagues. The irony of Pinkrose, Guy’s most enduring professional enemy, being an expert on Byron’s poetry is almost too obvious to require stating. His cowardice contrasts with the true heroism of the Greek, British, Australian and New Zealand soldiers admired by Harriet in *Friends and Heroes*. Although Guy does sometimes receive career assistance, such as from Mrs. Brett and Alan Frewen in *Friends and Heroes* and Dobson in *The Danger Tree*, these helpers are not insiders in the “Organization”. The “Organization” operates capriciously, in ignorance, at long range from its English base, through favours given to undeserving cronies. Similarly, though

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<sup>7</sup> Somewhat inconsistently spelled “Organization” in *Friends and Heroes*, and throughout the Levant trilogy, in the Penguin editions. This is the spelling I will adopt, because the name “Organization” appears more frequently later in the sequence.

Major Tickeridge and “Jumbo” Trotter are occasionally able to assist Crouchback due to their knowledge of army bureaucracy, it is clear that they are not figures whose power is rising during the war.

Unfair treatment by the army or the “Organization” contrasts with the honesty and work ethic of Crouchback and Guy Pringle. The idea that the virtue inherent in hard work will prevail does not remain unquestioned though, particularly in the Balkan and Levant trilogies. Harriet, deprived of satisfactory employment for much of the sequence, resents this aspect of Guy’s idealism as much as she does his political discussions:

“... He’s stuck at that commercial college, wasting his talents. He’s not allowed to leave the Organization and Gracey can’t, or won’t, give him a job worthy of him. Other men are at war, so he must take what comes to him. He cannot protest, except that his behaviour is protest. He must either howl against his life or treat it as a joke.” As she spoke, protest rose in her, too. “This is what they’ve done to him – Gracey, Pinkrose and the rest of them. He believes that right and virtue, if persisted in, must prevail, yet he knows he’s been defeated by people for whom the whole of life is a dishonest game.” (Manning, *Danger Tree* 113)

Both Manning’s and Waugh’s sequences contrast those who adhere to “right and virtue” with those who get ahead unfairly. Manning’s “Organization” and Waugh’s army are dysfunctional institutions which permit this kind of opportunism. But as well as these similarities, the portrayal of these two central institutions reveals differences in the political sympathies of Manning’s and Waugh’s sequences. The conservative “Organization” is able to be exploited due to its disorganisation, because it is out of touch with modernity, but Waugh’s army becomes unpleasant because it is becoming modern. Affection for the Halberdiers’ old-fashionedness is not paralleled by any sentiment in Manning’s sequence.

### **The failure of old colonial heroes: the past unredeemed**

Kut-al-Imara begins Crouchback’s disillusionment with the army as an institution, and the officers of his acquaintance undermine his models of heroism. None of them lives up to the Truslove model, but the one who comes closest is the officer whose speech invokes the memory of the Truslove story in the passage quoted in the first section of this chapter (see p. 18), Brigadier (originally Colonel, ultimately Major-General) Ritchie-Hook. He is a kind of perpetual adolescent, a grown-up rebellious schoolboy hero, “twice court martialled for disobedience to orders in the field, twice acquitted in recognition of the brilliant success of his independent actions” (*Men at Arms* 61). His philosophy is firmly that of a First World War general:

“[...] You must use [men] when they’re on their toes ... Use them,”<sup>8</sup> he repeated dreamily, “spend them. It’s like slowly collecting a pile of chips and then plonking them all down on the roulette board. It’s the most fascinating thing in life, training men and staking them against the odds. [...] You throw them into action and in a week, perhaps in a few hours, the whole thing is expended. [...] You have to ‘start all over again from your beginnings, and never breathe a word about your loss’. Isn’t that how the poem goes? [...]” (64-5)

The (mis)quotation from Kipling’s “If” places Ritchie-Hook in the Victorian/Edwardian, Truslove period of thinking about patriotism and military sacrifice, and he is also connected to Truslove’s place in adventure stories with colonial settings through mention of his “years of unremitting conflict” (61) overseas between the wars. While the fascination Ritchie-Hook holds for Crouchback can be explained by the congruence of his belief in “expend[ing]” men with Crouchback’s willingness to serve as “fodder”, his cheerful unawareness of the shortcomings of First World War military leadership also contributes to the building of the tone of ironic scepticism which, as I have suggested earlier, occurs right from the start of *Men at Arms*. There is no suggestion of Ritchie-Hook lacking personal bravery, as I think is connoted for the officer in the remembered Truslove story: he accepts First World War rhetoric without hypocrisy. In doing so, he further undermines this rhetoric, because Ritchie-Hook combines Truslove’s bravery with presumably un-Truslove-like insubordination. In his courage and his ability to deal with the obstructions of the “vast uniformed and bemedalled bureaucracy by whose power alone a man might stick his bayonet into another” (127) Ritchie-Hook is sympathetic, but otherwise he is a dangerous trickster.

Apthorpe, whose rise and decline provides a good deal of the comic material in *Men at Arms*, further deflates the Truslove ideal. Although he is not older than Crouchback, Apthorpe’s characterisation makes it clear that he is old-fashioned. Like Ritchie-Hook, he initially favourably impresses Crouchback: “Apthorpe alone looked like a soldier. He was burly, tanned, moustached, primed with a rich vocabulary of military terms and abbreviations. Until recently he had served in Africa in some unspecified capacity. His boots had covered miles of bush trail” (40). I will return in the next chapter to the significance of Apthorpe’s colonial origins, but for now it suffices to note that, between them, the savage Ritchie-Hook and the Blimpish Apthorpe illustrate that Crouchback’s boyhood model of martial heroism is outdated when it is brought to life. The damage done by attachment to ideas of heroism from the past is demonstrated by Crouchback’s loyalty

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<sup>8</sup> Ellipsis in original.

to Ritchie-Hook and Apthorpe bringing about the two “black mark[s]” (217) which he accrues in his time with the Halberdiers. The first follows his volunteering to command Ritchie-Hook’s “unofficial fun”, a reconnaissance expedition at Dakar, in which he attempts most directly emulation of Truslove: “[c]an I go myself, sir?” [Crouchback] said to Colonel Tickeridge. This was true Truslove-style” (209). This is followed soon after, at the close of *Men at Arms*, by his accidental involvement in Apthorpe’s death. The repercussions of his loyalty to Apthorpe and Ritchie-Hook hang over the rest of Crouchback’s army career. If Ritchie-Hook and Apthorpe come from colonial adventure stories, then the implication is that these stories are no longer valid models.

The one character in Manning’s sequence who functions as a comparable memento of the military past, combining Apthorpe’s alcoholism with Ritchie-Hook’s tendency to make unfortunate literary references, is Commander Sheppy. Appearing in a cameo role near the end of *The Great Fortune*, Sheppy is never depicted as anything other than fatuously anachronistic, unable to function as a modern military leader, unable to inspire the young intellectuals of Harriet and Guy’s set with Truslove-like patriotism, and condemned from a number of perspectives. Harriet “think[s] his manner that of someone who has taken a correspondence course in leadership” (146). The journalist Galpin observes that there is “[n]othing so conspicuous as your old-time member of the British Secret Service” (128). And the academic David Boyd cynically says “[t]his is ‘cloak and dagger’ stuff, of course. They take on these romantic old war-horses and say: ‘If you succeed, you’ll get no recognition. If you fail, you’ll take the consequences.’ That makes them grit their teeth. They love it” (183). David’s imagined commander sounds very like the one in the Truslove story, but, unlike in *Men at Arms*, there is no hint of sympathy for this point of view.

Guy’s conscience pricks him to join the volunteers, an example of his ambivalence over his non-combatant role: “[w]e ought to be an active service and if we’re not, we should do what we can” (182). Ritchie-Hook quotes Kipling, but Sheppy quotes “The Charge of the Light Brigade” with even less fortunate connotations: “[y]ou’ll be rank and file. Yours not to reason why, yours but to do and die. Right?” (183). In fact, the only significant outcome of Sheppy’s schemes is Yakimov’s later inadvertent betrayal of Sasha Drucker. Appropriately for Sheppy’s implicit identification of himself with the “[s]ome one [who] had blunder’d” (Tennyson l. 12) in the poem, he disappears from the story after being arrested “shouting drunk, talking quite openly about bringing Danube shipping to a standstill”, as Inchcape puts it (*Great Fortune* 235). As with Apthorpe, the bottle seems to be at the root of his problems.

The war is no place for former colonial soldiers in either Manning's or Waugh's sequence, but there is pathos in the deaths of Apthorpe and (as I will discuss shortly) Ritchie-Hook, which is lacking in Sheppy's removal from the narrative. In the second chapter I will return to the treatment of colonialism and the empire by the two authors in more detail, but for now it is worth noting that all three of these old colonials have a negative impact on the lives of the central characters.

### **The failure of military heroism: class, courage and cowardice**

The publicly acclaimed war heroes in *Sword of Honour* are not drawn from the ranks of old colonials or old soldiers. Nor are they going to be found among conservative members of the upper class such as Crouchback, as Ian Kilbannock explains when he tells Crouchback that his Commando unit is

“... [I]ast-war stuff, Guy. Went out with Rupert Brooke.”

“You find us poetic?”

“No,” said Ian .... “Perhaps not poetic, exactly, but Upper Class. Hopelessly upper class. You're the ‘Fine Flower of the Nation’. You can't deny it and *it won't do.*” ...

“This is a People's War,” said Ian prophetically, “and the People won't have poetry and they won't have flowers. Flowers stink. The upper classes are on the secret list. We want heroes of the people, to or for the people, by, with and from the people.” (*Officers* 329)

Crouchback's romantic First World War willingness to be sacrificial fodder is here undermined by association with Rupert Brooke, whose poetic point of view was certainly “Upper Class” in its connection of a spiritualised patriotism to heroism, and whose early death as a soldier was even less militarily impressive than Gervase's. The irony of Kilbannock's speech, given Waugh's trilogy's valuing of class loyalty and class stability, is that he is himself an upper-class journalist turned public relations worker for the RAF who has found a comfortable niche during the war. As the description of Mr Crouchback quoted in the first section of this chapter suggests (see p. 16), there are different kinds and grades of class value in *Sword of Honour*. Kilbannock is upper class, but, on the debit side of the moral ledger, he is not from the Anglo-Catholic elect, and he is a former racing correspondent who states “I want to be known as one of the soft-faced men who did well out of the war” (*Men at Arms* 23). Unlike Crouchback, he is prepared to embrace modernity in a way which exploits yet transcends his class. It soon becomes apparent from Kilbannock's behaviour that he does not have the moral integrity of the regular Halberdier officers, such as Colonel Tickeridge, who reside in a suitably Victorian upper-middle class, but are presumably happy with their station in life.

Aside from the complexities of Waugh's novels' evaluation of the class system, the very suggestion that Crouchback will be held back from opportunities for heroism due to his being upper class, whereas Guy Pringle's career is often held back *by* members of the upper class, is another crucial difference in the political perspective of Manning's and Waugh's sequences. In *Sword of Honour*, those who profit from the war attach themselves to the political left wing. In the Balkan and Levant trilogies Lush, Dubedat, Gracey, and Pinkrose come from quite diverse class backgrounds, and there is not an invariable correlation between left-wing beliefs and moral deficiency.

Kilbannock's "prophetic" statement that heroism will be withheld from the upper classes, and therefore Crouchback, is of course borne out in the trilogy. Waugh's polemicising is apparent in the fact that, having been disallowed for the upper class, heroism is then irretrievably debased, with "heroes" built on falsehoods. The central example of military fiasco being turned perversely into a success story is in the storyline involving Trimmer. Trimmer, "the only member of the batch [of trainees] whom Guy definitely disliked" (*Men at Arms* 42), is Crouchback's opposite from a class perspective. "There was a great deal in [Sergeant Soames] that reminded Guy of Trimmer" (163): Trimmer is also a creature of modernity, and not of an appropriate class to be an officer. His elevation to popular hero comes as the result of a raiding mission almost as ineffectual as Crouchback's "Operation Truslove" (218). Trimmer provides the clearest and most sustained illustration of how the notion of heroism is debased during the war. He typifies undeserving scoundrels who are elevated out of all proportion to their talents.

Yet Trimmer as popular hero is a kind of Frankenstein's monster whose fame is completely created by Kilbannock, who therefore fulfils his own prophecy. The true hero of the raid is Trimmer's modest sergeant, but Kilbannock has already chosen Trimmer, not just working-class but an officer, as more amenable to being transformed into a popular hero. With the possible and partial exception of Ludovic, with his literary career, working-class people do not rise due to their own merits in *Sword of Honour*. Any success is the result of patronage. That this patronage is motivated by an erroneous socially egalitarian ideal, and in Ludovic's case also homosexuality, places it firmly on the side of the "Modern Age" in the moral scheme of the trilogy. Trimmer is not just a threat to Crouchback in terms of class, but also emotionally and spiritually. Trimmer's affair with Virginia, still Crouchback's wife in the eyes of the church, begins with him wearing major's badges, adding violation of the laws of military rank to his violation of class boundaries. Steven Trout notes that Trimmer is associated with "reductive phallic imagery", such as the "emasculated title of [his] most



celebrated exploit—“Operation Popgun” (142), but it is Trimmer who makes Virginia pregnant. In Waugh’s moral framework, he stands for much that is threatening about the “Modern Age”.

Earlier I mentioned the importance of anticlimactic defeats in the structure of Waugh’s trilogy. There is one of these defeats at the end of each novel, and Apthorpe’s death is the first. Munton identifies these defeats as markers of the “positive drive towards disillusion” (83) in the trilogy, and David Lodge describes them as “anticlimactic ‘battle[s]’ which [confirm] the hero’s disillusionment” (39). Like Munton and Lodge, I believe that *Sword of Honour* presents the war as a journey in which unpleasant truths are revealed, or suspicions confirmed. The tripartite structure of defeats has other structural reflections: Lodge notes that each novel has “a dominant comic antihero who parodies or inverts the hero’s stance”, respectively Apthorpe, Trimmer, and Ludovic (39). Although I agree that this is a significant trinity, and the progression is pleasing in that Trimmer is arguably more damaging than Apthorpe, less so than Ludovic, I think that Ludovic is just as important as Trimmer, if not more so, in *Officers and Gentlemen*, too. In the following section I will discuss the importance of the third of Crouchback’s defeats in the moral scheme of the novel, but for now I will turn to the second and largest-scale defeat involving Crouchback, the fiasco of Crete.

Things often seem to come in threes in *Sword of Honour*, and the behaviour of Crouchback’s three most important companions on Crete provides further evidence of the impossibility of achieving true heroism in modern warfare. For Ivor Claire, Major Hound, and Ludovic, Crete is a test of personal ethics, a test which all three fail. Denied opportunity for military heroism, Crouchback nevertheless manages to maintain some moral integrity in his decision to escape. In Claire’s case, this episode also shows the contrast between the sympathy accorded to such representatives of the past as Apthorpe and Ritchie-Hook, and the unsympathetic treatment Waugh’s trilogy gives to some members of another much more recently outmoded class, the “Bright Young Things” who starred in his pre-war novels. Like Apthorpe and Ritchie-Hook, Claire initially impresses Crouchback: “Ivor Claire, Guy thought, was the fine flower of them all. He was quintessential England, the man Hitler had not taken into account, Guy thought” (*Officers* 342). Claire disappoints Crouchback’s expectations by escaping from Crete against orders. His cowardice only becomes really damaging when Mrs Stitch (who reappears from the pre-war novels), in her desire to protect Claire’s reputation, throws away an envelope containing the identity discs of a young Catholic soldier discovered by Crouchback on Crete:

The young man was dead, undamaged it seemed. He lay as though at rest. The few corpses which Guy had seen in Crete had sprawled awkwardly. This soldier lay like an effigy on a tomb—like Sir Roger in his shadowy shrine at Santa Dulcina. ... [L]acking words the three of them stood by the body, stiff and mute as figures in a sculptured Deposition. (434)

This sacrificial youth, explicitly compared to Roger of Waybroke and Christ but also implicitly, through his “undamaged” state, to Gervase, is “disappeared” by Claire and Mrs Stitch. Here Waugh seems to revoke his affection for the majority of the cast of characters in his pre-war novels. The protective machinations of “Bright Young Things” have stood in the way of an ordinary, Catholic soldier’s family finding out that their son has been killed. Claire ends the war having served in Burma where he “had done well, collected a DSO and an honourably incapacitating wound. He was often in Bellamy’s now. His brief period of disgrace was set aside and almost forgotten” (*Unconditional Surrender* 707). The empire is still available as a means for upper-class scoundrels to redeem their careers, but Claire’s failure of courage, like Kilbannock’s mercenary nature, shows the moral failure of the “Bright Young Things”, and his cowardice will never be completely forgotten.

Major Hound’s behaviour on Crete is perhaps more forgivable than Claire’s because of his mental breakdown under the strain of battle. Ludovic’s (presumed) murder of Hound could be read in political terms, as symbolising the transfer of power from the traditional officer class to the working class, and some support for this interpretation might be offered by Ludovic temporarily throwing in his lot with the anarchic Free Spanish deserters, as well as his subsequently attaining the rank of major. More important, though, is Hound’s characterisation as a soldier who did not ever expect to fight – the antithesis of Crouchback’s initial heroic idealism and willingness to become “fodder”. With abilities only as an administrator, he contrasts with the equestrian Claire in background:

[Hound] had chosen a military career because he was not clever enough to pass into the civil service. At Sandhurst in 1925 the universal assumption was that the British army would never again be obliged to fight a European war. Young Hound had shown an aptitude for administration and his failures in the riding-school were compensated by prizes at Bisley. (*Officers* 347)

Despite his skill at shooting on the rifle range, Hound, like Crouchback, never fires his weapon in anger, and it is removed from him by a Cretan peasant, a scene I will discuss in the second chapter. Hound and Claire, one despised and one admired by Crouchback, both disgrace themselves. Crouchback’s escape from Crete under the protection of Ludovic, “godless at the helm” (456), Trimmer’s seduction of Virginia, and Claire’s and Mrs Stitch’s actions combine to make the end of *Officers and Gentlemen* the nadir of Crouchback’s war

experience in terms of his heroic aim. The working-class Ludovic, the middle-class Hound, and the upper-class Claire have all failed to behave heroically. Wrong-doing on a personal level stems from wrong-doing by the army as a whole in its decision to retreat.

The lack of battle scenes in Waugh's trilogy emphasises the limited scope for military heroism in his version of the war. Crouchback witnesses the blitz in London and is strafed on Crete, while Virginia and Uncle Peregrine are killed, offstage, by a flying bomb: but here the war acts in an impersonal way. Crouchback's injuries are suffered in training accidents rather than in action. In the Balkan trilogy, the lack of war action is entirely reasonable given the civilian settings. The danger of the war remains present but it is depersonalised. The Pringles suffer bombing raids in Athens and are strafed by aircraft as they escape by boat. Angela Hooper's son is accidentally killed by a hand grenade early on in the first volume of the Levant trilogy, *The Danger Tree*. Aircraft and bombs are agents of fate, representing the uncertainty hanging over life in general. Even the more militarily active Simon's wounding by a booby trap suggests that the damage done by war comes from a general rather than personal malignity, operating at a distance through machines.

Throughout Waugh's as well as Manning's sequence, personal relationships with members of one's own side are more of a challenge than enemy action, and the indirect psychological effects of war on personality and institutions are of most interest. It could be argued that the limited amount of war action is part of the verisimilitude of the novels, a realistic denying of the adventure-story tendency to place characters at the centre of momentous events. But it is worth considering the weight that their rarity places on the few battle scenes we do witness in *Sword of Honour*. As I have mentioned, the trilogy describes only the most farcical military operations. There is no suggestion of Crouchback being in danger from stray bullets during the raid at Dakar, the fighting on Crete, or the assault on the Croatian outpost. This emphasises Crouchback's lack of fear in battle, and his *potential* to behave heroically if required is never doubted, but the potential is never realised. He only once encounters a German soldier face to face, on Crete, and they are both too startled to shoot at each other.

The substantial descriptions of the North African campaign in the Levant trilogy are the notable exception to these generalisations, contrasting with Crouchback's truncated battles. It is true that a good deal of Simon's story is concerned with the details of life in the desert and his relationships with his commanding officers and subordinates, and as in Waugh's trilogy most of the description of life in the army is concerned with mundane events. But in

*The Danger Tree* and *The Battle Lost and Won* there are substantial episodes of fighting. In *The Battle Lost and Won* Simon is a liaison officer and so no longer expected to shoot at Germans, though he still behaves bravely carrying messages under fire. In *The Danger Tree*, though, Simon experiences his first battle, packed with action. Simon, having hit a German soldier with the first shot he fires, then sees his friend and corporal Arnold being hit, and carries him out of battle:

Astounded by the sight of him, Martin shouted in fury, “You damned fool, what do you think you’re doing?”  
 “It’s Arnold. He’s my batman and driver. He’s been shot in the chest.”  
 “Put him down at once and get back to your men.”  
 “You’ll look after him, won’t you?”  
 “Get back, I tell you. You could be court-martialled for this.” (157)

Having rescued Arnold, Simon returns to the battle, and “[c]oming face to face with a blond, pink-skinned German youth, [he] fired in a fury, saying, ‘Damn you. Damn the lot of you,’ and the pink face opened and spilt out redness, like a pomegranate. This was hatred, all right” (157).

As the only scene in these nine novels in which one of the central characters fires at an enemy soldier, this is worth examining for its depiction of bravery and motivation in combat. Although Treglown praises Manning’s generally “impressive restraint and conviction” in her depiction of war scenes, he comments that

[s]he tends ... to over-romanticize Simon Boulderstone. For a young English officer in his first battle to kill a German with his first shot while crying “‘Damn you. Damn the lot of you’”, and then to pick up his wounded batman and carry him behind the lines to safety, may not be too good to be true but is certainly too good for fiction. (153)

It is certainly reasonable to be sceptical about the realism of Simon’s emotional charge back into battle, and that he might feel (before Arnold’s death) as if he has found in battle “the thing he had wanted all his life” (*Danger Tree* 156). But Treglown slightly confuses the order of events here: the cry of “[d]amn you” is in response to Arnold’s death, not in the preceding description of Simon’s “first shot ... [which] had wounded someone, or even killed him. Either way, he’d put one jerry bastard out of action” (156). Simon’s excited battle-lust may be somewhat mindless, but his anger is caused by his friend’s death, for which, in ordering Arnold to carry a message back under fire, he is partly responsible. His anger in the scene arises from personal, rather than professional or patriotic, sources. In carrying Arnold out of battle Simon is heroic, yet acting contrary to his orders and his duty to the rest of his men, which as an officer should outweigh his personal relationships. His

action is more akin to a classical hero, such as Achilles, who is finally goaded to fight by desire for personal revenge, rather than to support his side's cause.

The importance of such almost romantic male friendships to Simon gives the narrative of the war in the desert the flavour of a Victorian or Edwardian school story or adventure story:

Here in the desert, either from lack of stimulus or some quality in the air, the men were not much troubled by sex. The need to survive was their chief preoccupation ... Simon felt well and vigorous and he thought of women, if he thought of them at all, with a benign indifference. He belonged now to a world of men; a contained, self-sufficient world where life was organized from dawn till sunset. It had so complete a hold on him, he could see only one flaw in it: his friends died young. (197)

As I noted earlier (see p. 23), “a happy adolescence” is what Crouchback initially experiences in the Halberdiers; a way of feeling more appropriate to the youthful Simon, who is able to fit into the army more successfully than Crouchback. Simon's immersion in an asexual, wholesome “world of men” is a regression to school-story innocence, but “not [being] much troubled by sex” gains a sinister connotation when he is later paralysed from the waist down. Jenny Hartley notes that Manning's depiction of Simon's experience of the desert war draws on Keith Douglas's memoir *Alamein to Zem Zem*.<sup>9</sup>

But although Douglas is highly individualistic ... he usually describes action in war as action in concert: men in tanks, tanks in groups. In contrast, most of Simon Boulderstone's significant combat experiences are solitary. His job as a liaison officer sends him across dangerous battlefields alone; like Harriet, he is posted to a front line of one. (195)

After the loss of his close friends Arnold, Trench and Crosbie, and his brother Hugo, Simon realises he must give up his romantic friendships. However, he remains patriotic and excited by the opportunity for adventure offered by the war despite his wounding and slow rehabilitation. That this puts him on Harriet's side in her conflict with Guy is illustrated by his refusal to take seriously Guy's encouragement to train as a teacher.

There is an implication that Guy, exempt from fighting, has the luxury of seeing the war in terms of conflicting ideologies; but for Simon, the muddle of the first battle of Alamein, like Crouchback's experience on Crete, comes to be dominated by the personalities of his

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<sup>9</sup> Braybrooke and Braybrooke also record that “Olivia thought the poet Keith Douglas's reports of his life as a junior tank officer the most accurate and satisfying of all such testimonies” (116).

comrades, such as his commanding officer, Major Hardy. In keeping with the school story subtext in Simon's desert experiences, Hardy is an actual headmaster:

If Hardy himself had had any qualities on which to hang reverence, they would have made a hero of him, but everything about the major discouraged worship. He had little contact with the men and his remote manner suggested a self-sufficiency in which they had no faith. Simon had been right in suspecting that Hardy had been a schoolmaster before the war. ... [H]e had been the headmaster of a small prep school in Surrey. Simon, who had had a form-master not unlike the major, realized that Hardy was a timid man whose silence and withdrawn manner hid nothing but inefficiency. ...

He ... felt that Hardy, a middle-aged man, uprooted from a regular job, was worse off than any of them. (*Danger Tree* 148)

The terms used here—"reverence", "hero", "worship", "faith"—suggest the "civil religion" of patriotic heroism described in spiritual terms I noted in Harriet's musing on Charles Warden (see above, p. 22). These qualities may be present in the younger and more attractive Charles, but they are notably absent in the character of Hardy.

Both Manning and Waugh show an army trapped in a public school ethos, in which junior officers are infantilised and their teachers are not inspirational. They also show combat as a test of personality in which many soldiers are found wanting; particularly those like Hardy and Major Hound, who are too much middle managers, administrators rather than soldiers. The unheroic personalities of these manager-officers reflect the inadequacy of the army, and, as if in response to this inadequacy, heroic behaviour becomes detached from its expected ideological backing in battle. Simon's carrying Arnold's body out of the battle is selfless yet against orders; Ludovic is a hero for saving Crouchback, but also a murderer; Trimmer becomes a war hero yet has done nothing to deserve the acclamation; Ritchie-Hook is fearless yet his death futile. That Simon is the least morally compromised of these four potential heroes demonstrates the less scathing outlook of Manning's sequence on the modern army. Simon manifests adventure-story motivation and behaviour that in Waugh is discredited, yet despite stretching realism in scenes such as his response to Arnold's death, Manning manages to convince us of Simon's reasons for behaving as he does: a combination of naïve confidence, excitement, and loyalty to his comrades.

### **Crouchback's redemption: the moral of the tale in *Sword of Honour***

In the first two novels of his trilogy, Waugh comprehensively demonstrates the inability of Crouchback, or any other major character, to achieve heroic glory. The third, *Unconditional Surrender*, deals most directly with Crouchback's moral quandary, and here my discussion returns to the importance of the Catholic moral basis in Waugh's novels. The validity of

Crouchback's dream of heroic sacrifice is now tested by conflicting ideals which are represented by two motifs. The first is Mr Crouchback's statement that "[q]uantitative judgments don't apply" (491) with regard to the Lateran Treaty's effects on the church, and the second is "The Death Wish", which is the title of the third part of the novel, as well as Ludovic's nostalgic romance novel. These two concepts oppose what Myers categorises as "anti-Modernist Catholicism" (x) with modern, irreligious ideas about human identity and motivation.

Lodge describes the "Catholic Novel" as a "fictional tradition, which goes back to the French Decadence, [and] is characteristically concerned with the operation of God's grace in the world, with a conflict between secular and divine values in which the latter are usually allowed an ironic and unexpected triumph". He states that *Brideshead Revisited* was Waugh's "first—and essentially, his last" Catholic Novel (30), but I believe that the conflict and triumph pattern Lodge outlines is also very apparent in *Sword of Honour*. Lodge's reservation may be due to his feeling that *Sword of Honour* contains too much of Waugh's own idiosyncratic interpretation of the faith: "[h]e has been accused of being less consistent in his later fiction—of speciously identifying the eternal verities with a particular human social group, the English Catholic aristocracy and gentry" (11). Conor Cruise O'Brien more bluntly describes Waugh's version of Catholicism as "Mr Waugh's private religion, on which he has superimposed Catholicism, much as newly converted pagans are said to superimpose a Christian nomenclature on their ancient cults of trees and thunder" (qtd. in Bergonzi, *Situation* 125). It may be difficult to separate the expression of faith from snobbery when reading Waugh, but I think *Unconditional Surrender* puts faith slightly ahead.

Mr Crouchback's opinion about the Lateran Treaty that "[i]f only one soul was saved that is full compensation for any amount of loss of 'face'" (*Unconditional Surrender* 491) is in direct opposition to the secular, humanist beliefs of those who have come to dominate society and the army in the trilogy. Waugh's feelings on socialism, an ideology entirely concerned with "quantitative judgments", can be seen in the self-delusional enthusiasm of Gilpin, de Souza, or Sir Ralph Brompton for the Soviet Union and the Croatian communist partisans. Crouchback's acceptance of his father's credo, his father being "the best man, the only entirely good man, he had ever known" (539), also contrasts with Ritchie-Hook's ruthlessly utilitarian First World War approach (see above, p. 28). In a modern guise, this is still the approach of commanders such as General Whale, prepared to ruthlessly sacrifice lives to improve his standing in the War Ministry. First and Second World War concepts of total war are identical in their disregard for the individual soul.

Ritchie-Hook's demise near the end of *Unconditional Surrender* symbolises the emptiness of the total war philosophy. By 1944 he is a pathetic figure from the past, "a lean, grey-faced, stiff old man, whose single eye was lustreless, whose maimed hand reached out to a chair-back to steady him as he limped and shuffled to his table" (679-80). As Bergonzi notes, the battles in *Sword of Honour* are all either failures, or staged for propaganda purposes (*Situation* 135), and the final battle in the trilogy, the attack on the Croatian fortress, is both. As the last military action in the trilogy, and in the wider context of the war in Europe, this final battle balances the recounting of Roger of Waybroke's story at the beginning. On the small scale of this pointless encounter, Ritchie-Hook's death is the opposite of Roger's, who "fell at the moment of victory", yet on the large scale he dies as the war is almost won. With a last flash of heroism, and insubordination, Ritchie-Hook subverts the arrangements by joining the battle. But his heroism is just an expression of a personal death wish: "more than once he's said to me right out: 'Dawkins, I wish those bastards would shoot better. I don't want to go home'" (*Unconditional Surrender* 694). Ritchie-Hook's death illustrates the debased nature of the Allied victory. His heroic sacrifice is futile and achieved despite the official mission rather than in aid of it, but perversely, his sacrifice also convinces General Spitz about the seriousness of the partisan cause. Ritchie-Hook has achieved Crouchback's initial goal of becoming "fodder", but he has become fodder for propaganda.

The triumphal change which Crouchback achieves in *Unconditional Surrender* comes through adopting his saint-like father's point of view and equating "quantitative judgments" with "the death wish". The Jewish refugee Mme Kanyi summarises the mass psychology of the "death wish", which is, in her presentation, the root cause of the war, having motivated both Nazis and communists:

"Is there any place that is free from evil? It is too simple to say that only the Nazis wanted war. These communists wanted it too. ... Many of my people wanted it .... It seems to me there was a will to war, a death wish, everywhere. Even good men thought their private honour would be satisfied by war. They could assert their manhood by killing and being killed. They would accept hardships in recompense for having been selfish and lazy. Danger justified privilege. I knew Italians – not very many perhaps – who felt this. Were there none in England?"

"God forgive me," said Guy. "I was one of them." (702)

The death wish is linked to both Nazi and communist motivation for starting the war, and in putting a plague on both their houses Kanyi concurs with Crouchback's initial thoughts on the matter. (I will leave aside the historical dubiousness of the idea of Jews or communists being eager for war, rightly taken to task by Munton [92-3].) This initial belief is simply confirmed, but in the rhetorical journey of *Sword of Honour* this is also a crucial



moment of development because Crouchback finally acknowledges that his own idea of heroic sacrifice, which excited him to fight against “the Modern Age in arms”, is in fact the same impulse that arose amongst the followers of these repugnant secular ideologies. The idea that, as in Brooke’s poem “Peace”, war would function as a kind of divinely-sanctioned spiritual cleansing, an escape from “a world grown old and cold and weary” (l. 5), is acknowledged to be both historically and morally false. Kilbannock was right after all to invoke the poet cynically, although still wrong of course in his suggestion that the “People’s War” should be embraced. Moral integrity is separate from the will to fight; fighting the “Modern Age” will only draw one into its amorality.

Crouchback’s real and enduring attempts at heroism fit into his father’s moral scheme, rather than having anything to do with this falsely heroic “death wish”. Like his attempt to send the unknown soldier’s identity disc home, his effort to save the Jewish refugees in Croatia tries to defy quantitative judgments, the machinations of secular society.<sup>10</sup> The commandant of the refugee camp expresses the contrary, prevailing doctrine when he asks why Guy is worrying so much about finding the Kanyis: “aren’t you making rather heavy weather of it? What do two more or less matter?” (*Unconditional Surrender* 704). In the Balkan trilogy, too, the closest Guy and Harriet come to heroic and selfless risk-taking is their sheltering of Sasha, which is a secret and personal decision. Harriet thinks of Sasha as a “dependent innocent” (*Spoilt City* 469), and it is his seeming helplessness which causes her to overcome her initial reluctance to protect him and support Guy’s charity. Crouchback and the Pringles come closest to heroism when acting against officially-condoned passivity and disregard for the victims of evil.<sup>11</sup>

Crouchback’s other heroic act is also not martial; in fact it is marital. By charitably accepting Virginia back and raising Virginia and Trimmer’s love-child (named, with appropriate symbolism, Gervase) as his own after her death, he produces the single redeemed soul which his father believes outweighs any political outcome. Trimmer was a completely artificially created hero, the antithesis of Crouchback’s ideals, yet his child is spiritually rescued, further negating Crouchback’s original dreams of martial heroism.

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<sup>10</sup> Opinions differ about the extent of Crouchback’s responsibility for the final rescuing of the refugees. See McCartney (95) and York (252). While one’s opinion on this matter may change one’s feeling about the bleakness of the trilogy’s conclusion, I think the important point is that Crouchback makes so much of an effort on the refugees’ behalf.

<sup>11</sup> Other aspects of the Sasha and Kanyi episodes will be discussed at more length in the next chapter.

Virginia too is redeemed *post mortem*, the connotations of her surname (Troy, “[l]ike Helen of Troy” [*Unconditional Surrender* 605]) replaced by her forename’s suggestion of the Madonna.

The salvation of Trimmer’s baby is one of three important inversions or changes of place that have happened at the conclusion of the trilogy. The other two are that, while Crouchback has become a father and husband, his nephew Tony, originally said to be “rich in love and promise” while Crouchback had only “a few dry grains of faith” (*Men at Arms* 30), has become a monk; and Ludovic now lives in the Castello Crouchback, inheriting Crouchback’s pre-war state of exile. This conclusion leaves some room for interpretation. Lodge suggests that the baby Gervase is “a living symbol of Guy’s (and Waugh’s?) modified class consciousness” (43), but this seems to be an overly charitable analysis, given the way in which class mobility is dealt with elsewhere in the trilogy. I think Bergonzi is closer to the mark in saying it is a “cynical embodiment of the reconciliation between classes” (*Wartime* 118) and that the spiritual aspect trumps any idea of egalitarianism, and also outweighs the bitter irony of the situation from a class perspective. Even Mr Crouchback’s family pride is unimportant by comparison with the Catholic doctrine underlying his faith. The “deep wound” (see above, p. 15) suffered by Crouchback before the war may have been healed, but his personal spiritual healing is not connected to the healing of England as a whole: this dream has been abandoned.

Ivor Claire’s successful resurrection of his military career demonstrates the change in the definitions of heroism and sacrifice that sees the dream of military heroism discredited. The two terms “heroism” and “sacrifice” which Crouchback initially saw as equivalent have been redefined, with a split between false and unattainable military heroism and true spiritual heroism associated with meaningful sacrifice. As McCartney summarises, “pursuing his ideal of Christian militancy has led [Crouchback] seriously astray” (95). The sacrifice of family pride Crouchback makes in accepting Trimmer’s child is in a completely different scale of values to Claire’s achievements:<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> As Bergonzi notes, in the first edition, Crouchback has two more sons after the war, while “in the 1965 text Guy and [his second wife] Domenica are described as childless” (*Situation* 138), so the continuation of the line is solely through Trimmer’s child. As noted earlier, this revised version also removes references to Truslove, thereby increasing the emphasis on Crouchback’s spiritual destiny and diminishing the importance of his nostalgic patriotic ambitions.

[*Crouchback*.:] “Ivor doesn’t believe in sacrifice. Who does nowadays? But he had the will to win.”

[*Ian*.:] “I can’t think of anything more sacrificial than plodding about in the jungle with those desperadoes. I don’t know what he thinks he’s going to win there.”

“There was a time I was very fond of Ivor.”

“Oh, I’m *fond* of him. Everyone is and everyone has forgotten his little *faux pas* in Crete. That’s what makes it so rum his charging off to be a hero *now*.”

When Ian left, Guy brooded about the antithesis between the acceptance of sacrifice and the will to win. It seemed to have personal relevance, as yet undefined, to his own condition. (*Unconditional Surrender* 600)

The idea of heroism in battle has been debased and become the “will to win”, which is what the mercenary Kilbannock is interested in and is still achievable by Claire despite his cowardice on Crete; and this is a phrase cheapened by association with Claire’s show jumping background (hinted at here by “plodding” and “charging”).

Crouchback has ended the war as a soldier who never fought, whose sacrifices have been unconnected to the now devalued idea of martial heroism, and the enduring effect of whose wartime actions is the continuation of the Anglo-Catholic nobility—with Trimmer’s bloodline. Crouchback’s protestant brother-in-law Arthur Box-Bender’s concluding remark that “things have turned out very conveniently for Guy” (710) is bitterly ironic in terms of Crouchback’s initial ideals, but there is some truth in the statement because things *have* turned out conveniently for the exposition of a particular kind of Catholic morality.

### **The lack of closure in the Levant trilogy**

Crouchback’s story ends neatly with the taking up of his inherited Anglo-Catholic position, but the conclusion of Manning’s sequence lacks this narrative closure. Guy’s and Harriet’s lives and their relationship are in much the same state as always, despite Harriet’s dramatic return to Cairo and Guy’s acknowledgement that she is “moving out from under his influence” (*Sum of Things* 561). Partly this can be explained by the less extreme starting position of the Pringles’ beliefs compared to Crouchback’s: because Guy Pringle’s socialism is moderate compared to Crouchback’s Catholic philosophy, his potential for disappointment is not as great. In terms of his career, Guy’s reward comes in the first novel of the Levant trilogy:

[*Dobson*.:] “I may say that, in my cable to Bevington, I mentioned that Guy was the only Organization man in Rumania who stuck it out to the end.”

“Thank you, Dobbie. Guy needs a friend.”

“Needs a friend! But no one has more friends.”

“There are friends and friends. There are those who want something from you and those who will do something for you. Guy has plenty of the first. He’s rather short of the second.” (*Danger Tree* 140)

Guy’s (and Harriet’s) bravery in remaining in Romania and Greece has counteracted the damage done to his career by his tendency to offer charity to those who do not deserve it. As Crouchback suffers for his loyalty to Apthorpe and Ritchie-Hook, so too does Guy Pringle suffer for his loyalty to and forgiveness of the undeserving Lush and Dubedat. In the practical sense of offering charity to his enemies, Guy Pringle has behaved in a more Christian manner than Crouchback. But he has not offered enough to Harriet. Guy finally acknowledges his deficiencies only when he thinks Harriet has died, in a moment of insight comparable to Crouchback’s following Mme Kanyi’s speech:

When Edwina had accused him of leaving Harriet too much on her own, Guy had been offended, yet the accusation was justified. . . . He had his work and his friends, and he had sacrificed Harriet to both. The truth was, the war had given his work too much importance. Work had condoned his civilian status. Its demands had left him no time for his wife and he had instigated her return on the doomed ship. But had the demands of his work been so intensive? Didn’t he inflate them to save his civilian face?

Now, no longer challenged by the nearness of war, he could see the futility of his reserved occupation. Lecturing on English literature, teaching the English language, he had been peddling the idea of empire to a country that only wanted one thing; to be rid of the British for good and all. And, to add to the absurdity of the situation, he himself had no belief in empire. (*Sum of Things* 513-4)

Unlike Crouchback, who has been disappointed by the failure of society to allow the expression of his heroic ideals, Guy has been disappointed by society’s valuing of his work above his own idea of its value. He cannot sustain a Kiplingesque belief in the heroism of “peddling the idea of empire” to unappreciative audiences. The place of the empire in his teaching of English literature is a subject to which I will return in the subsequent chapters, but for now it suffices to note Guy’s questioning of his sustaining motivation. The guilt caused by his civilian status, apparent when he joined “Sheppy’s Fighting Force” (Clarence’s sarcastic title [*Great Fortune* 181]) has not been compensated for by his work: he has been as ineffectual as the passively critical Harriet.

Simon, who has fought heroically, seems to offer a counter to Guy’s and Harriet’s lack of progress. But there is a final twist of tragedy in Simon’s fate, noted by Jenny Hartley, in his posting to Leros, an Aegean island which passed into Allied hands with the surrender of Italy but was then invaded by German forces later in 1943. While Simon may not be condemned to “certain death” as Hartley states (197), he will almost certainly be captured and possibly wounded again, based on the figures given by Panagiotis Gartzonikas in his

study of the Aegean conflict (39). The Pringles survive but Simon, closest to a conventional hero in mentality, lives out Charles Warden's destiny and becomes a futile sacrifice like his friends and brother.

Munton categorises post-war novel sequences by Waugh, Manning, Anthony Powell and C. P. Snow as "inverted epics, in which the heroic temperament is undermined or the unheroic given privileged attention" because their authors have indulged in a kind of cultural self-criticism from a post-war perspective (22). In this chapter I have demonstrated why heroism is a problem in *Sword of Honour* and the Balkan and Levant trilogies, while also showing that the "privileged attention" given to the unheroic is used to contrast the moral integrity of the central characters with amoral external forces. Crouchback begins the war wanting to throw himself into a struggle which will combine heroism with sacrifice, patriotism with spiritual healing. The Pringles seek adventure and attempt simply to survive. Models of heroism from the past, with their Victorian or First World War rhetoric, prove ineffectual in both authors' sequences. The institutions in which the central characters serve, whether Waugh's army or Manning's "Organization", prove not to reward heroism or moral integrity. These institutions' behaviour in crisis, exemplified by Waugh's depiction of Crete or Manning's of the escape from Greece and what follows in Cairo, show how they are vulnerable to exploitation by the cowardly. Similarly, Simon's compassion alienates him from the army in the battles of Alamein. There are glimpses of heroism on a small scale, but selfless behaviour is either futile (as for Ritchie-Hook), morally compromised (as in Ludovic's rescue of Crouchback), or in defiance of authority (as in Simon's attempt to save Arnold).

The Catholic moral of *Sword of Honour* allows Guy Crouchback to achieve a personal spiritual victory. The conclusion of the trilogy sidesteps the degeneration of the modern world by showing that Crouchback's attempt to integrate his faith with secular ideas of heroism was a flawed project. Crouchback's sacrifice of this desire, of his initial motivation to "serve his King", represents a wilful withdrawal of concern for the state of the wider world in the trilogy. Manning's sequence is less sceptical about the modern, meritocratic society arising during the war than Waugh's is, less inclined to fret about the decline of tradition. Harriet's more nebulous desire for "adventure" has arguably been fulfilled. Her sacrifice has consisted of her marriage to Guy who represents the uncaring wider world. Guy himself has sacrificed Harriet's happiness to his career. The "reactionary" Harriet may be the implied winner in the conflict between her and Guy, but the very existence of this conflict is a crucial difference between Manning's and Waugh's sequences.

## Chapter Two: Being English Abroad

In *Sword of Honour* and the Balkan and Levant trilogies, the war is a time of social flux. Social certainties are upset: some people are raised up, sometimes unfairly; some are cast down, also often unfairly. In the first chapter, I examined how traditional ideas of heroism and sacrifice, duty and loyalty, are challenged by this social flux. This chapter expands on the theme of social change during the war but with a focus on the novels' settings, concentrating on their portrayal of declining English influence abroad.

First, a terminological clarification. Terms such as “empire”, “imperialism” and “colonialism” are not directly relevant to the settings in countries such as Romania, Greece and Egypt in the 1940s. Although “imperialism” and “colonialism” certainly have some accuracy in describing English influence and attitudes in the novels, my concern in this chapter is with the decline of these concepts from their pre-war realisation. I use these terms to relate pre-war history and ideas to wartime changes, and to connect my analysis to postcolonial theory in which the meanings of such terms are well established. In particular, I use the term “native” in its postcolonial-theoretical sense to refer generally to the non-Western European inhabitants of Manning's and Waugh's foreign settings.

The structure of the chapter is broadly similar to the first, in that I move from ideals to their disappointment. I look at how Crouchback's and Harriet's idealised foreign landscapes are placed in the past, and then discuss their contrastingly unpleasant experiences abroad. Finally, attempts to assist Jewish refugees in both novelists' sequences are examined, connecting declining opportunities for heroism to declining British power.

### **Images of abroad: romantic nostalgia and “death objects”**

Set entirely outside Britain, and with far more non-British characters, the Balkan and Levant trilogies make a more substantial engagement with the decline of British power and challenges to the empire than *Sword of Honour* does. In Waugh's trilogy, Dakar, Egypt, Crete, Italy and Croatia serve principally as backdrops for the decline of Crouchback's enthusiasm for the army and his alienation from the modern world. But both Manning's Harriet and Waugh's Crouchback draw a distinction between a generally unsatisfactory present, and a nostalgically idealised past. Just how far in the past this better time lies differs between the two sequences. I will begin by exploring three ways in which the novels represent exotic settings: for Crouchback, they are associated with pre-war good times; for Harriet, with the

distant past; and for Guy Pringle, by contrast, they are the reality of his current employment.

In *Sword of Honour* the happiest scenes abroad, apart from the prologue involving Crouchback's grandparents in Italy, take place in almost literally rose-tinted memories of his time in Kenya with Virginia, "living, it seemed to him afterwards, in unruffled good-humour beside a mountain lake where the air was always brilliant and keen and the flamingos rose at dawn first white, then pink, then a whirl of shadow passing across the glowing sky" (*Men at Arms* 15). Crouchback does not make much of his colonial experience, but at a few points in the trilogy he is temporarily mistaken for the most prominent ex-colonial in the story, Apthorpe, by his seniors – notably by Ritchie-Hook at the Captain-Commandant's luncheon, but also on his return to the Halberdier barracks after his escape from Crete. Crouchback is therefore closer to his "brother-uncle" (*Unconditional Surrender* 488) and fellow "old settler", in Ritchie-Hook's term (*Men at Arms* 63), than he admits. Apthorpe's colonial experiences prove to be somewhat bogus, but Crouchback's memories of Kenya are just as nostalgic as Apthorpe's occasional recollections of his life in the "real Africa" (69), or the Truslove stories. Kenya is connected with a romanticised English past, creating another contrast with distasteful modernity; the wide-ranging irony of Waugh's treatment of colonials and natives in *Scoop* or *Black Mischief* is absent in these descriptions:

[Crouchback and Virginia] talked of old times together. First of Kenya. The group of bungalows that constituted their home, timber-built, round stone chimneys and open English hearths, furnished with wedding presents and good old pieces of furniture from the lumber-rooms at Broome ... the white-gowned servants and their naked children always tumbling in the dust and sunshine round the kitchen quarters; the families always on the march to and from the native reserves, stopping to beg for medicine .... Evening bathes in the lake, dinner parties in pyjamas with their neighbours. Race Week in Nairobi, all the flagrant, forgotten scandals of the Muthaiga Club, fights, adulteries, arson, bankruptcies, card-sharping, insanity, suicides, even duels – the whole Restoration scene re-enacted by farmers, eight thousand feet above the steaming seaboard.

"Goodness it was fun," said Virginia. "I don't think anything has been quite such fun since. How things just do happen to one!" (120-1)

Crouchback's return to Broome at the conclusion of *Sword of Honour* is a fantasy of a return to a pre-reformation Catholic England, and a fantasy involving only a selected few. By contrast, this reminiscence of Kenya is a fantasy set in the recent past, and its attraction is material and social rather than spiritual. The expatriate social life of the 1920s itself reincarnates an earlier period of courtly excess. This pre-war excess is also celebrated by Ludovic in *The Death Wish*, in a diplomatic rather than settler milieu.

Virginia, who epitomises the attraction of this period, is the last in a line of Waugh heroines including Margot Metroland, Nina Blount, and Angela Lyne. Everard Spruce describes Virginia as “the last of twenty years’ succession of heroines. . . . The ghosts of romance who walked between the two wars” (*Unconditional Surrender* 670). Like the other “Bright Young Things”, Virginia fails morally during the war, but, unlike them, she achieves moral redemption. Her return to Crouchback and conversion to Catholicism supplant the secular charm of the Kenyan memories, while also symbolically if briefly restoring Crouchback’s household. Virginia is a fantasy figure who over the course of the trilogy moves from embodying the racy pre-war years to embodying Catholic reconciliation and martyrdom, the personification of Crouchback’s memories of when the going was good but then later also the personification of the virtues of his religion.

Nostalgia for the pre-war period is not a factor for the Pringles. They are not from a class which benefited from the empire. Harriet’s life in Cairo exposes her to some of the same melodrama that Crouchback remembers with affection from his Kenyan days. This is not at all appealing:

She thought, “Everything has gone wrong since we came here.” The climate changed people: it preserved ancient remains but it disrupted the living. She had seen common-place English couples who, at home, would have tolerated each other for a lifetime, here turning into self-dramatizing figures of tragedy, bored, lax, unmoral, complaining and, in the end, abandoning the partner in hand for another who was neither better nor worse than the first. Inconstancy was so much the rule among the British residents in Cairo, the place, she thought, was like a bureau of sexual exchange. (*Battle* 336-7)

As a recent arrival with no colonial nostalgia to draw on, Harriet inclines towards a touristic appreciation of the “ancient remains”, the imaginative excitement of history and mythology. While Crouchback’s nostalgia for Kenya is nostalgia for the very recent past, and his own experiences, Harriet is excited by Biblical and other myths:

Damascus appeared at last, a map of lights spread high on the darkness. As the road rose up among gardens and orchards, a scent of foliage came to her and her fears faded. Here she was in the oldest of the world’s inhabited cities. The oasis on which it was built was said to be the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were created here and here Cain killed Abel. Damascus had been a city before Abraham was born and had been one of the wonders of the Ancient world. Who knew what pleasures awaited her in such a magical place? (*Sum of Things* 407)

Just prior to Harriet’s arrival in Damascus, a swineherd is described by Mortimer as being like “Ulysses on the island of the Phaeacians” (404). Manning draws on the classics to suggest the transitory nature of the war and modern history, the essentially unchanged



underlying nature of Mediterranean civilisation, but also the cultural privilege of the English as inheritors of the classical tradition, who are able to make such identifications. Unlike Major Hound's encounter with the Cretan (see below, p. 57), the figure from antiquity recedes and becomes part of the landscape again. Harriet may not be from the colonial classes, but she could be accused of being an Orientalist in that she seeks always to remove the actual natives from the frame of her tourism. Damascus as a "map of lights" is the high point of her time there. Climbing the pyramids at Giza with Simon or touring Luxor with Aidan, Harriet and her companion escape from unwanted guides. Harriet seeks an unmediated experience of the foreign, but without its present-day foreign inhabitants. I will return shortly to the revenge the landscape itself seems to take for this attempted exploitation.

Guy Pringle's position as a servant of an overtly (neo-)colonial organisation puts him in a very different position to both Harriet and Crouchback. Contrasting strongly with Crouchback's and Harriet's different kinds of valuing of the past, and his own connection to the past through his teaching of English literature, his interest in abroad is determinedly in the present:

... Harriet ... pointed to the Khalifa monuments edged with moon light: "Let's go and look at them."

"Good lord, no. Who would want to see things like that?"

"They're magnificent. And they're no distance away."

"Sorry, but I'm late as it is. I have to get to the Institute. You can go any time to see them. Ask Angela to go with you."

"But I want to go with you."

"Darling, don't be unreasonable. You know how I hate things like that. Useless bric-a-brac, death objects, *memento mori*! What point in making oneself miserable?" (*Battle* 248)

This deprecation of tourism as being incompatible with serious work is shared by the eponymous hero of Manning's more overtly autobiographical *My Husband Cartwright* (1956), a collection of pieces originally published in *Punch*:

My husband Cartwright is a lover of his fellow-men. Lovers of their fellow-men can be maddening. Cartwright's love manifests itself not merely by general benevolence but by a dislike of anything that distracts the eye of charity. While lecturing abroad he suddenly conceived a resentment of "sights" especially "useless" sights, such as ruins or tombs. You might suppose that were it not for such distractions as Tiberias, the Valley of the Kings or Hadrian's Villa, tourists abroad would occupy themselves solely in alleviating poverty. (Qtd. in Braybrooke and Braybrooke 179)

For Cartwright and for Guy, tourism demonstrates the stark difference in wealth between coloniser and colonised. An activity that romanticises the past rather than taking an interest

in the problems of the present, it is not compatible with progressive political beliefs. The problem with the way Harriet's opposition to this point of view is expressed is that it either flatly contradicts or adds an overtone of racism to her professed interest in "people", which is contrasted with Guy's interest in "ideas" early on in the Balkan trilogy (*Great Fortune* 63). Harriet's claim to a human understanding supposedly lacking in Guy is undermined by her desire to see sights uncluttered by natives.

This removal of the human element from the empire is also suggested in the first two volumes of *Sword of Honour* by Apthorpe's gear, "that vast accumulation of ant-proof boxes, water-proof bundles, strangely shaped, heavily initialled tin trunks and leather cases all bound about with straps and brass buckles" (*Men at Arms* 92). Like Crouchback's memories and Harriet's monuments, Apthorpe's gear comes from the past. But rather than empire as the good old days, decorative landscape, or site of socially improving work, Apthorpe's gear is the empire as old-fashioned encumbrance: much of it is not useful in wartime, it dates from the Victorian or Edwardian period, no one (except Apthorpe) really understands what it is useful for, but it still needs to be carried around and looked after.

Apthorpe's affection for his gear, though not shared by Crouchback, is paralleled by Crouchback's affection for the decorative relics of empire displayed at the Halberdier barracks, which are even more extraneous in wartime:

[The Adjutant] and Guy went to the ante-room. It was not the room Guy had known .... A dark rectangle over the fireplace marked the spot where "The Unbroken Square" had hung; the bell from the Dutch frigate, the Afridi banner, the gilt idol from Burma, the Napoleonic cuirasses, the Ashanti drum, the loving-cup from Barbados, Tipu Sultan's musket, all were gone.

The adjutant observed Guy's roving, lamenting eyes.

"Pretty bloody, isn't it? Everything has been stored away underground since the blitz." (*Officers* 245-6)

As a collection of decorative but useless bric-à-brac, the Halberdiers' accumulated colonial spoils can be compared with Thomas Richards's idea of the "imperial archive" which is "neither a library nor a museum, though imperial fiction is full of little British libraries and museums ... the imperial archive was a fantasy of knowledge collected and united in the service of state and Empire" (6). The curios, no longer backed by power, expose the triviality of this Victorian mania for collecting, and are as useless and out of date in wartime as Apthorpe's old-fashioned military etiquette. The fate of the Halberdiers' relics symbolises the irrelevance of the project of collection of knowledge about the world as part of actually controlling the world. Examples of this comic miniaturization of the imperial

archive can be found in several places in the trilogy. As Steven Trout notes, Crouchback's penultimate posting is at the "Royal Victorian Institute", at which craftsmen are involved in building models of beaches and, in their spare time, the institute itself (138). The recurring spuriousness of military maps in the trilogy is a more serious manifestation of the failure of the archival project.

There is a sinister aspect to the foreign landscape in both Manning's and Waugh's sequences. The "death objects" Guy mentions suggest the amoebic dysentery which afflicts Harriet throughout the Levant trilogy, and the typhoid exacerbated by alcoholism which kills Bill Castlebar. Apthorpe's demise also results from the tropical diseases and alcoholism to which he has been exposed in Africa, as a medical officer explains to Crouchback:

"Apthorpe's got the disadvantage of having lived in this God-forsaken country. You chaps who come out fresh from England have got stamina. Chaps who live here have got their blood full of every sort of infection. And then, of course, they poison themselves with whisky. They snuff out like babies. ..."  
(*Men at Arms* 226)

As well as Castlebar, the characters Cookson and Jackman show that Manning concurs with Waugh in suggesting extended residence abroad leads to drinking problems. Harriet may be resistant to this aspect of colonialism, but the disappointment of her actual experiences of Damascus, or Luxor, where she arrives in the middle of a cholera epidemic, show that she is exposed psychologically as well as physically. Her tourism is fraught with anxiety despite her admiration for Lady Hester Stanhope. Though she struggles against Guy's plan to send her home, like the medical officer in *Men at Arms* Harriet sees England as an antidote to the Egyptian environment that threatens her survival:

... [S]he recalled the vision of England that had overwhelmed her once in a Cairo street. It returned in her memory, a scene of ploughed fields and elm trees with a wind smelling of the earth; she thought if she were there, she would be well again. Here she was not only unwell, but at risk from all the diseases known to mankind.  
(*Danger Tree* 194)

England, and specifically the English countryside, is a panacea, but it remains completely imaginary in Manning's sequence. For both Crouchback and Harriet, the recent or distant past is far more attractive than the dangerous present abroad. The following two sections discuss the problematic nature of the wartime present in Manning's and Waugh's sequences respectively.

## Engaging with the natives in the Balkan and Levant trilogies

In the previous section I drew attention to the contradiction between Harriet's claimed interest in "people" and her desire to see foreign landscapes as depopulated. In this section I will explore in more detail Manning's treatment of foreigners, the importance of Guy's differing approach to the "natives", and evidence of a countervailing attraction from Harriet towards certain native characters.

Generally Manning's narrator, like Harriet, is negative about foreigners, though the Greeks in *Friends and Heroes* are an exception. Manning's narrator and characters frequently acknowledge the heroism and generosity of the Greeks, as when a Greek man gives Harriet and Guy a fish intended for his family and "Guy, overwhelmed, praise[s] the generosity of the Greeks and their tradition of hospitality" (*Friends* 717-8). Harriet notes approvingly that "[t]he Greek army is professional: rank has nothing to do with class, only with proficiency" (803), and the Greek soldiers are presented as truly, if tragically, heroic in their fight against the vastly superior German army. A distinction can be drawn between generally admirable (Greek), unlikeable (Romanian), and ambivalently treated (Egyptian) foreigners.

The narrative voice—when focalised through Harriet or Yakimov—in *The Great Fortune* and *The Spoilt City* constantly judges the Romanians harshly, and while this seems entirely reasonable in the case of the King and the rest of the elite, in the descriptions of the less fortunate classes the condemnation can often seem unfair. Harriet cares more about the peasants' treatment of their animals than she does about the peasants themselves. Guy sees the peasants as "blameless victims", but Harriet agrees with Sasha Drucker's stepmother: "the more she learnt about them, the more she was inclined to share Doamna Drucker's loathing of them; but she would not call them beasts. They had not the beauty or dignity of beasts. They treated their animals and their women with the simple brutality of savages" (*Great Fortune* 123).

This opinion may be devalued by being associated with the mercenary Doamna Drucker; and Manning's novels do make clear the poverty in which the majority of Romanians, Greeks and Egyptians live, whether they are stated to be worthy of sympathy or not. But the Victorian term "savages" used by Harriet indicates her general outlook. Harriet's condemnation of the Romanian peasants for their cruelty to animals contrasts with Guy's determination to remain rational:

[Harriet:] "All over this country animals are suffering—and we can do nothing about it."

... [Guy:] "The peasants are brutes because they are treated like brutes. They suffer themselves. Their behaviour comes of desperation."

"It's no excuse."

"Perhaps not, but it's an explanation. One must try to understand."

"Why should one try to understand cruelty and stupidity?"

"Because even those things can be understood; and if understood, they can be cured." (*Spoilt City* 513)

Harriet is alienated from both English and natives, but, like Fielding in Forster's *A Passage to India*, Guy is claimed by his Romanian, Greek and Egyptian students in an emotionally affectionate way. This kind of engagement is completely inconceivable in the case of Harriet (and it is also worth noting the contrast with Crouchback's unpopularity with the Italians of Santa Dulcina):

Gamal, [Guy] said, had written in an essay: "My professor, Professor Pringle, is an Oriental. But if he is not, he should be because he is one of us!"

Gamal may have said that, or written it. Certainly some one had said it: and in Rumania and Greece there were people who had said the same thing. They had all laid claim to him and he had responded. He was, Harriet felt, disseminated among so many, there was little left for her. (*Battle* 247)

This idea of Guy's attempts to do good resulting in him being spread too thinly, to Harriet's detriment, is frequently reiterated in the Balkan and Levant trilogies, as is the idea that Guy is offering himself as a kind of sacrifice in trying to connect with the world: "he seemed like radium throwing off vitality to the outside world—not that he thought of it as the outside world. So spontaneous was his approach to it, he seemed unaware of any sort of frontier between himself and the rest of humanity" (*Great Fortune* 148).

Like Fielding, Guy's sympathetic relationship with the natives is accompanied by a sometimes vexed and generally distant relationship with the colonial authorities. The ironically named Anglo-Egyptian Union, a club populated by English only and separate from the Egyptian Army Officers' Club next door, typifies the mainstream colonial relationship. The Egyptian officers' misunderstanding of Jackman's offensive song about King Farouk and Queen Farida (*Danger Tree* 188-9) illustrates the gulf between cultures. Not understanding English, the Egyptian officers are impressed by the song and offer to buy a piano for the club; not understanding that the officers have not understood his song, Jackman is afraid when they approach. By contrast, Guy's visit to Gamal's *arba'in* demonstrates his ability to reach across cultural boundaries.

A scene describing Pinkrose during a panic at the Cairo railway station shows the worst qualities of the elite, not pretending to be anything other than selfish when under threat:

[Harriet] saw Pinkrose, hanging on to his traps and pushing first this way, then that, trying to find a position that would give him an advantage over the others. In his determined search and frequent mind changes, he thrust women from him and tripped over children, and so enraged the volatile Greeks, Free French, Poles and German Jews that they shouted abuse at him and blamed him for their fears. Hearing none of this, aware of nothing but himself, he struggled back and forth, losing his hat, regaining it, clucking in his agitation. (93)

The symbolism is clear, with the genuine refugees of suffering Europe shoved aside by a selfish upper-class Englishman. In this brief scene Pinkrose's moral deficiency is extended from his treatment of Guy to encompassing everything that is wrong with imperialism. Pinkrose brings with him snobbery and lack of concern for anyone below the ruling class, while Guy works selflessly at the civilising mission.

As a lecturer, Guy embodies a late form of imperialism based on cultural rather than physical power, operating in countries outside the formal empire but supposedly amenable to British influence. His personal ethics, his socialism, and his love of literature positively inflect his work. But Manning's sequence is by no means uninterested in the ruthless political aspects of the struggle for wartime influence lurking behind this mask. The scene at the Cairo railway station is also used to show Egyptian perception of the interchangeable nature of British and German domination:

[Harriet] also heard the gleeful yells of the porters throwing luggage aboard. "You go. Germans come. You go. Germans come."

Iqal might have his doubts about the German promises but the fellahin had heard there were great times ahead. The wonder was, Harriet thought, that they were all so tolerant of the losers. Even when poor, diseased and hungry, they maintained their gaiety, speeding the old conquerors off without malice. No doubt they would welcome the new in the same way. (94)

In *Colonial Strangers* Phyllis Lassner writes that the Egyptians in the Levant trilogy provide a "critical commentary" on colonialism (36). There is a parallel between the Egyptian railway porters, cheerfully farewelling the English but prepared for the "next wave of interchangeable conquerors" and Harriet who temporarily escapes from her marriage but "takes her place in [Guy's] shadow once again" on returning from Palestine: "[e]xpressing Manning's own political critique, her own 'gleeful yells,' the Egyptian porters assert a reality that remains out of reach to both the English characters and their author" (39; 40). While noting the lack of any significant Egyptian characters in the trilogy, she states that

[i]f the natives are given very little presence or voice in the trilogy, their subjectivity is asserted in the responses of both Pringles to the vexed relationship between their own status as colonial exiles and that of the colonized. ... Unlike those writers who may undermine their own colonial critique by creating self-canceling ironies

(Conrad and Forster have been so accused), Manning's irony ... always targets the British. ... Even as characters like Harriet and Guy Pringle and Geoffrey Lynd<sup>13</sup> are presented sympathetically as voices of conscience, their complicity with imperialism is not excused or considered irrelevant as though they were innocent bystanders. ... While [Harriet's] political observations are fiercely independent, she could be describing her own dependent, pacified position in relation to her husband and to the colonial administration (37-8).

The parallels between Guy's and Harriet's position with regard to England, Harriet's position with regard to Guy and the English colony, and the Egyptians' with regard to the empire (and, we might add, Guy's position with regard to the "Organization") have an attractive neatness. What Lassner does not pay enough attention to, though, is the importance of a romanticised attraction to the "Other" which marks Harriet's interactions with Sasha, Dr Shafik, and even Halal in Damascus. Whereas Sasha is younger, more timid, and objectively in a more vulnerable situation than Harriet, the well-educated and urbane Shafik presents a more adult sort of appeal, one which can be considered in an ironically mocking, rather than maternal, way: "[l]ooking into his large, dark, emotional eyes, she almost wished she had an Oriental husband, especially one who looked like Dr Shafik" (*Battle* 348). Whether her feelings are sentimentally maternal, as with Sasha, or romantic, as with Shafik, Harriet seems to be attracted by a European veneer of English language and education applied to an underlying exoticism.

Like Guy's success in engaging with his students on a personal level, this other aspect of Harriet's Orientalism suggests Forster, or even Kipling, albeit with gender differences. I agree with Lassner that there is a "reality that remains out of reach" to Manning, because I do not think Harriet's dehumanising touristic desires can be logically reconciled with her unvoiced agreement with Guy on the attractiveness of personal relationships with the "Others". But Harriet's, and the narrator's, scepticism about colonialism is undermined by these contradictory attractions, and to claim that "the native's language and the experience it represents remains beyond the pale of colonial appropriation" (*Colonial Strangers* 40) is too charitable to the agendas apparent in the novels.

Manning's sequence is not unaware of the exploitative nature of, for example, English interest in Romanian and Egyptian oil, of the economic power imbalance which the "Organization" window-dresses with cultural promotion. But does the awfulness of the Romanian peasants in the first two novels of the Balkan trilogy cancel out the sympathetic

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<sup>13</sup> The hero of Manning's earlier novel *Artist Among the Missing* (1949).

portrayal of Guy's Egyptian students' anti-colonialism? And although the blasé attitude of some Egyptians towards the prospect of German victory is certainly noted in the Levant trilogy, the Balkan trilogy contains extensive exposition of the anxieties of many Romanians and all Greeks about German invasion, and their loyalty to England and its imperial allies. Political positions are not fixed or simple: as I noted in the first chapter, Harriet is "stimulated" by the mystical fascism of the Iron Guard, but she remains anti-German. She also argues against Simon's naïve belief in "the British Empire [as] the greatest force for good the world had ever known" (*Danger Tree* 24). Similarly, the presentation of the Egyptians' opinions on the interchangeability of their colonial masters gives space to different opinions. Iqal's response to Harriet's question about how he feels about German occupation provides a good illustration of this:

"... What do these Germans promise us? – they promise freedom and national sovereignty. What are those things? And what are these Germans? They are invaders like all the invaders that have come here for one thousand four hundred year. They come, they go, the English no worse than others. But to govern ourselves! – that we have forgotten, so how do we do it? And why should we believe these Germans, eh? ... In their hearts, Mrs Pringle, the Egyptian people wish you no harm." (74)

The importance of the Egyptians' "hearts", the suggestion in Guy's and Harriet's attempts to engage with natives that personal relationships are more important than political ones, that they might be able to outlast the collapse of colonialism, is again reminiscent of *A Passage to India*. Braybrooke and Braybrooke note, with regard to Manning's more consciously post-colonial novel *The Rain Forest* (1974), that

... she believed with E. M. Forster that history is a "series of muddles", in which political order constantly gives way to political disorder. For her, only works of art endured, surviving, by virtue of the eternal values that they represented, in "a permanently disarranged planet". That last phrase comes from Forster and tied up with her acceptance of a world marked by original sin. (220)

"Original sin" is a useful concept to apply to the presentation of imperialism in Manning's novels. The writing and reading of these novels, from the 1960s to today, is inevitably marked by an awareness of Nazi crimes, casting the morals of colonialism in a difficult context. Lassner states that the "ideological double bind fostered by citizenship in the British Empire ... consists of defeating Hitler's murderous empire while serving and defending both Britain's democratic values and its colonial exploitation" (34). Harriet's interest in monuments expresses a desire to find "eternal values" abroad, to escape from this bind by looking into the past. But her covert interest in natives of the present suggests that Guy's approach is feasible whereas hers is not.



## Disengagement from the natives in *Sword of Honour*

While Manning's sequence deals extensively with the Pringles' connections with the natives, in Waugh's trilogy Crouchback attempts to remain aloof. The disconnection between the army and those they are protecting is exemplified by the description of the road to Alexandria: "[o]n the beaches young civilians exposed hairy bodies and played ball with loud, excited cries. Army lorries passed in close procession, broken here and there by new, tight-shut limousines bearing purple-lipped ladies in black satin" (*Officers* 350). The war is intermingled with yet completely separate from the local population, who live lives of relaxation, and, it is hinted, licentiousness, suggesting Harriet's idea of Cairo as a "bureau of sexual exchange" noted in the first section of this chapter. Crouchback's monk-like dedication to the war brings him closer to Harriet's prim point of view, contrasting with his Kenyan memories.

Waugh initially uses the effects of cross-cultural contact for comedy value, with the unenthusiastic Italian spy Mr Pelecci at Southsands, the crazy Scottish nationalist Katie, and the Laird of Mugg's pilfering the army's dynamite. From the Cretan episode of *Officers and Gentlemen* onward, and especially in the concluding Croatian episode of *Unconditional Surrender*, the comedy darkens and is increasingly replaced by bitterness about dishonest dealing, typified by the scene with the spying priest at the church in Alexandria, and by Crouchback's interactions with the partisans in Croatia. Foreigners cannot be trusted in Waugh's war whether they are allies or enemies, and the category of foreign begins strictly at England's borders. Although Waugh is racist, we must bear in mind that his English characters are just as likely to be unreliable, capricious, self-deluding, self-centred, opportunistic, and so on. Cultural prejudice is secondary to generalised misanthropy. The villains of the trilogy, such as Trimmer, Ludovic, Ivor Claire, and Gilpin, are characterised by their problematic relationship to the class system, rather than by any kind of ethnic difference (though it may be worth noting that Trimmer's false-heroic deed and seduction of Virginia are achieved in his second attempt at a military career, passing himself off as a Scot).

The population of Waugh's Mediterranean and Balkan settings – Egyptian, Greek, Italian or Croatian – is engaged in dishonest exploitation of the British and Americans. The Croatian partisans' claims for assistance are based on "steer[ing] a delicate course between the alternating and conflicting claims that the partisans were destitute and that they maintained in the field a large, efficient modern army" (*Unconditional Surrender* 645). This exploitation of the Allies in Croatia is foreshadowed on Crete when Major Hound has a

hallucinatory encounter with a peasant who is a figure from another time, similar to the “Ulysses” figure in *The Sum of Things* (see above, p. 47):

Fido awoke in this Arcadian vale to find standing near him and gazing fiercely down a figure called straight from some ferocious folk-tale. His bearing was patriarchal, his costume, to Fido’s eyes, phantasmagoric – a goat-skin jacket, a crimson sash stuck full of antique weapons, trousers in the style of Abdul the Damned, leather puttees, bare feet. He carried a crooked staff. (*Officers* 428)

It is as if a Greek from the time of the *Odyssey* has stepped into the present. The Cretan has no interest in assisting a supposed ally, and removes most of Hound’s equipment, including his revolver. Hound’s compromised moral position, and the theft of his equipment by a brigand, later recurs on a large scale in *Unconditional Surrender* with the aid the Croatian partisans receive but which seems to be put to no use. Such vignettes run wilfully contrary to the historical power relationship, to conventional ideas of “sides” in the war, and the desire for all Allies to be noble.

Though *Unconditional Surrender* notes the poverty of the peasants in Croatia, even this is subordinated to the need to emphasise the lack of distinction between the two enemies who represent “the Modern Age in arms”; the continuity between occupation by one side and the other. The Croatian countryside suggests a picturesque, quaint, past:

The convoy set out through a terrain of rustic enchantment, as through a water-colour painting of the last century. Strings of brilliant peppers hung from the eaves of the cottages. The women at work in the fields sometimes waved a greeting, sometimes hid their faces. There was no visible difference between ‘liberated’ territory and that groaning under foreign oppression. Ian was unaware when they passed the vague frontier. (689)

Like Harriet’s visions of Damascus or the pyramids or the Parthenon, the archaism of Croatia is its chief attraction. Archaic charm contrasts with the meaningless distinctions of current politics: the glimpses of picturesque peasant culture contrast with the partisans’ drabness. The moral position of the partisans as a whole is similar to that of Trimmer, because they are completely dependent on the patronage of the powerful (the Allies) yet also associated with the amoral modernity which upsets Crouchback. In Begoy, he spends time in the botanic gardens, because

[t]he ragged, swaggering girls in battle-dress, with their bandages and medals and girdles of hand-grenades, who were everywhere in the streets, arm-in-arm, singing patriotic songs, kept clear of these gardens where not long ago rheumatics crept with their parasols and light, romantic novels. (650)

Munton reasonably criticises Waugh's depiction of the female partisans by contrasting it with a disturbing scene in Thomas Keneally's novel *Season in Purgatory* (1976) in which partisan women are killed in battle (94). Cattermole, an "enthusiast" (*Unconditional Surrender* 638), does speak of the bravery of the female partisans, but notes that "[p]atriotic passion has entirely extruded sex" (637). Ironically, though, this breakdown in gender distinctions is also occurring on the home front, where Crouchback's future wife is following the trend towards more elastic definition of gender roles, as well as secular rather than spiritual pursuits:

... [Eloise Plessington's] only family problem was her daughter, Domenica, now aged twenty-five, who had tried her vocation in a convent, failed, and now drove a tractor on the home farm, an occupation which had changed her appearance and manner. From having been shy and almost excessively feminine, she was now rather boisterous, trousered and muddied and full of the rough jargon of the stock-yard. (672)

Such changes in gender roles pose a direct threat to Crouchback's idea of heroism – particularly in *Unconditional Surrender*, by which point they serve as another mocking reminder of the futility of his heroic aspirations in the first place. If women on the home front are becoming "boisterous, trousered and muddied and full of ... rough jargon", that is, behaving similarly to soldiers, then what exactly are chivalrous men like Crouchback protecting by serving abroad?

Crouchback's return to Italy en route to Croatia completes a cycle which begins with his journey away from Santa Dulcina at the start of the trilogy. But unlike the greater odyssey of his return to Broome, this is not in any sense a happy homecoming. It is a cold reflection of the warm reception his grandparents find on their visit to Italy in the prologue to the first volume of the trilogy, in which "[t]he [Vatican] City, lapped now by the tide of illustrious converts, still remembered with honour its old companions in arms" (*Men at Arms* 7). While rural Croatia remains untouched by time because it is not yet controlled by the partisans, by 1944 Italy has become like England, grimly internationalised or Americanised: "Guy asked [a waiter] in Italian for olives. He answered in English almost scornfully: 'No olives for senior officers,' and brought American pea-nuts" (*Unconditional Surrender* 629).

Manning's novels show a variety of points of view on the morals of imperialism – Guy's left-wing friends such as David and the Egyptian nationalist students are set against the conservative diplomatic establishment represented by Dobson and the "Organization". Waugh does not give us quite so much to work with: in part because the trilogy spends less

time in foreign settings, in part because most of the foreign scenes focus on the army, and in part because of the constant satirical intent. Like the inadequacy of Waugh's generals and the promotion of the talentless in his army, the exploitation of the Allies by the partisans is a darker development of the social and cultural inversions of power that were played for comic effect in pre-war novels like *Scoop* and *Black Mischief*. Waugh is not particularly concerned with the fate of the empire or the justice of colonialism. Crouchback's nostalgia for Kenya suggests a conservative attachment to the colonial period, but it is clear that this is something that can only exist in his memories: Apthorpe and Ritchie-Hook exemplify the out-datedness of colonial attitudes. The scenes in Italy and Croatia show the replacement of a picturesquely authentic culture by the degeneracy of the modern world, divided between Soviet and American influence.

### **Personalising the Holocaust (1): the Pringles and Sasha Drucker**

The themes of the decline of heroism, the distinction between individual and institutional morality, the passing of imperial power, and the difficulties this creates for intercultural contact, are brought together in episodes in both Manning's and Waugh's sequences in which the central characters attempt to assist Jewish refugees.

The Balkan trilogy introduces the spectre of the Holocaust in the opening scene of the first novel, *The Great Fortune*, in which a Jewish refugee loses his papers and is removed from the train taking the Pringles to Romania, despite Guy's attempt to intervene. The appearance of the Drucker family in the second part of the novel continues the development of this theme. Sasha Drucker's eventual position as dependent on Harriet's protection is hinted at in his initial description:

Like his sisters, he resembled his father without being handsome. His eyes were too close together, his nose too big for his face, but because of his extraordinary gentleness of manner Harriet felt drawn to him. There was in him no hint of the family's energy and drive. He was like some nervous animal grown meek in captivity. (97)

The simile in the last sentence prefigures Sasha's later protective confinement by Guy and Harriet, while connecting him to the ill-fated red kitten Harriet will also adopt, a kitten which bites everyone except her, which "[becomes] at once Harriet's cat, her baby, her totem, her *alter ego*" (207). Like the kitten, Sasha becomes a kind of substitute child for Harriet. Sasha's connection to the red kitten is an important marker of Harriet's sympathy: by thinking of him as a meek animal, she exempts him from the constant judging, and finding wanting, she applies to most people. Lassner notes the analogy between Sasha and

the kitten, and also that Sasha's concealment in the rooftop shed parallels Harriet's own domestic situation – but that he is placed in an even more dependent category:

Conflating playhouse and prison cell, the shed is a likely candidate to signify either fantasy or nightmare. Such a confining space also reflects social and historical realities, however – the domestic space that infantilizes the woman by overprotecting her, and the ghetto that feminizes the Jew by keeping him powerless. Constructed and constricted as dependent and inessential Others, they are treated like pets, just like the homeless kitten Harriet adopts . . . . By turns nonconformist and needy, amusing and annoying, Sasha earns the affectionate tolerance from Harriet that she endures from her husband and his colleagues. (*British Women Writers* 234)

Lassner's analysis is perceptive insofar as it equates Harriet's domesticity with Sasha's protective custody, but, like her similar comparison of the Pringles' position with the Egyptians in *Colonial Strangers*, it has problems, here because of the vastly differing magnitudes of the threats that they face. Harriet's relationship with her husband and his colleagues is not overshadowed by the threat of genocide.

Emblematic of the position of Jews in Europe during the war, the Sasha episode also tells us about the detachment of English culture from its power base. Sasha has been educated in England: “[r]eflecting on his English schoolboy slang that at once placed and displaced him, [Harriet] thought wherever he was, he would belong nowhere” (*Spoilt City* 465). When he deserts from the army, he tells the Pringles that “[the soldiers] had respected him because he spoke English, though they could scarcely believe he had actually been to England. England they held to be a sort of paradise, the abode of titans” (393). Sasha here reports, and represents, to the Pringles an image of imperial power which is quickly slipping away during the war. Harriet's initially reluctant nurturing of Sasha could be read as an obligation to keep up, on the domestic front, the proselytising, civilising mission her husband is involved with publicly, a slightly different interpretation to Lassner's but in keeping with her opinion that “Harriet emerges as a sign of both the oppressed and oppressor” (*British Women Writers* 234). Like the “pictures of British cruisers that curled and yellowed in the sun” (*Great Fortune* 240) at the British propaganda bureau, though, Sasha's ability to speak English is ineffective in protecting him against the physical reality of the Balkans under German domination, however much it may impress the peasant conscripts.

Although Harriet is prepared to protect Sasha, she is not without prejudice against him. Sasha's adoption of Englishness only goes so far – Harriet's narrative still emphatically excludes him from a European identity of any kind: “[w]atching the boy, Harriet thought that were one to meet him in any capital in the world, one would think not ‘Here is a

foreigner' but 'Here is a Jew'. Though he would be recognisable anywhere, he would be at home nowhere except here, in the midst of his family" (97). The Pringles' failure to keep Sasha safe removes him from a state of immature innocence: "one lie—less than a lie, a hint that he had been betrayed by friends—had precipitated the settled doubts of his race. ... He now accepted the perfidy of the world and acceptance was born in him, an inheritance, not to be changed" (*Friends* 858). Sasha's reappearance is timely in saving Harriet from infidelity, an encounter with Charles Warden, and, as Harriet is also thinking of Sasha when she first sees Charles, Sasha frames the relationship. Having fulfilled this final narrative function, his innocence is completely replaced by his Jewish cultural inheritance: "... [Harriet] could see him turning into a wily young financier like the Jewish financiers of Chernowitz who still proudly wore on their hats the red fox fur that had been imposed on them long ago, as a symbol of cunning" (858). Unlike Yakimov, who has never grown up and whose socially accepted English identity is vital in helping him survive as long as he does, Sasha's English veneer is stripped away by suffering, suffering from which those accepted as truly English are excluded.

Yakimov's inadvertent betrayal of Sasha, like the Sheppy episode, associates the upper class with damaging incompetence. The second most important male character in the Balkan trilogy, Yakimov is the opposite of Guy, aristocratic rather than working class, idle rather than conscientious: the character in Manning's sequence who is most like a Waugh character. Like Pinkrose, Yakimov is completely self-centred, but from his first encounter with the Pringles it is made clear that though his behaviour might troublingly invoke Pharaoh's dream, his motivation is not malicious: "Harriet thought she saw in him an avidity, as though he would, if he could, absorb into his own person the substance of the earth; then he glanced at her. His eyes were guileless" (*Great Fortune* 44). Yakimov's background in the continental version of the lifestyle of Waugh's "Bright Young Things" is given little sympathy, manifesting itself in gluttony and chronic indebtedness. If Yakimov represents the cosmopolitan class that benefited from the empire without working, then the suggestion is that this class is of no use in the modern world. Like Ritchie-Hook, Yakimov has been bypassed by history. However, also like Ritchie-Hook and unlike Sheppy, condemnation is not unbalanced by sympathy. In his adoption of an English identity despite being "half Irish and half White Russian" (41) and his ambivalent position within the English colony, Yakimov is more than anything an outsider. Though their relationship is vexed throughout most of the first two novels, he finally becomes an ally of the central outsider, Harriet, offering friendship to her when she is alone in Athens. Addiction to material comforts suppresses Yakimov's latent decency, just as it illustrates

Pinkrose's selfishness: and by embracing his heritage as a financier, Sasha commits to material gain and is lost to Harriet.

The implication in *The Battle Lost and Won* that the two Jewish lecturers employed by Guy, Hertz and Allain, are Zionist agents who have assassinated Pinkrose in mistake for Lord Pinkerton, could be read as a kind of retrospective justification of Harriet's suspicions about Sasha. While confirming the validity of her stereotyping, it is also an act of revenge on the class Yakimov represents: Yakimov's sudden and tragicomic death prefigures Pinkrose's, and both deaths could be read as symbolising the dying out (or killing off) of the useless upper classes to clear the way for post-war geopolitics. Like the Zionists in *Unconditional Surrender* who "are only interested in the young" (704), Hertz and Allain are figures from the post-imperial world, prepared cynically to take advantage of Guy's trusting nature for the sake of their secret mission. Sasha is both attractive and endangered, somewhere between a child and an adult, between English and foreign. As English teachers, Hertz and Allain reprise Sasha as mimics and boundary-crossers, but there is no suggestion of fragility or dependence. Using their teaching jobs as a disguise for the exercise of ruthless power, they draw our attention to Guy's role in the "Organization" being itself a disguise for the exercise of power, but in his case the power is ceasing to exist even as he realises he does not believe in its propagation.

## **Personalising the Holocaust (2): Crouchback and the Jewish refugees**

The Holocaust looms over *Sword of Honour* as it does over the Balkan and Levant trilogies. In *Men at Arms* there are early omniscient narrative digressions which contrast the Holocaust and Soviet war crimes with the comfort that still prevails in England during the phony war:

It all seemed a long way from Tony's excursions in no-man's-land; farther still, immeasurably far, from the frontier of Christendom where the great battle had been fought and lost; from those secret forests where the trains were, even then, while the Halberdiers and their guests sat bemused by wine and harmony, rolling east and west with their doomed loads. (70)

I will return shortly to the image of the "frontier of Christendom", the collapse of which, it is insinuated here, has led to the mass murders. The monk-to-be Tony in a First World War "no-man's land" stands like Gervase or Roger of Waybroke against this evil, but the battle has already been lost; and it is suggested that the plebeian majority are not just ignorant of this defeat, but that their ignorance is a moral deficiency:

There were long accounts of the indignities and discomforts of the prisoners [in the *Altmark*], officially designed to rouse indignation among a public quite indifferent to those trains of locked vans still rolling East and West from Poland and the Baltic, that were to roll on year after year bearing their innocent loads to ghastly unknown destinations. (118)

The fate of the Kanyis, presumably put to death by the partisans, which realises these earlier visions, is an example of the much darker moral landscape in Waugh's trilogy than that of Manning's sequence. The Pringles' attempt to protect Sasha does not succeed, but he at least survives from among his immediate family, whereas Crouchback's attempts to help the Kanyis contribute, however unintentionally, to their demise. In both Manning's and Waugh's storylines, the protected Jew or Jews are betrayed as an unintentional side effect of charity: the Pringles' taking in of Yakimov allows him to betray Sasha, while the Kanyis are condemned due to Bakic's malicious misinterpretation of Crouchback's visiting Mme Kanyi. But a crucial difference is that in Manning's novels none of the English actively wish Sasha ill. Yakimov's childishness is to blame for Sasha's betrayal, but Yakimov is without intentional malice. The Druckers' suffering happens at the hands of the historically anti-Semitic, and increasingly pro-Nazi, Romanian establishment. In *Unconditional Surrender* the situation is the reverse; the threat to the Jewish refugees is not the retreating Germans, but the neglect or malice of the Allies. While Sasha is an exception who survives the Holocaust, the Kanyis are the exception to the rest of their group of refugees (rescued by an American charity) in being detained by the partisans. It is an ironic victory for the belief in "quantitative judgements" (491).

The continuation of Nazi wrongdoing by the partisans in Yugoslavia is suggested by their use of a former concentration camp to house the Jewish refugees. It is not just the partisans who are involved in such crimes, but, indirectly, their British supporters. The British-run camp in Italy to which the refugees are sent after their escape from Croatia is a further echo of the "locked vans", but a manifestation of thoughtless bureaucratic rather than malignant evil, like Major Marchpole who is "busy despatching royalist officers – though he did not know it – to certain execution" (704). Partly this is the result of institutional inertia, a development of the idea in *Men at Arms* I noted in the first chapter that the army are "bringing the new world ... bounded by barbed wire and reeking of carbolic" (86). By the end of the trilogy, "the lightless concentration-camp which all Europe had suddenly become" (204) has been instantiated in the camps in Croatia and Italy. But there is also an element of deliberate malice among the army officers. When the Kanyis fall victim to the partisan regime, the rebarbative future Labour MP, Gilpin, has been involved in sealing their fate, and seems to take pleasure in it:



“The woman was the mistress of a British Liaison Officer. ... A whole heap of American counter-revolutionary propaganda was found in their room. ... They were tried by a People’s Court. You may be sure justice was done.”

Once before in his military career Guy had been tempted to strike a brother officer – Trimmer at Southsands. The temptation was stronger now, but before he had done more than clench his fist, before he had raised it, the sense of futility intervened. (*Unconditional Surrender* 705-6)

Gilpin is thus placed alongside Trimmer among the most morally defective characters in the trilogy. But it must be noted that this outcome is most satisfyingly tragic *if* the reader suspects that there is some slight basis to the spy Bakic’s perjury. Crouchback’s friendship with Mme Kanyi is comparable to the situation between Harriet and Sasha in that there is a slight suggestion of possible romantic attraction. Mme Kanyi is noted as being younger than the other refugees, her husband is often absent, and Crouchback has made her a present of some fashion magazines. Like the citation of Trimmer for heroism, the evidence gathered by Bakic has some basis in reality, but reality has been grossly travestied for political ideological purposes. In his readiness to accept Bakic’s trumped-up evidence, Gilpin subordinates truth to ideology, while also demonstrating that socialism is incompatible with—is completely incapable of understanding—chivalrous gentlemanlike behaviour. Manning is as happy as Waugh to indulge in occasional casual racist comments, and certainly depicts a considerable quantity of anti-Semitic sentiments expressed by Romanians as well as Harriet, but Waugh’s trilogy’s determination to emphasise the evil done by the partisans and their left-wing supporters in the army risks diminishing the culpability of the Nazis.

At the start of this section I noted that the collapse of the “frontier of Christendom” is associated early on in *Men at Arms* with the victims of Nazi and Soviet mass murder. The evil behaviour of the communists Bakic and Gilpin over the Kanyis confirms the trilogy’s condemnation of secular political ideology as being incompatible with truth and justice. Gilpin is one of Sir Ralph Brompton’s willing helpers in a fight which is a battle against Christianity as much as against the Germans: “[l]iberation was Sir Ralph’s special care. Wherever those lower than the Cabinet and the Chiefs of Staff adumbrated the dismemberment of Christendom, there Sir Ralph might be found” (613). Sir Ralph is therefore morally equivalent to Nazis and Soviets. Crouchback’s attempts to assist the refugees are his final attempt to defy a military establishment which has fallen under the control of such secular ideologues. Reinforcing the idea that Crouchback is now fighting on the wrong side, that any side in this war is the wrong side, the farcical final battle in the trilogy is an assault on “a very solid little fort built more than a century earlier, part of the

defensive line of Christendom against the Turk” (690). Crouchback’s original aspiration to become a modern crusader may be undermined by the trilogy, but it remains clear on the moral superiority of religious over secular philosophy.

### **Escaping the empire**

Waugh’s trilogy is sceptical about the new post-imperial England, the England which is part of the concentration camp image of Europe. Wartime London is populated by American soldiers and nouveau-Cockney workers in drab unisex overalls who queue to see the Sword of Stalingrad. Trimmer is the worst product of the new England which, as Ian Kilbannock suggests, like Trimmer, has been invented for marketing purposes: “[the American journalist Joe] looks on us all as feudal colonial oppressors, which, I will say for you, Trimmer, you definitely are not. We’ve got to sell him the new Britain that is being forged in the furnace of war” (*Officers* 442). Given Ian’s sarcastic tone, Trimmer’s behaviour, and Crouchback’s memories of Kenya, the implication is that being a feudal colonial oppressor might not have been such a bad thing.

But, as I have discussed in this chapter, the empire is only shown in a good light in Crouchback’s and Apthorpe’s reminiscences, and in its implied role as having been part of a system which protected Christianity in Europe. The rhetoric of empire has become damaging: “[Crouchback] had found [Churchill’s speeches] painfully boastful and they had, most of them, been immediately followed by the news of some disaster, as though in retribution from the God of Kipling’s *Recessional*” (166-7). In *Sword of Honour* the scenes abroad function as part of the Catholic anti-humanist philosophical position of the trilogy – the entire world is inadequate compared to the divine ideal, but less inadequate the closer you get to Broome. That Crouchback begins the trilogy in an existential “wasteland where his soul languished” (*Men at Arms* 12) hints at the theme of a mystical, spiritual renewal of England, but, as I noted in the first chapter, this renewal is withheld from England as a whole.

The conclusion of *Unconditional Surrender* fulfils Crouchback’s initial desire for separation from the imperfect world: “[o]ften he wished that he lived in penal times when Broome had been a solitary outpost of the Faith, surrounded by aliens. Sometimes he imagined himself serving the last mass for the last Pope in a catacomb at the end of the world” (*Men at Arms* 14). In her analysis of *A Handful of Dust* and *Brideshead Revisited* in *Mourning, Modernism, Postmodernism*, Tammy Clewell convincingly argues that Hetton (in *A Handful of*

*Dust*) is used as part of a critique of “empty spiritualism” (100), “the waning of tradition” and “the ascendancy of the modern” (101). *Brideshead* fares slightly better:

Ryder views *Brideshead* as the material manifestation of the divine, a view that figures the house as a shelter from the transience of twentieth-century social life.

If *Brideshead* embodies this transcendent perfection, it also stands in Ryder’s account as a defense against the ascendancy of a middle-class sensibility; however, he regards this defense as having collapsed during the war years and views the middle-class platoon commander Hooper as evidence of the decline of the aristocracy and the vulgarization of society by the middle classes. ... But if *Brideshead Revisited* constitutes a surrender to [the] loss [of the country house tradition], this surrender is by no means unconditional. The novel responds to the death of a living tradition by raising religion as the only source of meaning able to withstand modern meaninglessness and the increasing democratization of British culture. (121)

Broome, unlike *Brideshead*, survives the war free from military occupation, in use as a Catholic school. *Sword of Honour* thus seems more optimistic than *Brideshead* in that the country house tradition *and* the religious tradition are preserved, with less damaging compromises. The dangers of remaining trapped in a colonial adventure story, epitomised by the grim fate of Tony Last in *A Handful of Dust*, are also avoided. Truslove, Apthorpe, Ritchie-Hook, the Halberdiers, all colonial relics, fall by the wayside. After the war Broome endures as Crouchback’s ancestral home and a retreat from the problems of the world.

While Crouchback must return from abroad to fulfil his Anglo-Catholic destiny, *The Sum of Things* ends with the Pringles still resident in Cairo and with their relationship difficulties unresolved. Their ongoing conflict and compromises are in keeping with the world’s situation post-war, rather than standing in defiance to it as Waugh’s resolution does. Near the end of *The Sum of Things* the self-effacing diplomat Dobson decides to write his memoirs:

It was Dobson’s belief that the British empire began to decay when the speed-up of communications gave the Colonial Office dominion over the colonial governors.

“That will be my theme,” he said.

Guy considered it: “You mean, individuality became answerable to the machine?”

“Excellently put,” Dobson scribbled on an envelope: “We no longer have great men like Bentinck, the Wellesleys, Henry Laurence [sic], James Kirk: men who developed their initiative by exercising it. Now the service is dependent on a pack of non-entities. You agree?”

“I’m not sure that I do. One can develop bad judgement as well as good.” (512)

Dobson then quotes King Farouk who, he says, responded to the ambassador's argument that British troops must stay in Egypt in order to protect the Gulf oil fields by saying "[o]h, stay if you must, but when the war's over, for God's sake put down the white man's burden and go" (513).

This exchange between Dobson and Guy, and Farouk's adaption of the opening line from Kipling's poem, provides a useful context for thinking about the similarities in the depiction of the English abroad in Waugh's and Manning's sequences. Through working for the army and the "Organization", Crouchback and Guy Pringle are working for, respectively, the concrete and the ideological propagation of English power. They are defenders of the margins of a crumbling empire. They are defenders, too, of a culture from which slight but critical differences separate them: for the Pringles, class; for Crouchback, religion. Therefore, they must defend values which they do not embody, shown in Guy Pringle's realisation that "he himself had no belief in empire" (514), and Crouchback's service in an increasingly bureaucratic and politicised army. They owe loyalty to the "pack of non-entities" in the army or the "Organization", and their scepticism about their superiors' competence is matched by their superiors' lack of appreciation for them. And they are marginalised still further by the effects the changing society of wartime England projects even to the edges of its sphere of influence.

Lassner groups Manning and other women writers with marginalised refugees who "were granted a kind of alien status [and in that sense] could not be considered integral to that part of national identity which stands united" (*British Women Writers* 17). A similar point could be made about the Catholic consciousness of Waugh's trilogy. The expression of marginalisation is central to these novels, especially since it seems not to be logically justified: Crouchback does not have to feel so alienated because he is a Catholic; Harriet is surely capable of finding work, or expressing her own opinions in conversation. The descriptions of the attempts to save Sasha and the Kanyis express a belief that the use of English power can still be worthwhile when put to an unambiguously worthwhile, humanitarian purpose. Assisting the most marginalised people of the war also expresses Crouchback's and the Pringles' own desires to feel less marginalised. But these attempts do not quite work out, partly because the attempts to behave charitably are not actually supported by official power (in Manning), or official power has the opposite point of view (in Waugh).

The sequences differ in the extent to which they are about the practicalities of life during the end of empire, this forming a much more important part of Manning's sequence. Guy Pringle has aspects of a Kipling hero such as Strickland Sahib, able to operate inside native culture, in the service of his own concept of imperial righteousness, but alienated from official power:

[Strickland] held the extraordinary theory that a Policeman in India should try to know as much about the natives as the natives themselves. ... But people said, justly enough, "Why on earth can't Strickland sit in his office and write up his diary, and recruit, and keep quiet, instead of showing up the incapacity of his seniors?" ("Miss Youghal's Sais" 24-5)

But in Guy's scepticism about colonialism, his political ideals, the manner of his engagement with the natives, we have come a long way from Kipling's stories. Strickland's knowledge results in him being able to exercise power over the natives: "[n]atives hated Strickland; but they were afraid of him. He knew too much" (25). Crouchback's experiences abroad are more in keeping with the subtext of anxiety apparent in this quotation. In *Sword of Honour* the comforting imperial fantasy of government through superior knowledge is replaced by a new fantasy, closer to the message of "The White Man's Burden", in which the imperial powers are exploited by ungrateful and wily natives. In his belief in service without the exercise of power, Guy is closer to Forster's Fielding, but unlike Fielding he does not "harden" with time in his feelings on the usefulness of the empire (292). Manning's treatment can be fitted into a progression of thinking towards a post-colonial consciousness, but Waugh's is determinedly regressive.

Manning and Waugh were writing when the empire had effectively ceased to exist, looking back on the war as the time during which English global power was supplanted. Dobson's admired colonial governors seem quaint and harmlessly idiosyncratic in the era of Hitler, Stalin, concentration camps and modern weapons. In their not-quite-successful attempts to take on a share of the crumbling burden, and in the attraction that the past era of English supremacy holds for them compared to the present, Manning's and Waugh's English abroad express a cultural anxiety about what was to come next for Britain.

## Chapter Three: The Uses of Literature

In this final chapter I consider the uses of English literature in Manning's and Waugh's sequences. Guy Pringle's employment by the "Organization" is central to determining the Pringles' wartime experience, and in both the first and second chapters I have mentioned the importance of the tension between his official role as a promoter of English literature and culture and his own developing ambivalence about this function. *Sword of Honour* also takes an interest in the literary world, particularly in the final volume, *Unconditional Surrender*. Waugh's trilogy is more concerned with satirising the contemporary literary scene than Manning's sequence, where Guy's direction of *Troilus and Cressida* in *The Great Fortune* is the most important episode involving literature, and one I will discuss at some length. Both Manning and Waugh, however, provoke reflection on the use of literature for propagandistic or educational purposes as opposed to its function as a personal escape from wartime reality. These uses of literature also reveal undercurrents which contradict or suggest alternatives to some of the more overtly negative social perspectives of the novels, particularly Harriet's position as a woman in Manning's sequence.

### Ludovic the romantic author

There are two important literary characters in *Unconditional Surrender*: Everard Spruce, whom I will discuss in the following section, and Ludovic. Ludovic's literary career is introduced in *Officers and Gentlemen*, in which he is an as-yet unpublished diarist and poet. He is the most destructive, while also the closest to being genuinely heroic, of Waugh's three "dominant comic antihero[es]", to use Lodge's term (39). Ludovic is at the bottom of the hierarchy in Waugh's trilogy's moral scheme, for several reasons: he is a protégé of an aristocratic socialist (Sir Ralph Brompton), a member of the working class who has risen above his station, an unscrupulous soldier who does not respect the laws of war or military rank, a homosexual, and, finally, he becomes part of a literary establishment which supports the left-wing politics making all these freaks possible. That his treatment is not straightforwardly condemnatory, as Trimmer's or Gilpin's is, despite the nature of his crimes on Crete, suggests some level of narrative sympathy for him, and I think this sympathy can be explained by his position as an author.

Ludovic becomes a writer as naturally as Yakimov becomes an actor in the Balkan trilogy. Like Yakimov, Ludovic possesses a mimetic ability. On several occasions we are shown his ability to speak with two voices: "he [has] the manservant's gift of tongues"; one voice is

“fruity”, the other “plebeian” (*Officers* 410). It is telling that when Crouchback encounters Ludovic in London, unwittingly reminding him of his crimes, Ludovic loses this “fruity” voice: he is thrown back to his original class and “resum[es] his barrack-room speech” (*Unconditional Surrender* 525). Crouchback’s moral superiority catalyses a temporary return to the correct order. This is Crouchback’s only symbolic victory over Ludovic – otherwise, in rescuing Crouchback from Crete and by manipulating his parachuting training report, Ludovic has power over Crouchback, even if he lives in fear of Crouchback exposing his crimes. His move to the Castello Crouchback at the end of the trilogy is a final reinforcement of their involuntary connection.

Out of the antiheroic trio of Apthorpe, Trimmer, and Ludovic, who are all prodigiously raised beyond their natural stations in life through the chances of war, Ludovic effects the most successful transition. He is also the only one of the three whose elevation is backed by genuine ability, although Waugh’s portrayal of his success might be poking fun at the pretentious and easily duped literary establishment. It is tempting to analyse Ludovic’s literary career in intentional, autobiographical terms. Waugh wanted to deal satirically with authors and the literary world during the war; he had created, in Crouchback, a hero whose narrative could not realistically be contorted to introduce him to this scene; Ludovic provides an author-cipher. This analysis is given obvious credence by evidence in *Unconditional Surrender*. Like Waugh, Ludovic’s later military career allows him time to write, and, like Waugh, he devotes that time to writing a flamboyant, lush, nostalgic, neo-Romantic novel. Ludovic’s *The Death Wish* has a lot in common with Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited*:

Admirers of his *pensées* (and they were many) would not have recognized the authorship of this book. It was a very gorgeous, almost gaudy, tale of romance and high drama .... . But it was not an old-fashioned book. Had he known it, half a dozen other English writers, averting themselves sickly from privations of war and apprehensions of the social consequences of the peace, were even then severally and secretly ... composing or preparing to compose books which would turn from the drab alleys of the thirties into the odorous gardens of a recent past transformed and illuminated by disordered memory and imagination. Ludovic in the solitude of his post was in the movement.

Nor was it for all its glitter a cheerful book. Melancholy suffused its pages and deepened towards the close.

So far as any character could be said to have an origin in the world of reality, the heroine was the author. (*Unconditional Surrender* 658-9)

This précis contains notable similarities to Waugh’s preface to the 1960 edition of *Brideshead*:

This novel ... lost me such esteem as I once enjoyed among my contemporaries and led me into an unfamiliar world of fan-mail and press photographers. ... I wrote with a zest that was quite strange to me and also with impatience to get back to the war. It was a bleak period of present privation and threatening disaster – the period of soya beans and Basic English – and in consequence the book is infused with a kind of gluttony, for food and wine, for the splendours of the recent past, and for rhetorical and ornamental language, which now with a full stomach I find distasteful. (1)

(Actually, more like Ludovic, Waugh was not particularly keen to get back to the war, according to Frank Kermode's introduction to the Everyman edition of *Brideshead* [ix-x].) As Bergonzi drily observes, "[e]vidently Major Ludovic and Evelyn Waugh were writing much the same kind of book" (*Situation* 131). Waugh, of course, writes from quite a different class, political, and theological position to his creation. But Ludovic's connection to the political and social views of prodigies such as Gilpin is minimised. It was his mimetic ability which enabled him to succeed in the society he eulogises, and Ludovic therefore partly reprises the heroes of Waugh's pre-war novels, who have to operate within the fashionable upper class but are always fundamentally alone, excluded by some difference of class background or morality. Ludovic's ability to operate in different social registers, to play the part required of him, is reminiscent of Ambrose Silk in *Put Out More Flags*. Ludovic's belief in *ars gratia artis* and his connection, in his writing if not his lifestyle, to Silk's Wildean aestheticism is suggested when he is "struck where he should have been most sheltered, in the ivory tower of *avant-garde* letters" when Crouchback reappears at the parachuting school (*Unconditional Surrender* 560) – *The Ivory Tower* is the title of Silk's magazine. While Ludovic's mimicry is sinister in a social sense, it is also part of his literary creativity.

Like Waugh's, Ludovic's early works gain a certain cachet from the fashionable literary world. Like Waugh, in his major wartime work of fiction he finds solace in a semi-autobiographical retreat to "the odorous gardens of a recent past", Waugh the Oxford of the twenties, Ludovic the pre-war diplomatic corps. What can Ludovic's characteristics as an author, then, tell us about Waugh's? For all his enculturation by Sir Ralph, Ludovic remains a literary naïf whose *pensées* and war poetry are based simply on his experiences; writing is for him an addiction and catharsis, rather than the expression of any kind of political agenda. His poem supposedly praising the Sword of Stalingrad becomes inevitably an elegy on his escape from Crete. The suggestion that Waugh, like Ludovic, writes always as an outsider, always in expiation of personal suffering, always in (conscious or unconscious) imitation of somebody else's literary style, is a bleak summation of his literary career; too bleak, perhaps, for us to take it entirely seriously. If Crouchback's story can be



read as an exaggerated grouching about Waugh's position as an Anglo-Catholic and his disappointing attempt at soldiering, Waugh's use of Ludovic to grouse at his literary career is just as dramatically magnified. It is typical of Waugh, who, as he aged, increasingly presented a public facade which seemed to be a parody of Evelyn Waugh, that he should write himself into his novel as an eccentric and gloomy hermit.

There are layers of fictional wrapping in the parachute training school episode during which Ludovic is working on *The Death Wish*. While Ludovic is writing a work of "elaborate improbability", he is himself starring in de Souza's fantastical narratives. Appropriately for a harbinger of the modern age, de Souza's stories are filmic: his "imagination roll[s] into action as though at a 'story conference' of jaded scriptwriters" (584). The obtuse Captain Freemantle takes de Souza's fantastic horror-film inventions about Ludovic seriously, demonstrating the military inability to understand parody, or any kind of literature for that matter. This military lack of imagination is also suggested when Jumbo, like the rest of Hookforce reading functionally to pass the time, "[c]an't make [*Don't, Mr. Disraeli*] out at all" (*Officers* 309). Jumbo's inability to recognise a parody of the Victorian era, a parody of the era from which the Halberdiers' culture originates and in which it still seems to be trapped, is similar to Ritchie-Hook's (or Manning's Commander Sheppy) not being able to recognise the self-satirising effect of his poetic references.

In its description of the reception of Ludovic's work, *Unconditional Surrender* pokes fun at the literary establishment and its desire to theorise and fit works into intertextual patterns. The statement that "Ludovic in the solitude of his post was in the movement" might tempt us to link him to the Movement of the 1950s. The problem with putting Ludovic in the same group as Kingsley Amis, John Wain, and Iris Murdoch is immediately apparent. Bergonzi, in *Wartime and Aftermath*, quotes J. D. Scott who in "In the Movement", a kind of manifesto published anonymously in the *Spectator* in 1954, described it as being

bored by the despair of the Forties, not much interested in suffering, and extremely impatient of poetic sensibility, especially poetic sensibility about the writer and society ...<sup>14</sup> The Movement, as well as being anti-phoney, is anti-wet; sceptical, robust, ironic, prepared to be as comfortable as possible in a wicked, commercial, threatened world which doesn't look, anyway, as if it's going to be changed much by a couple of handfuls of young English writers. (137)

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<sup>14</sup> Ellipsis in Bergonzi's quotation.

It is fair to say that Ludovic's novel, like *Brideshead*, does not fit with this description. If we treat "the movement" as a movement of Ludovic's time during the war, such as the New Apocalypse, the categorisation is just as problematic. However, if we think about other post-war movements in literature we see that Ludovic could indeed fit into "[t]he emerging literary culture [which] was to a large extent reactive; novelists wanted to get back behind modernism to Edwardian or Victorian or eighteenth-century models" (139). What is going on here seems to be a joke about the difficulty of such classifications, a difficulty Bergonzi acknowledges:

The movements of the 1950s, though they may have grouped together writers who shared a common time and a common way of looking at the world, were not set up by the collaborating producers themselves, not all of whom knew each other, but defined and labelled from outside by critics, journalists, and publicists. (139)

The pointed claim that Ludovic is "in the movement" satirises the desire of critics to identify movements, and Waugh is also eager to satirise the critic's desire to identify allusions. This is invoked in Ludovic's conversation with Everard Spruce, the other important literary character in *Unconditional Surrender*.

"... There is the Drowned Sailor motif – an echo of the *Waste Land* perhaps? Had you Eliot consciously in mind?"  
 "Not Eliot," said Ludovic. "I don't think he was called Eliot."  
 "Very interesting. And then there was the Cave image. You must have read a lot of Freudian psychology?"  
 "Not a lot. There was nothing psychological about the cave." (524)

Spruce's responses, and Ludovic's seeming ignorance, make fun of the desire of critics to connect literary works to other literary works, much like Colonel Grace-Groundling-Marchpole's delusional attempt to connect all military intelligence to reveal an all-encompassing web of conspiracy. We suspect that Ludovic's obtuseness is a sham, because "Sir Ralph [has] discreetly attended to [Ludovic's] education, lending him books on psychology which he relished ..." (507). And we know that Waugh, lurking behind the narrative, is aware of *The Waste Land*. He had made use of *The Waste Land* in the title and epigraph of *A Handful of Dust*, for example, and I noted in the previous chapter that Crouchback's soul is said to be languishing in a wasteland at the start of *Men at Arms* (see above, p. 65). Ludovic's borrowing from Eliot, whether conscious or unconscious, and his reserving of the right to withhold information about his influences, is a wry comment on Waugh's own ambivalent relationship with modern literary movements and theories of literary influence.

## Everard Spruce and state-sanctioned literature

*Survival*, Everard Spruce's magazine, contrasts with Ludovic's solitary efforts in being an officially sanctioned and funded publication. In its commitment to its ideals the magazine has more integrity than Spruce himself, whose "socialist" background is promptly undermined by the description of his living arrangements in a "fine house in Cheyne Walk" (*Unconditional Surrender* 514) with four secretaries who "[give] him their full devotion; also their rations of butter, meat, and sugar" (515). Spruce's comfortable living arrangements, like Ludovic's, contrast with Crouchback's Spartan army life, while his interest in gossip columns and society figures such as Virginia Troy undermines his intellectual austerity. Spruce's vicarious acquaintance with Virginia is notable for its blurring of the fictional frame of the novel: he defines her by comparison with literary characters: "Hemingway coarsened the image with his Bret, but the type persisted – in books and in life" (671).

Spruce's preservation of a particular kind of pre-war male academic lifestyle is also comparable to that of the scoundrel Dr Beltado in *The Sum of Things*, who employs female assistants to produce work which is of value mostly in his imagination. Like most of the characters lampooned in Waugh's trilogy, Spruce has profited from the war:

The war had raised Spruce, who in the years preceding it had not been the most esteemed of his coterie of youngish, socialist writers, to unrivalled eminence. ... Spruce ... had stood out for himself and ... announced the birth of a magazine devoted "to the Survival of Values". The Ministry of Information gave it protection, exempted its staff from other duties, granted it a generous allowance of paper, and exported it in bulk to whatever countries were still open to British shipping. Copies were even scattered from aeroplanes in regions under German domination and patiently construed by partisans with the aid of dictionaries. A member who complained in the House of Commons that so far as its contents were intelligible to him, they were pessimistic in tone and unconnected in subject with the war effort, was told at some length by the Minister that free expression in the arts was an essential of democracy. (513)

This passage is typical of *Sword of Honour*'s representation of the war effort. Though defending ideals which may be admirable by contrast with the enemy's, *Survival*'s production is a misguided use of resources from a practical point of view. It is as incomprehensible to MPs as it is to foreign partisans, though given the treatment of both of these kinds of people in the trilogy, this may not be as strong condemnation of it as it first appears. Despite Spruce's socialist background, like Silk's *The Ivory Tower* in *Put Out More Flags*, *Survival*'s agenda is artistic rather than political. If we read Spruce biographically, he would seem to be a version of Cyril Connolly, and *Survival* of Connolly's magazine *Horizon*. Another less subtle reference to Connolly occurs earlier in the trilogy, in the

maker's plaque on Apthorpe's thunder-box, "*Connelly's Chemical Closet*" (*Men at Arms* 136), and there are others in earlier novels: the terrible Connolly children in *Put Out More Flags* and General Connolly in *Black Mischief* (Bergonzi points out the second two references in *Wartime and Aftermath* [5-6]).

The other opinions we hear on *Survival* in the novel are generally negative, and to do with its commitment to abstract rather than representational art. Crouchback thinks "[i]t compared unfavourably in his opinion with the Squadron Leader's 'comic' particularly in the matter of draughtsmanship" (596), and it also fails to appeal to Uncle Peregrine: "[h]e picked up *Survival*, glanced at the illustrations, remarked without hostility: 'Ah, *modern*'" (598). Yet Peregrine, unable to comprehend modern art or modernity itself, is unwittingly contributing to *Survival's* production. An interesting intersection between the non-intellectual yet cultured milieu of the Crouchbacks, and the work of Sir Ralph Brompton and Everard Spruce, is provided when we are told that

[t]here was a "salvage drive" in progress in the course of which public-spirited citizens were exhorted to empty their shelves so that their books could be pulped to produce official forms and *Survival*. Many rare and beautiful volumes perished before it occurred to the ministry that they could more profitably be sold. (597)

This passage neatly combines Waugh's trilogy's evaluation of social change during the war with its evaluation of contemporary culture and tastes in literature. The "rare and beautiful" old editions are mindlessly destroyed to create raw material for the products of the new society. The first of these products, "official forms", are associated with the bureaucracy which frustrates individual valour, promotes the undeserving as heroes, and leads to arbitrary decisions such as Crouchback's posting to Italy, printed on a card by the "Electronic Personnel Selector" (505). The other product is *Survival*, a parody of publications of the literary avant garde. The new movement in literature is being produced out of the pulping of the literary tradition. Books are rendered down to become disposable forms and magazines: solidity and aesthetic value are replaced by transient functional value. *Survival's* creator sees the title of the magazine as aspirational, because it is a vessel for "the Survival of Values" of pre-war progressive culture; and the title also contrasts with the Nazi cult of death. Yet *Survival* is produced through the reduction of art to the functional value of its raw materials. The destruction of literature and the idea of recycling gain a further sinister resonance, suggested by the personification of the books which have "perished", from the historical facts of Nazi book-burnings, and theft of jewellery and artworks from concentration camp victims. There is an implication that England is even more of a cultural

waste land than occupied Europe, because in England the intellectual and social elite *willingly* give up their treasures to further the cause of governmental bureaucracy.

The titles of the two imaginary works of literature in *Unconditional Surrender* form an ironic juxtaposition which summarises the satirical conundrum of *Sword of Honour*. *Survival* is what everybody should want out of the war, yet this word is used for the title of a magazine which is elitist and unpopular, despite being produced by a “socialist”. *The Death Wish*, Ludovic’s hugely successful bestseller, is associated with what Mme Kanyi identifies as the impelling destructive psychology of the war. Progress and nostalgia, the modern and the traditional, are therefore both devalued, in much the same way that Crouchback’s old-fashioned ideas about heroism are discredited during the war, yet not replaced by worthwhile new ideals.

Its elite status actually shields *Survival* from the full force of moral disapproval. The destruction caused by its production is the worst aspect of *Survival*, the content of which is innocuous if incomprehensible. The press releases and stories which are written by Ian Kilbannock and used by acquiescent journalists to bring about Trimmer’s elevation to war hero are aimed at the non-intellectual majority of the population. These pieces of popular journalism, presumably published in papers such as Lord Copper’s *Daily Beast*, are far more overtly propagandistic and damaging manifestations of modernity than *Survival* is made out to be. Trimmer as hero is completely a creation of text and image, a simulacrum, but not a creation of elitist publications such as *Survival*. Waugh’s trilogy’s critique of intellectualism is far more restrained than its critique of class instability.

In addition to satirising modernity, Ludovic and Spruce fulfil another function, in creating a kind of composite version of the author as hero. Literary creativity, it is suggested, is not compatible with moral correctness: Spruce lives with four women, Ludovic is gay. If we add Ludovic’s interest in romance and literary style to Spruce’s interest in modernity and gossip to Crouchback’s morality, in sum we get something like Evelyn Waugh: not necessarily a picture of Evelyn Waugh the person, but a version readily identifiable as the implied consciousness of his novels. At the end of the war, Spruce’s and Ludovic’s role is to continue to write, Crouchback’s to continue the faith. Combined, they form a Waughian ideal.

### ***Troilus* in Bucharest (1): the historical and political context**

Given the Pringles' milieu of lecturers, diplomats and intellectual refugees, literary matters could be expected to be more prominent in the Balkan and Levant trilogies than in Waugh's much more predominantly military settings. But the Pringles are isolated from the literary hub of London, Guy's engagement with literature is as a teacher of texts rather than an author, and Harriet's separation from the actual work of Guy's career limits its part in the narrative.

The most substantial episode dealing with literature occurs in the last part of *The Great Fortune*. Guy's ambitious production of *Troilus and Cressida* is rehearsed as Germany launches its invasion of northern and western Europe. In *Continuance and Change* Robert Morris summarises the significance of the production of *Troilus*:

... Guy's hobbyhorse for producing theatricals reflects his perpetual engagement in escapist pursuits. ... The play holds up a mirror to a mirror. It is a stunning conceit of Miss [sic] Manning's, embracing at once the three significant spheres of action in *The Great Fortune*: the real-life drama of the actors; the interplay between Rumanian and European history; and the fickleness, reversals, and insecurity brought about by all wars. (36)

In this section I will analyse the *Troilus* episode with regard to the second and third of Morris's "spheres of action", interpreting the production of the play in terms of the novel's historical context. The following section will examine its function as part of the characterisation and plot of Manning's sequence, leading to an exploration of some of the anxieties underlying the narrative in the Balkan and Levant trilogies.

As Morris suggests, by "hold[ing] up a mirror to a mirror" the play miniaturises the concerns of Manning's sequence as a whole. The play connects to the fictional world outside itself just as a historical novel like *The Great Fortune* connects to the actual time and place in which it is set. As a work of literature, *Troilus and Cressida* is open to reinterpretation. The multiple interpretations that can be made of Manning's account of the production suggest the multiplicity of interpretations of the sequence in which it appears. The production of *Troilus* can be claimed to be predominantly anti-fascist, predominantly anti-war, or predominantly pro-British. In examining these different interpretations it is important to bear in mind that they can overlap one another.

The depiction of Guy's direction of the play makes clear that for him it is determinedly a vehicle for progressive politics:

Guy ... had been lecturing his audience on the character of Achilles, who, offered the alternative of a long life spent in peaceful obscurity and a short life of glory, chose the latter. In Homer, Guy was saying, Achilles was the ideal of the military hero: but Shakespeare, whose sympathies had been with the Trojans, had depicted him as a fascist whose feats were performed by fascist thugs. (*Great Fortune* 254)

By staging a production that sympathises with oriental Trojans rather than occidental Greeks, Guy is attacking the actual “fascist thugs” appearing in the German newsreel films showing in Bucharest, which are themselves highly dramatised productions:

There was nothing here of the flat realism of the English news, nothing of the bored inactivity which people had come to expect. Every camera trick was used to enhance the drama of the German machines reaping the cities as they passed. Their destructive lust was like a glimpse of the dark ages. (255)

The Germans in these films are described by Romanian audience members overheard by Harriet using imagery that suggests the pre-Christian ancient world: “[s]uch beautiful young men!’ ... ‘... like the gods of war!’” (256). Guy’s production criticises this real conquest by presenting a contrary side of the “gods of war”, and *Troilus* is a good play for him to adopt for this purpose, with its presentation of deal-making between the warring sides, and victory without chivalry in the Myrmidons’ defeat of Hector. (Hector’s murder is one of the scenes chosen for the montage of the play’s performance in the BBC television adaptation *Fortunes of War*.)

With Guy’s production being rehearsed over the course of the invasion of France, the mirroring of the fall of Troy in the play by the fall of Paris in reality is suggested by the title of this section of *The Great Fortune*, “The Fall of Troy”. (Again, this connection is particularly strongly drawn in the television adaptation, in which shots of the performance of the play are intercut with snippets from original newsreel films showing the German advance.) Jeffrey Meyers points out in his article “The play’s the thing” that Bucharest is also Troy and “Manning employs *Troilus* ... to suggest the gradual corruption of Romania’s doomed civilization, to draw incisive parallels between her own historical setting, the fall of modern Bucharest, and Shakespeare’s fall of ancient Troy” (23). There are small-scale resonances between the Trojan myth and reality in Bucharest during the play’s rehearsal, such as the Trojan horse-like infiltration of the city by Iron Guardists, and the English also being put in the place of the Trojans when the English Bar is taken over by Germans and their supporters. Like Troy, Manning’s Bucharest sits between Occident and Orient – its aspiration to become more European, that is to become more French, is quashed by Germany’s conquests:

For Bucharest, the fall of France was the fall of civilisation. France was an ideal for all of those who struggled against their peasant origin. All culture, art and fashion, liberal opinion and concepts of freedom were believed to come from France. With France lost, there would be no stay or force against savagery. Except for a handful of natural fascists, no one really believed in the New Order. The truth was evident even to those who had invested in Germany: the victory of Nazi Germany would be the victory of darkness. (*Great Fortune* 265)

Hence the appropriateness of Achilles played as a fascist. Treglown writes, on the appeal of Manning's novels, that "[v]icarious tourism is certainly part of it ... taking [readers] to what could seem like lost paradises just before they fell ..." (145). The problem with seeing the sequence as nostalgic is that, as I discussed in the previous chapter, Harriet's attempts at tourism are not successful. The production of *Troilus* also makes the point that in Bucharest we are not actually in a "lost paradise", but the scene of an already long-running conflict. *Troilus* is a challenging play, in which war is not a simple and honourable affair. It is very hard to interpret it as anything other than an anti-war play.

The play may be anti-war, but it is possible nevertheless to identify a patriotic function in its production. The very fact of the production of the play is an assertion of English culture, a celebration of Shakespeare, probably the most enduringly famous author in English literature, in the face of Romania's slide towards the German side. A comparison with the most famous Shakespeare production of the war, Laurence Olivier's film of *Henry V* (1944), is useful in considering this interpretation. In her study *Film Propaganda in Britain and Nazi Germany*, Jo Fox discusses the propagandistic aspects of this production: the script was edited to play down Henry's negative characteristics and any positive French ones, and to remove depictions of dissent within the English side and "the paeans to Divine Right" (239). "In short, *Henry V* was to be yet another endorsement of British wartime leadership through the mobilization of the past" (240) and "[t]he contribution to the war effort was a theme emphasized not only in Olivier's persona but in the publicity for the film" (241). Olivier suggested that before the film's release it should be screened to British and Allied troops, and "[t]he promotion of the film in local cinemas also capitalized on the past, with Two Cities<sup>15</sup> advising cinema-owners that 'there is an extraordinary comparison between Henry V's landing at Harfleur and the D-Day landing of the Allies'" (242).

*Henry V*, played as a story of a morally justified military victory over France, is probably the Shakespeare play most amenable to a simple patriotic production. The different mood of

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<sup>15</sup> The production company.



Guy's production, and his choice of play, can be explained by the period of the war in which it takes place. As the story of a siege (and played to sympathise with the Trojans), *Troilus* is more in keeping with the situation in 1940: both the English colony in Bucharest, and England itself, are besieged. *Henry V*, a story of conquest, appeared in 1944, although there were suggestions that its pro-military message was becoming inappropriate by then, when the emphasis should be on preparing for peace (Fox 242). Like *Henry V*, Guy's production shows that the devil is in the details when attempting to mobilise literature for patriotic purposes. The text has a tendency to escape from its intended use.

Any patriotic function of the play is undermined by the fact that the Greeks, traditionally associated with the English by anyone with a classical public-school education, come off as being in the wrong compared to the Trojans. Guy's production subverts the expectations of the "Organization" while being supported by its staff. Further, it is suggested that Guy's motivations are socialist, rather than connected to war propaganda at all, profits from the expensive tickets to the play going towards a scheme "devised by Guy and Dubedat for the housing of poor students. The fact roused more wonder than the price of the seats, for few Rumanians could believe that a group of people, even English people, would work so long and so hard at no profit to themselves" (275). The production of the play is an assertion of charity as well as "culture, art and fashion", and therefore opposes the cultural "darkness" of Nazism. But it does not fight unequivocally on England's side. While not prepared to advance the argument as directly as Waugh, in choosing to include a play in which amoral behaviour in war is so prominent, Manning hints that the assumption of the Allies' righteousness should be questioned.

### ***Troilus* in Bucharest (2): acting out desire**

As Meyers observes, in this part of the novel Manning "draws on Shakespeare's imagery and irony to portray her characters and structure her plot"; there is a connection to Shakespearean metatheatre ("play-within-the-play") itself (23). The "play within a novel" allows character traits to be exaggerated or revealed through the assignment of roles in the play. This is not quite the same thing as Lionel Abel's definition of metatheatre as "theatre pieces about life seen as already theatricalised" (60), but it certainly raises consciousness of the fictional frame of the narrative, as Ludovic and Spruce do in *Unconditional Surrender*. The play functions to bring out truths about the participants in an indirect way: "[e]xcept for Yakimov and Guy, no one was called upon to act very much. Each player was playing himself" (*Great Fortune* 280). (And Yakimov, like Ludovic, is a natural mimic.) The ironic appropriateness of Guy's filling of roles in the play, of "each player ... playing himself", is

generally well catalogued by Meyers. I will try to avoid repeating points that he makes, but there are a few casting choices which are worth discussing in slightly more depth.

Bella is chosen to play Helen of Troy. Bella, an Englishwoman married to a Romanian and fluent in the language, later chooses to remain in Bucharest under fascist government because, in Dobson's opinion, "she thinks she'll be a jolly sight more comfortable where she is" (*Spoilt City* 576). Her attractiveness and her willingness to passively accept a transition between sides in the war therefore neatly echo Helen's position in the Trojan legend. Bella's "over-fervent" welcoming of the news that Helen's is a short part (*Great Fortune* 230), and her performance in which "Harriet thought [she] looked like a Venus of a debased period; a great showy flower without scent" (279), confirms Harriet's (and Guy's) opinion of her as somewhat intellectually lightweight.

Thersites is played by Dubedat. In Inchcape's opinion, the part fits his unattractiveness: "[h]e certainly knows how to exploit his natural unpleasantness" (283). There is an additional level of dramatic irony because Thersites, a "slave whose gall coins slanders like a mint" (Shakespeare, *Troilus* I.iii.193) reveals Dubedat's true nature, foreshadowing his betrayal of Guy. The play supports Harriet's instinctive evaluation of Dubedat's morality, but Guy, who is playing Nestor and speaks this very line, cannot see the truths revealed in his own creation. It is up to the more conservative establishment figure Inchcape, who appropriately plays Ulysses, to have the correct opinion. Guy, like Nestor, is left to "apply" (I.iii.32) the words of others without being able to control his own manipulation.

In Bella's and Dubedat's cases, then, the play functions to foreshadow their behaviour later in the trilogy, and adds literary weight to Harriet's prejudices. The most important connection between the play and the lives of its players is provided by Sophie's performance as Cressida, and here the situation is a bit more complicated and has resonances which run throughout the sequence. Harriet's replacement by Sophie in the role adds further tension to her relationship with Guy, heightening her concerns about Sophie's attempts to win Guy away from her, and his tendency to make important decisions in a dictatorial fashion. We soon see that Sophie is entirely appropriate for a particularly unsympathetic interpretation of the role, and that Sophie acting Cressida is revealing her true nature, just as Dubedat and Bella do. When Harriet "face[s] Sophie in [the] part" (*Great Fortune* 240) at a rehearsal she observes that

Sophie, of course, had never lacked vanity. She had the usual Rumanian face, dark-eyed, pasty and too full in the cheeks, but her manner of seating and holding herself

demanded for her the deference due to a beauty. ... All the attention must be for her. When Guy gave it to Yakimov, she wanted it back again ... posturing her little backside, imbuing all her moves and *moues* with a quality of sensuous and lingering caress. She seemed to be in a state of inspired, almost ecstatic, excitement about it all. She wriggled with sex. (241)

And then in the actual shows

Sophie's performance was beyond expectations. As she sauntered and swayed with little meaningful looks and gestures, letting her pink chiffon drift, like a symbol of her own sexual fragrance, about Troilus or her man-servant or, indeed, any male who happened to be near, Harriet realised the girl was a born Cressida, a "daughter of the game". Even in her scenes with Pandarus she was not overshadowed. The two enhanced and complemented each other, a scheming partnership of niece and uncle set to devour the guileless and romantic Troilus. (278)

Sophie's chiffon as "a symbol of her own sexual fragrance" has an echo later in the Balkan trilogy when Harriet is dallying with Charles Warden

... a man-at-arms to whom was due both deference and privilege. She was her own symbol—the girl whose presence heightened and complimented [sic] the myth. Enchanted, she was almost immediately disenchanted .... She was against war and its trappings. She was thankful to be married to a man who, whether he liked it or not, was exempt from service. She was not to be taken in by the game of destruction .... Giving him a sidelong glance, she was prepared to ridicule him; instead, as she found his eyes on her, she felt warmed and excited, and the air about them was filled with promise. (*Friends* 741)

By again avoiding being drawn into a "game", here transformed into "a game of destruction", Harriet is indeed better off in what she calls "the real world" (*Great Fortune* 282). Her exclusion from the role of Cressida means she avoids the miasma of infidelity which then settles all too readily on Sophie. When Sophie replaces Harriet in starting a romance with Clarence, the substitution is neatly completed: Harriet has pulled back from the brink of becoming Cressida in real life.

However, the "excite[ment]" Harriet feels with Charles when she becomes "her own symbol" is one of several pieces of evidence that this straightforward consideration of the way the plot works out is not enough in exploring the significance of Sophie playing Cressida. It would be letting Harriet and Guy off too lightly to leave the analysis at this level. Meyers observes that "Sophie betrays Harriet in real life just as Cressida betrays Troilus in the play" (26). While it is certainly true that Sophie is interested in Guy and then marries Clarence, the extent of the betrayal is not Shakespearean, particularly given Harriet's earlier realisation of Clarence's flaws and rejection of his overtures. Like Ulysses in the "daughters of the game" (IV.v.63) speech which comes to Harriet's mind watching

Sophie, Meyers condemns Cressida/Sophie for this sexual betrayal, reaching slightly beyond the textual evidence to opine that “Sophie had probably been Guy’s lover before he married Harriet, though he never admits the liaison and Harriet never learns the truth about his past” (24). Throughout the Balkan and Levant trilogies there is a theme of suspicion of infidelity in the Pringles’ marriage, from both parties, yet the infidelity never progresses beyond a certain point: there is no physical intimacy, and, in Guy’s case, Harriet’s suspicions about Sophie and Edwina turn out to be incorrect anyway.

I am therefore inclined to disagree with Meyers’s supposition, and prefer to interpret this aspect of the play as an acting-out of a fantasy which runs, more or less subconsciously, throughout the entire sequence. Sophie’s description as “wriggl[ing] with sex” and having “sexual fragrance” in her performances emphasises the specifically sexual threat that she presents to Harriet. Throughout Manning’s six novels, we hear less about Guy’s and Harriet’s sex life than we do about Crouchback’s in *Sword of Honour*. Munton notes this absence of sex in the Pringles’ marriage:

The expression of desire is absent from the trilogies (only Aidan’s longing for Guy comes remotely close). It is extraordinary that there is no attempt to explore the sexual aspect of the Pringles’ marriage. In *Middlemarch* George Eliot finds ways to suggest Casaubon’s sexual failure, but Manning has less to say about desire in marriage than many novelists of the nineteenth century. The theme of unexpressed desire must be added to the political theme and the problem of Guy’s behaviour as the novels’ subject. (108)

I noted in the first chapter that even the virile young Simon is, first psychologically then physically, rendered impotent. Simon’s school-story romantic friendships with his subordinates are as innocent as Harriet’s succession of friendships with men, of which there is usually one per city: after Clarence and Sasha in Bucharest, Charles in Athens, Doctor Shafik in Cairo, and Halal in Damascus. As I mentioned in the second chapter, the only one of these relationships which is in real danger of becoming erotic is blocked by the intervention of the asexual son/brother substitute Sasha. Harriet’s removal from the role of Cressida at Guy’s behest is a statement of his fidelity, and of his wish to control *her* fidelity in a specifically erotic sense. This control of Harriet’s erotic life is part of the entire narrative’s suppression of erotic material. By the final novel in the sequence, *The Sum of Things*, in which Guy supports Simon during his rehabilitation in a completely unromantic

way,<sup>16</sup> Simon longs hopelessly for Edwina, Guy rejects Aidan, Edwina is married off, and the only successful erotic relationship in the Levant trilogy is ended by Castlebar's death, the suppression of erotic desire has become the underpinning of the entire plot.

Edwina, a woman who is interested only in sexual relationships (*Sum of Things* 417), and a more serious perceived threat to Guy and Harriet than Harriet's male friends, carries on from Sophie as the object of the infidelity fantasy in the Levant trilogy. Though not herself exotically foreign like Sophie, Edwina is described as having exotic, and specifically Greek, qualities:

A current of air, bringing into the scented room the fresh smell of the tamarisks, stirred the white dress that hung like a peplos from Edwina's wide, brown shoulders.

[Harriet:] "You look like the statue of Athena."

"Oh, Harriet!" Edwina, a beauty but not a classical beauty, laughed at this praise. (*Battle* 214)

The similes of the peplos and the statue of Athena, like the description of Bella as a "Venus" figure, invoke classical myth. The continuity between Sophie and Edwina is also apparent: like the statuesque Edwina, Sophie's "chief beauty was her figure" (*Great Fortune* 40). And as with Sophie, there is a sense that Harriet, with her flattery noted as being too strong by the comment that Edwina is not *actually* "a classical beauty", is herself creating what she sees.

The description of Edwina using imagery of the classical period is similar to the use of classical imagery in descriptions of Mrs Stitch in *Officers and Gentlemen*, who "rang a chime on her watch and set the cupids dancing" (461), and whose "eyes were one immense sea, full of flying galleys" (472) after her disposal of the envelope containing the dead soldier's identity disc. Mischievous desire is associated with the classical past. In Waugh's trilogy this desire is controlled by Virginia Troy's return to Crouchback and conversion to Catholicism. If Virginia is Helen of Troy, then Crouchback is a suitably ineffectual Menelaus, but his passivity is made irrelevant by Virginia's forced spiritual development. In Manning's trilogy the lack of such a controlling morality means suppressed desire for the exotic breaks out again as soon as it seems to be brought under control. Sophie and Edwina form a siren-like alternative to the realities of war throughout much of the Balkan and Levant trilogies.

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<sup>16</sup> Morris opines that "Guy's devotion to Simon is ... a new 'marriage' of sorts, not without the ambiguities or shortcomings of the old" ("Olivia Manning's *Fortunes*" 245). Given the lack of intimacy in the Pringles' marriage, I do not think this disagrees with my point.

In her disenchantment with her role as a “symbol” in relation to the “myth” she wraps around Charles, Harriet chooses reality over the fantasy world Sophie inhabits. Yet while from a rational standpoint she admires Guy’s non-combatant role, this is what allows him to pursue the imaginative schemes from which she is excluded due to her very rationality:

Dissatisfaction – chiefly Harriet’s – was eroding the Pringles’ marriage. Harriet had not enough to do, Guy too much. Feeling a need to justify his civilian status, he worked outside of normal hours at the Institute, organizing lectures, entertainments for troops and any other activity that could give him a sense of purpose. Harriet saw in his tireless bustle an attempt to escape a situation that did not exist. Even had he been free to join the army, his short sight would have failed him. He thought himself into guilt in order to justify his exertions, and his exertions saved him from facing obnoxious realities. (*Battle* 241)

Guy’s realisation later in the Levant trilogy that he has been denying reality (see above, p. 43) concedes accuracy to Harriet’s narrative perspective. That Harriet claims she can see the world accurately but is condemned to negative passivity, while Guy engages with the world in an idealistic way yet blinds himself to reality, is one of the central tragedies which lend the Balkan and Levant trilogies their melancholy tone. The fact that Harriet is completely wrong about Guy’s relationships with Sophie and then Edwina, despite claiming to exist in “the real world”, the generally misunderstood and unsatisfactory nature of desire, is another.

There is another interpretation of Cressida, of course, not as a willing “daughter of the game” but as a woman forced into an unappealing but necessary course of action due to callous political machinations. Just as Cressida is suddenly “[ex]changed for Antenor” (*Troilus* IV.ii.94), and has no choice but to join the Greeks, so we can understand Sophie’s compelling need to organise her escape from Bucharest. She has a Jewish mother, and has been involved in an anti-fascist magazine (*Great Fortune* 39; 66). Sophie’s personality might be unappealing, but her desire to obtain a British passport by any means, even marriage to Clarence, is understandable. Edwina’s interest in Guy is also understandable because she is trapped in an exploitative Cairo marriage market. It is interesting, given Guy’s fidelity despite Sophie’s and Edwina’s efforts, to consider whether Sophie’s interpretation of Cressida’s role is in line with Guy’s concept as director. The suggestion seems to be that Sophie herself creates a promiscuous Cressida, with Guy permitting but not encouraging the performance, confirming the pattern of their relationship outside the play. Like Ludovic’s writing, Guy’s creation miniaturises control which he exerts in the real world.

## The attractions of a literary career in the Levant trilogy

The entire treatment of literature in the Balkan and Levant trilogies can be read as a parallel exploration of the central theme of gender power relationships. As in *Sword of Honour* (see above, p. 57), war work is associated with the upsetting of conventional ideas of womanliness in the second trilogy. Angela Hooper states that “[t]o get into Mortimer’s outfit you have to be a lizzie or a drunk or an Irishwoman” (*Battle* 226-7). The “lizzie[s]” Mortimer and Phillips are treated sympathetically as representatives of an adventurous lifestyle inaccessible to Harriet, and they allow her single important independent act, her escape to Palestine. However, the unpleasant or at best melancholy nature of the gay characters in the novels—the Nazi Freddi von Flügel, pathetic Major Cookson and his sidekick Tootsie, tragic Aidan Pratt—argues against any attempt to claim that Manning’s novels propose a wholesale revision of the gender role distinctions from which Harriet, Sophie and Edwina suffer.

Teaching about literature is Guy’s war work, and Harriet is excluded from it. She states that her lack of family ties to England means “all I have is here” (*Great Fortune* 267). Yet despite this profession of the centrality of her relationship with Guy, she is excluded from involvement in her husband’s career, or a satisfying career of her own, due not just to her gender, but also conventional social expectations and snobbery, and the depression that evidently develops due to her withdrawn life. Meeting Mortimer and hearing about her driving work, “Harriet thought enviously: ‘They belong to a world at war. They have a part in it: they even die,’ but Harriet had no part in anything” (*Battle* 229). Despite his progressive political beliefs, Guy has ideas about marriage which are traditionally Christian or, perhaps more aptly given his occupation, an unattractively literal version of Catherine Earnshaw’s romanticism in *Wuthering Heights*: Harriet relates to Aidan an occasion on which Guy claims “you’re part of me – I don’t have to be courteous to you” (*Danger Tree* 165). On the connection between the plaintive tone of Harriet’s narrative and her marriage, Janice Rossen observes that “it is difficult for a reader to feel compassion for someone who speaks as self-pityingly and sarcastically as Harriet does. ... The main problem with Harriet’s predicament is that she never allows herself to admit that she has been wrong [in marrying Guy]” (24). Rossen’s opinion about the awfulness of the Pringles’ marriage may be a bit too strongly put, but it is certainly true that it would be difficult to describe the marriage as a happy one. My evaluation of the relationship certainly runs closer to Rossen’s than to Morris’s, who states that at the conclusion of the sequence the Pringles have found “some sense of permanence in a marriage acceptable to both” (“Olivia Manning’s *Fortunes*”

251). With the possible exception of Bella's, there are no satisfactory marriages in the trilogies: not for Angela, Sophie, Edwina or Harriet.

The Balkan and Levant trilogies' passing comments on more modern writing show it is something in which Harriet is interested, yet which is controlled by men. Clarence's dismissal of Lawrence, Woolf and Maugham is the most substantial commentary on modern authors, respectively: "dark gods, this phallic stuff, this—this fascism!" (*Great Fortune* 187); "all her writing is so diffused, so feminine, so sticky. It has such an odd smell about it. It's just like menstruation" (187-8); "[h]e's simply the higher journalism" (188). Clarence has tried writing, but "had given up trying because, after all, what was the point in being a second-rate writer?" and prefers reading detective novels (187). Clarence's scorn for his abandoned creative career hints at the source of his melancholy; he has by this stage become as inactive as Harriet. Harriet's interest in modern literature is shown in this scene: unlike Clarence, she finds Lawrence's *Kangaroo* "vivid and exciting" (187). Later she gives Guy a copy of *Finnegans Wake* for his birthday (*Danger Tree* 99), and there are various passing references to her reading.

The most important use of literature apart from the *Troilus* production occurs through the character of the poet Bill Castlebar in the Levant trilogy. He has the things that Harriet lacks: financial security (through his relationship with Angela), a sex life, and an interesting occupation:

Every night, [Angela] insisted on at least one of Castlebar's own limericks and she was as indignant as he was that the Cairo poetry magazine *Personal Landscape* had rejected them as too obscene for publication.

Harriet had discovered that beneath the mists of alcohol, Castlebar's creativity had its own separate life. During their days at The Cedars, he was, he said, working on a poem. ... "... Before lunch, when I'm shaving, I put it up on the shaving-mirror and look at it, and I alter a word here and there, and gradually it builds up. In a couple of weeks, it will be a poem."

"When it's finished, what will you do with it?"

"Just keep it, and one day I'll have enough for a slim vol." ...

She envied him his talent and decided that an occupation so intensive it made all else unimportant was very much what she needed herself. She wondered if she could write. (*Sum of Things* 485-6)

Castlebar's literary career is described in practical, rather than romantic, terms. Like Ludovic, he is compelled to write, but, unlike Ludovic, he has social skills. His obscene limericks associate him with the sexual desire unleashed by *Troilus*. Angela's and Castlebar's relationship reflects Harriet's and Guy's marriage in the sense that it is its opposite: while the Pringles are married yet unhappy, Angela and Castlebar are happy yet having an affair;



Angela supports Castlebar rather than the other way around. Angela's wealth gives her independence unavailable to Harriet, or any other woman in the sequence. It is no wonder the narrative seems to envy both her and Castlebar.

Harriet's envying of Castlebar's idyllic albeit alcoholic lifestyle, her "decid[ing] that [such] an occupation ... was very much what she needed" and her "wonder[ing] if she could write" hints at an explanation to one of the most puzzling questions which arises if we think of Harriet's character as realistic: what does she do with all her spare time? It is tempting to answer the question by treating the novels autobiographically, as I have when considering Ludovic's *raison d'être*. Manning was, of course, spending her spare time in Bucharest, Athens and Cairo writing, and sometimes writing for the magazine that was probably the model for *Survival*: "Lawrence Durrell wrote to Tambimuttu, the editor of *Poetry (London)*, 'I see that the hook-nosed condor of the Middle East Olivia Manning has been writing about us in *Horizon*. She's determined to be *dans le mouvement*'" (Braybrooke and Braybrooke 113). Manning does not include an author-cipher like Ludovic; instead the narrative is left hinting at a career withheld, presumably, for the sake of separation between life and fiction. In her conversation with Clarence and her admiring of Castlebar's career, there is a suggestion of a response from Harriet to Guy's control of literature (exemplified by the *Troilus* production), but it is denied to her. She is condemned to remain passive, defined only in relation to Guy.

### **Education, elitism and propaganda in Manning's and Waugh's sequences**

The importance of the disjunction between Guy's public persona and Harriet's disgruntled cynicism about this persona cannot be overemphasised when considering Manning's sequence. The values of Guy's altruistic socialism imbue his teaching as well as his theatrical productions, in the inclusiveness of their casting (with the exception of Harriet, of course) and their audience. His productions later in the sequence are variety revues, "Maria Martin" and music-hall style entertainments put on for the troops which appeal to an even wider audience than the production of *Troilus*. Regardless of Harriet's scepticism about his workload and extracurricular activities, Guy's professional competence is never doubted and contrasts starkly with his opportunistic colleagues and adversaries:

[Alan:] "The School's becoming a laughing-stock. There are all sorts of stories going round about the lectures. Apparently Lush suggested that Dante and Milton might have met in the streets of Florence. When one of the students pointed out

that there was about three hundred years between them, Lush said: ‘Crumbs! Have I made a clanger?’” (*Friends* 648)

Professor Lord Pinkrose may be more knowledgeable, but we do not find out if his status derives from intellect or solely from social place. He only ever delivers his lecture on Byron to a tiny, elite audience in Athens, and the reader is withheld from having an account of this lecture at first hand. At his second, fatal, lecture, in Cairo, he is concerned only with whether the Egyptian royal family will be present in the audience, having none of Guy’s idealistic belief in the virtue of popular education: “[y]ou must telephone the king’s chamberlain, Pringle. I insist. I *insist*. Make it clear that this is no ordinary lecture. I’m not just a don, I’m a peer of the realm. The palace owes me the courtesy of royal patronage” (*Battle* 352). His subsequent, accidental assassination before he can give the lecture is the final darkly comic silencing of Pinkrose’s voice. Having employed his assassins, and stubbornly refusing to cancel the lecture when Pinkrose has his final tantrum, Guy symbolically supplants Pinkrose by ushering him, in all innocence of intention, to his death.

Treglown notes that Guy’s “unshakeable belief that putting on a production of *Troilus and Cressida* in Bucharest as the Iron Guard takes over, or teaching *Finnegans Wake* to his last two remaining students in Alexandria, are important activities” forms a large part of the affectionate side of his portrayal (151). Comparing the treatment of teaching and literature again reveals differences in political sympathy between Waugh’s and Manning’s sequences. While Waugh uses the socialist Spruce and, to a lesser extent, the working-class and criminal Ludovic as satirical targets, both of whom are capable at their work, the principal targets in the Balkan and Levant trilogies are Pinkrose, and the manifestly incompetent Lush and Dubedat. For Manning, personal merit can transcend class, but Waugh is unable to concede this.

The attention paid to teaching and Guy’s popularity as a teacher contrasts with *Sword of Honour* where Crouchback’s initial feeling that he has found a happier adolescence in the army is let down by futile training courses. The only other kind of education depicted in *Sword of Honour* is Mr Crouchback’s war work teaching Latin at a Catholic prep school, which, though benign, is also ineffectual: his pupils avoid work by encouraging him to tell stories about the history of Broome. The trilogy’s attitude towards state education is expressed in regret that children have left a slum in London during the war: “the Pied Piper of the state schools had led them all away to billets and ‘homes’ in the country, and only the elderly and the slatternly remained of its inhabitants” (*Unconditional Surrender* 555).

In Manning's sequence, literature has a practical function in propaganda as well as in education, a function which Waugh denies to *Survival*. After *Men at Arms*, there are no references to Truslove: no memories of patriotic old stories. A crucial difference between Manning's and Waugh's sequences is the closeness of the threat of German invasion throughout the entire Balkan trilogy, and the first half of the Levant. In *Men at Arms* the threat of invasion is not taken seriously, and it recedes in the rest of Waugh's trilogy as the war advances. Guy's teaching and productions are a response to a real threat. Despite the complexity of the messages of the play, *Troilus* unites the members of the English colony in their shared knowledge of Shakespeare. We do get a glimpse of contending German high culture in the scene at a concert featuring a Beethoven piano concerto which the Pringles inadvertently attend and then walk out of, to Pinkrose's chagrin (a concert which is made overtly Hitlerian in the BBC television adaptation by being changed to Wagner). But most of the German cultural life we see in the Balkan trilogy is crude and degenerate by contrast: Freddi von Flügel's over-decorated villa and sleazy Japanese erotica; the patriotic songs when the English Bar is occupied by Germans; the "savagery against which [Guy] had declared himself" (*Spoilt City* 572) when the Iron Guard ransack the Pringles' flat, damaging his books. While *Survival* is used as a means to satirise the literary world and its relationship with the state, Manning is happy to allow English culture and those who promote it superiority over the enemy, even if Guy's employment of culture is never straightforwardly in favour of English power.

The scepticism Harriet, and Manning's narrative voice, feel about the worth of Guy's teaching and cultural promotion does in some sense parallel the scepticism *Unconditional Surrender* attaches to the production of *Survival*. In both cases, scepticism seems to be partly a product of envy. The trickster figures of Ludovic and Castlebar are free to escape from the realities of wartime life: their literary output is an expression of personal intellectual freedom, a freedom denied to Crouchback and Harriet. For Guy, literature is the subject of his career, a career which also provides an escape from wartime realities. Guy's production of *Troilus* makes political points but inadvertently reveals truths about desire which destabilise his relationship; Ludovic and Spruce destabilise the moralistic narrative certainty of the concluding volume of Waugh's trilogy.

## Conclusion

In the preceding chapters I have discussed Manning's and Waugh's sequences' treatments of heroism and sacrifice, the decline of British power, the literary scene, and the teaching of literature during the war. My analysis of these themes has supported the fairly uncontroversial proposition that the dominant mood of both authors' novels is, like *The Death Wish*, melancholy. The start of the war is the period of greatest excitement, promising adventure or opportunity for heroism: as the war progresses, disillusionment grows, to the point where victory cannot be celebrated. The very chronology of the sequences confirms their avoidance of victory and peace, with Manning's sequence concluding in 1943 and Waugh's last substantial episode focusing on Crouchback's bad experiences in Croatia in 1944.

A lot of my discussion of these sequences has rested on the ways in which they depict conflict between conservative and progressive politics. This conflict, arising from and pushed along by the war yet in a separate sphere to the fighting itself, is more important to the novels than the historical facts of the course of the war. In both cases, the narrative consciousness of the novels favours the conservative side. In *Sword of Honour* this favouritism is more strongly evident; the conflict is portrayed as having a theological basis, and Crouchback is an allegorical figure opposed to the secular world. In Manning's sequence, the conflict is based on personality as much as politics, and is expressed in the relationship between the progressive Guy and the conservative Harriet. Munton's analysis of Manning's novels concludes by saying they "validate an emotional and political conservatism [and] are a fitting summary to the generally repressive interpretation of the war made by post-war epic fiction" (108). I concur with this analysis in that I think Manning's sequence validates Harriet's cynical point of view, and believe it also applies to Waugh's, which validates the superiority of Crouchback's Catholic morality.

Where I think Munton's conclusion can be extended and modified is in noting the fact that the assumptions of the conservative narrative viewpoints are undermined in various ways. Accusing these novels of "conservatism" suggests that they should value tradition, but this is not usually the case. In Waugh's trilogy, and to a lesser extent in Manning's sequence, old patriotic models of heroic behaviour are discredited through being associated with the pointless sacrifice of the First World War. Heroism is futile or ethically dubious on the modern battlefield. The breakdown of the class system as it functions in the British army is

mourned by Waugh, but both authors suggest that the boarding-school-like traditions of the army were somewhat ridiculous anyway.

Institutions such as the army and the “Organization” would seem logical candidates to celebrate from a conservative point of view, but in both Manning’s and Waugh’s sequences these important career-shaping institutions are shown as being essentially amoral. What is most traditional about them is ridiculously ineffective, even if treated affectionately by Waugh, yet as they respond to modernity they are vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous individuals. Those central characters employed in challenging jobs, Guy Pringle, Crouchback and Simon, are shown to maintain their moral integrity through loyalty to their colleagues and friends, but their loyalty is generally unrewarded. The attempts to rescue Sasha Drucker and the Kanyis are the most notable examples of this theme of individual charity contrasting with institutional indifference.

Guy Pringle and Crouchback spend the war working for organisations about whose value they are increasingly sceptical. This development of disillusionment is reflected on a larger scale in Manning’s depiction of Guy’s work as an English teacher, serving an empire which is crumbling and whose values he disagrees with. By contrast with imagined or remembered images from an idealised colonial or ancient past, present-day Africa is fatal to Waugh’s Apthorpe and Manning’s Castlebar, and nearly fatal to Harriet as well. Cynicism about the current face of imperialism is shown through the desire of Manning’s Egyptians to get rid of the English, and Waugh’s Croatians’ ability to extort aid from the Allies.

It could be argued that this conflict between individuals and institutions and scepticism about tradition implies a radical individualistic agenda, but this would be to overstate the importance of the inadequacy of Britain’s army and empire in the novels. The crucial role played by particularly socially or politically déclassé characters such as Trimmer, Ian Kilbannock, Gilpin, Toby Lush and Dubedat in spoiling the army and the “Organization” argues against a radical reading. In the domestic realm, too, through Virginia’s return to Crouchback, his marriage to Domenica, and Harriet’s return to Guy, challenges to traditional patterns are raised but then quashed.

The continued survival of the Pringles’ marriage is an example of a statement of socially conservative intent, overarching the entire sequence, but then undermined by the great majority of the narrative itself, by Harriet’s unhappiness and the presentation of various possibilities of escape. The rapprochement of Crouchback and Virginia suggests a similar overarching theme in *Sword of Honour*, but it is not contentious: it is catholically fortuitous.

Like the return to Broome, it shows that in Waugh's trilogy response to the problems of the world at large is possible only in miniature, in enclaves of conservatism that defy political realities. Crouchback's class and religion offer an escape in which the moral standards of the trilogy can survive, but the Pringles' class background does not permit this. It is a crucial factor in the melancholy of Manning's sequence that opportunities for social change during the war which might provide a happier life for Harriet are denied as part of her, and the narrative's, opposition to Guy's political idealism.

Celebration of victory is withheld because the central characters do not consider themselves part of the social majority. The Pringles are excluded due to their lack of class status and wealth, Crouchback because he has too much class status and wealth. Like Harriet, Crouchback is caught in a bind: class loyalty requires him to support the establishment of his country, yet the establishment lets him down through embracing progressive politics.

The conclusion to Waugh's trilogy suggests that, despite some aspects of conservatism being discredited, it is an ultra-conservative version of the past, rather than the future, which triumphs through its very survival. More materially appealing examples of the attraction of the past are Crouchback's memories of Kenya and Virginia, and Harriet's desire to spend her time abroad as a tourist, her yearning for a mythically distant past. The anarchic creativity of literature also undermines the melancholy of the narrative present. Ludovic, Everard Spruce and Bill Castlebar represent alternative ways of dealing with the war by pursuing careers pointedly disconnected from the war effort. In Waugh's trilogy, Crouchback's desire for the war to be a righteous spiritual struggle, in which heroism is really possible, is mirrored and subverted by the aesthetic and atheistic desires of Ludovic. Even Guy's popular production of *Troilus and Cressida* in *The Great Fortune* subverts its patriotic function, and reveals truths about the inadequacy of the Pringles' relationship.

The satirising of Ludovic and Everard Spruce is an attempt to discredit anarchic literary freedom and confirm the correctness of the Catholic moral of the story, yet it is the anarchic satirising of institutions which lends Waugh's trilogy its charm. In Manning's sequence, Harriet's subconscious desire for liberation from sexual and class prejudice is countered by conservative desires to do with marriage and financial security. The facts of history will inevitably frustrate the expression of these contradictory desires. Manning's and Waugh's sequences express regret for defeat of their narrative possibilities in the face of historical victory.

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