

What do you think spies are: priests, saints and martyrs? They're a squalid procession of vain fools, traitors too, yes; pansies, sadists and drunkards, people who play cowboys and Indians to brighten their rotten lives. Do you think they sit like monks in London, balancing the rights and wrongs? (*The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* 246)

This chapter aims to undertake a chronological evaluation of the western tradition of spy fiction in English with a view to situating John le Carré in a larger context. This chapter proposes, in the process, to examine the theoretical implications of both the activity of spying and its representation in imaginative literature. This chapter further proposes to examine the structure of the spy novel, its generic conventions, issues of ideology, and possible instances of resistance to the norm. To this end, this chapter will focus on issues relating to the generation and reception of both British and American spy fiction.

This chapter contends that spy fiction evinces a wide range of interests, attitudes, and ideologies within its generic format, and that the spy novels of John le Carré constitute a significant contemporary turn in the historic development of spy fiction. This chapter contends further that the spy novels of John le Carré manage, in the end, to blur the distinction between generic fiction or popular fiction on the one hand, and the serious “literature of involvement” on the other.

2.01 Espionage, the Spy and Spy Fiction

The pursuit of espionage and the literary representation of this activity have invited considerable interest both in terms of public discourse and as a field of critical enquiry. Glenn Hastedt’s definition of espionage may provide a useful starting point:

Espionage is the act of secretly collecting information. Americans more commonly refer to it as spying....By necessity espionage occurs out of sight; only occasionally does it burst out of the shadows and into the open. However, even then a full picture rarely emerges. People find bits and pieces of evidence that point to an explanation for why an act of espionage occurred or how it was discovered, but important questions frequently remain unanswered long after the fact (Hastedt 1).

Hastedt’s definition, which stresses the covert nature of espionage, also manages to imply both the half knowledge it exudes, and a general sense of curiosity regarding its

agents, functions, and detailed effects. It is perhaps out of this public desire to know more about spies and their activities that spy fiction or espionage fiction is born. The fact that spy fiction is frequently subsumed into other categories such as “crime fiction,” or, more commonly, the “thriller,” may be seen to indicate some common characteristics.

Tzvetan Todorov’s “structuralist account” of detective fiction appears to distinguish between the “thriller” and the “spy novel,” without, however, specifically analyzing the latter. He posits two superimposed stories common to the detective novel and the “thriller”; one about a crime and the other about an investigation. He suggests that in detective fiction the story about the crime is suppressed at the expense of the second story about the investigation, thus making “curiosity” the point of interest that leads the reader from effect to cause. Conversely, in the “thriller,” the readers are “no longer told about a crime anterior to the moment of the narrative; the narrative coincides with the action” and the reader’s interest is sustained through “suspense” as the narrative moves from cause to effect (Todorov 140). Spy fiction appears to conform to Todorov’s formula for the thriller, insofar as the narrative focus is on current action, leading to a significant future event, with the protagonist involved in either the process of accomplishing it, or alternately, the investigation leading up to its prevention. Yet, this is just one of the characteristics the spy fiction holds in common with the thriller.

David Seed highlights the fact that in spy fiction, as in the “thriller” or the adventure novel, the protagonist is implicated in the action (Seed 115), and unlike Todorov’s classic detective, not “immunized” against physical injury. Michael Denning’s account of the “spy thriller” formulates it in terms of a narrative based on paranoia and conspiracy, where all events may be traced back to an evil source that must be both revealed and defeated (Denning 46).

Although the lines distinguishing “spy fiction” from the “thriller” have frequently been blurred, it has still been possible to argue that the latter is marked off by its relatively clear emphasis on “a rising curve of danger, violence and shock” (Glover 137). Thus, depending on the specific narrative organization and effects, it is possible to distinguish between the quasi literary “spy novel,” such as Graham Greene’s *The*

Human Factor (1978), on the one hand, and the sensational “spy thriller” like Frederick Forsyth’s *The Fourth Protocol* (1984) on the other. Further, both these sub-genres could be subsumed under the rubric of “spy fiction”.

“Spy fiction,” then, may be described as a generic category which seeks to include all imaginative narratives detailing and describing human beings involved in covert activity, particularly the clandestine collection and transmission of information, and the destabilization of nations, institutions and even individuals deemed to be adversaries. Intrinsic to this genre therefore is the depiction of activities which transgress moral, ethical and legal codes (Cawelti and Rosenberg 13). It will be interesting to see how different writers of spy fiction engage with these ethical and legal issues at various points in the historical development of the genre.

The activity of spying, particularly its strategic pursuit and imaginative representation, is rooted in human history. In fact, events such as the Biblical account of Moses sending out spies to survey the Canaan (Aronoff 1), and accounts of spying in the Homeric epics (Cawelti and Rosenberg 37) are seen as illustrative narratives. Interestingly, the Chinese text *Ping Fa* or *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu (circa 450 BCE), is presented as the first textbook of espionage (Woods 6). However, the account of Hanumān’s foray into Lanka in the *Sundar Kānda* of the Sanskrit epic *Rāmāyana* (see Griffith 1392-1496), believed to have been composed between the fourth and fifth centuries BCE (Narayan xxiii), seems to provide a more appropriate example of spy fiction since it is an imaginative representation that anticipates two key tropes of the genre: the collection and conveyance of secret information, and a heroic assault by a lone agent upon the enemy’s strategic resources. The fact that the narrative framing takes place in a context separated from open warfare is important.

2.02 The Birth of Modern Spy Fiction: Spy Fiction and Empire

It is suggested that spy fiction is a genre developed and perfected by the British, though there is no unanimity among scholars on this point (Furst “Introduction” viii). Brett F. Woods points out that James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Spy, a Tale o the Neutral Ground* (1821) predates Kipling’s *Kim* (1901), the first British spy novel, by eighty years, but admits that, “In the early 1900s, when the espionage novel eventually did emerge, it did so from a firmly British base and British writers were to

hold a monopoly over the form for many decades” (Woods 10). Cooper’s tale is set during the American War of Independence and deals with the intrigues of the American, English, French and native-American parties involved in the conflict. Harvey Birch, the spy, is a marginal figure, a scruffy peddler, who is shown to move unmolested between British and colonial (American) lines while secretly acting as an informer to aid the new American republic. Birch, embodies a new kind of self-effacing and selfless heroism. It has been suggested that Birch is a remarkable character inasmuch as he implies an alternate discourse of heroism to that of the soldier in the battlefield (Seed 116). But a long hiatus follows thereafter, and it is not until the dawn of the twentieth century that the first couple of the acknowledged spy novels appear in England, which includes, besides *Kim*, Baroness Orczy’s *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1903). The latter book describes the adventures of a heroic Englishman’s success in rescuing aristocrats from Revolutionary France.

Although David Seed believes that the action in a spy novel is self-evidently political since it involves national rivalries (Seed 115), Michael Denning states that in the Cold War spy novel, “its political subject is only a pretext to the adventure formulas and the plots of betrayal, disguise, and doubles which are at the heart of the genre and of the reader’s investment” (Denning 2). In fact, he insists that British spy novels are essentially “cover stories” designed both to screen the decline of the British empire and to explain it in terms of betrayal (Denning14). Jon Thompson seeks to establish a direct link between the culture of imperialism and spy fiction: “The modern spy novel...takes imperialism, with its attendant systems of domination and political intrigue, as its necessary precondition” (Thompson 85). Spy fiction is also remarkable for its unique blending of documented facts and imaginative fiction. As Brett Woods observes:

Drawn from reality, revealing what is generally veiled, it seeks to provide a brief glimpse into society’s political underbelly through the application of international intrigues, questionable alliances, and, on not few occasions, spirited doses of sex, violence and, of course, murder. (Woods 1)

The fact that public interest in espionage at the start of the twentieth century may be traced to the actual Dreyfuss spy scandal in France, has been mentioned by several commentators (Panek 7; Woods 9). The spy narrative, therefore has always been subject to the claims of real life..

The British spy novel of the 1900s is also seen to blend specific historical events with discrete strands of several earlier narrative traditions. Apart from the Dreyfuss affair, one of the principal narrative traditions cited as being instrumental in its formation is the imperial Victorian adventure story for boys, which includes Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* (1887), and Henry Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1888). (Thompson 85) Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901), which is now generally recognized as the first major British narrative with a spy hero, is perhaps the best known of these.

Kim is, in a way, a paean to British imperial glory refracted through eyes of its hero Kimball O'Hara, an orphaned European boy who is forced to live by his wits in the streets of Lahore. His British (Irish) antecedents, suntanned 'native' appearance and his knowledge of local Indian dialects, lead to his recruitment by the Imperial British Secret service. What perhaps clinches this pact is Kim's ultimate ideological identification with the imperial forces. The imperial agent, Mahbub Ali, is convinced that Kim would never tell him a lie, though he "could lie like an Oriental" (Kipling 25). After suitable education and training Kim becomes involved in the "The Great Game" of imperial intrigue "that never ceases day and night, throughout India" (Kipling 60). He travels across the vast northern territories of India in the guise of a wandering lama's disciple, while helping the secret service to defeat the occasional plot by a venal Indian prince or spies in the service of Czarist Russia. Kipling's novel is acknowledged to have been more than just a spy novel. Instead of the element of suspense that characterizes most spy narratives, Kipling chooses to focus on the epiphanic realization of Britain's imperial glory. With the vast sweep of its depiction of Imperial India, its heterogeneity, and curious blend of the spiritual and the mundane, *Kim* conjures up the illusion of India as a timeless territory, likely to remain a crown possession forever.

Kipling's use of the "The Great Game" metaphor to describe the intrigues between imperial Britain and Czarist Russia for political control over India and the North West Frontier (now Afghanistan) can not only be seen to have gained currency but also to have been picked up by later practitioners of spy fiction. Indeed, phrase serves to highlight on the one hand, the imperialist assumptions underlying the narrative, the insistence on a schoolboy code of honour and fair play with its inevitable associations with athleticism and sporting activity on the other. The novel itself serves as a model

for what Jon Thompson calls ‘the tradition of the heroic spy novel’ (Thompson 83). It has also been suggested that *Kim* provides several other key ingredients of the spy fiction genre: “Primarily it gave to espionage fiction the suggestive pieces of a formula in which exotic locales, travelogue, heroic action, caricatured depiction of the enemy, and ultimately political affirmation could all be set to work” (Woods 24). But whereas Kipling’s novel suggests a sense of complacency regarding the durability and stability of Britain’s imperial glory, a contrasting sense of doubt and disquiet seems to impel several of its immediate and well known successors.

2.03 The Invasion Alarm and the Heroic Spy Novel

The complicity of the spy novel with imperial ideology is revealed through the representation of Russia in *Kim* as a rival imperial power and a potential threat to be effectively contained through spies. However, the rising industrial and military might of Germany in the later years of the nineteenth century seems to provide not only a new adversary, but also an undercurrent of paranoia which becomes a characteristic of the nascent genre.

Complicity with imperial ideology is historically supplemented by an invasion paranoia, which in turns spawns a series of xenophobic invasion narratives which includes George Tomkyns Chesney’s *The Battle of Dorking* (1871), William le Queux’s *The Great War in England in 1897* (1894), and Robert Erskine Childers’ *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903). In these narratives we see Britain presented as unprepared and vulnerable in the face of powerful enemies with access to new scientific discoveries and superior technology. William le Queux’s serialization of *The Invasion of 1901* (1906) in the pages of the popular Daily Mail is an updated form of his earlier invasion novel. Works such as these le Queux novels, for example, which employ the “war prophecy” mode, have been noted for creating a “spy fever” in Britain, and eventually influencing the establishment of the iconic MI6, or the Secret Intelligence Service in 1901 (see French 355-70; also Davies 34).

It may not be out of place here to examine here Robert Erskine Childers’ *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903), often seen as the most accomplished illustration of the invasion narrative. It is possibly the first true espionage novel on account of the extraordinary concentration of theme and treatment, and the suspense generated and sustained by its

narrative. The novel centers round a yachting trip around Germany's Baltic coast by two young Englishmen; Carruthers, a bored civil servant on a holiday, and his friend Davies, a keen sailor. Their innocuous trip results in their accidental discovery of a German plot to invade England. Their subsequent dash back to England and the furious pursuit by the murderous spy, Dollmann, a renegade Englishman, provides the rousing conclusion to this landmark work.

The use of authentic charts and maps is an interesting feature added to the genre for later improvisation. As Eva Horn points out, by virtue of being a *mise-en-scene* of the maps detailing the depths and shallows of a strategic space, the novel itself becomes secret intelligence (Horn 129). It should be mentioned here, however, this feature is in keeping with the ideological complicity of the spy novel with imperial geography and cartography. While the charts of the Frisian isles depicted by Childers help establish a rare plausibility in the narrative, they also operate as Ideological State Apparatuses. Childers can be also be seen attempting to disavow the typical sensationalism of the le Queux style spy novel by having one of its heroes mocking the spy figure as, "those romantic gentlemen that one reads of in the sixpenny magazines", and with a penchant for carrying cameras disguised as tie pins" (Childers 81-82) . The technology that surrounds the image of the romantic spy hero is also subtle evoked here.

This disavowal notwithstanding, Childers does present in Carruthers and Davis a pattern of amateur spy heroes. Here we see ordinary Englishmen drawn into adventure and intrigue by accident; but the point to be noted is that these men prevail over overwhelming circumstances owing to their natural resourcefulness and superior moral fibre. This can be seen to provide a model for later writers like John Buchan to build upon, especially when spy fiction is required to serve the state as an Ideological State Apparatus.

E. Philips Oppenheim's *The Mysterious Mr. Sabin* (1905), like Lessingham in *The Zeppelin's Passenger* (1918), and Count Leopold von Ragastein in *The Great Impersonation* (1920), can be seen to introduce yet other strand in the spy novel, the figure of the impossibly mannered diplomatic spy. This figure is regularly involved in schemes to jeopardize British interests by passing on sensitive government documents

to foreign powers. This particular strand in the spy narrative is discernible in at least four of the Sherlock Holmes stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, including *The Naval Treaty* (1893), *The Second Stain* (1904), *The Bruce-Partington Plans* (1912), and *His Last Bow* (1917). Interestingly, in this last work, Holmes himself is shown acting as a double agent, providing disinformation to a German spy, von Bork, on the eve of World War I. This, in a way, shows that the consistency attributed to the spy hero in matters of loyalty is a matter of convenience, validated in specific contexts.

It is interesting to note that in most of the early novels of espionage, the professional spy is projected as a base and ignoble character, motivated by money alone. In sharp contrast, aristocratic persons engaged in espionage, whether English, German, or Japanese, are shown to be patriots in so far as they do it out of a sense of duty and refuse to accept money in return. In fact this willingness to participate in the espionage game without mercenary motive may be seen to mark off the noble English spy from his sordid foreign counterpart. In Oppenheim's *The Great Impersonation*, Prince Terniloff's admission, "I detest espionage in every shape and form, even where it is necessary" (Oppenheim 216) can be seen to reflect a widely felt sentiment which is echoed even in Childers's *The Riddle of the Sands*.

As in most early narratives with imperialist underpinnings, Oppenheim's fiction is riddled with a casual racism. Sir Everard Dominey, hero of *The Great Impersonation*, marvels that an old German schoolmate can now bear to spend time training "filthy blacks" in Africa (Oppenheim 10). Both le Queux and Oppenheim wrote over a hundred novels each, although little of their prolific output appears to be remarkable either in terms of plausible depictions of espionage or of neatness in execution. These works seem to be, for most part, mystery-romances of high society aimed at lower-middle class professional women. Leroy Panek observes: "The appeal to the shop girl or the typist, the obsession with depicting the High Life, the stereotyped characters of the self-sacrificing woman, the cad and the spotless hero which we find so often in le Queux and Oppenheim all come from the Victorian love romance" (Panek 6).

The emergence of this new class of female readers, like the parallel rise of working class male readership for action packed "thrillers" or "bloods" can be traced as much to the effects of the Education Act of 1870 as to the new system of circulating

libraries (Denning 18). But whereas Panek dismisses the works of both le Queux and Oppenheim as “unrefined and unmitigated twaddle” (Panek 5), David Seed suggests that there is more to their writing than meets the eye. With regard to *The Great Impersonation*, he says: “Ultimately Oppenheim is using his protagonist to personify the best qualities of Germany in order to dramatise their collapse in the World War” (Seed 117). Whatever the quality of their writing, the fact that they did have an impact on the socio-cultural life of Britain in the first half of the twentieth century can be seen in ironic inter-textual responses in the works of their successors. In Ian Fleming’s *Moonraker* (1955), for example, a policewoman alludes to this impact on the cultural imaginary of the spy, “people that Phillips Oppenheim had dreamed up with fast cars and special cigarettes with gold bands on them and shoulder-holsters.” (Fleming *Moonraker* 161) Undoubtedly, there is the element of a self-deprecatory irony in this allusion, insofar as the details are truer of Fleming himself, rather than any of Oppenheim’s creations. In particular, the xenophobia and racism underlying the narratives of le Queux and Oppenheim continue to resurface in the subsequent works of writers such as John Buchan and “Sapper” McNeile.

2.04 John Buchan and the Recurring “Clubland Hero”

The figure of the heroic spy reappears in John Buchan’s *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), now regarded as a seminal influence on the modern British spy novel. Following Richard Usborne’s label *Clubland Heroes* (1953), it has been customary to consider Buchan together with two other writers—namely, Dornford Yates and “Sapper” H.C. McNeile—since they all produced spy fiction featuring spirited amateurs belonging to the leisured classes who dabble in intrigue motivated chiefly by patriotic motives. An unflinching similarity of social class and consciousness among the protagonists apparently unites the works of all three, whereas William’s Okewood and Fleming’s Bond are disqualified by their professional status. Buchan’s hero, Richard Hannay, is another resourceful amateur; a Scottish mining engineer newly arrived from South Africa, bothered by leisure and lack of friends, who accidentally gets involved in a bid to thwart a group of German spies in London from stealing Britain’s naval defense plans. Hannay, who features in four further adventures including *Greenmantle* (1916), *Mr Standfast* (1919), and *The Three Hostages* (1924), not only sets the pattern for the

typical British spy hero, but also becomes the first of the recurring figures in spy fiction, anticipating James Bond and George Smiley, among others.

It would be useful, at this point, to examine at length a few exemplary texts belonging to the tradition of the heroic spy in order to analyze their points of convergence and departure.

In *Greenmantle*, for example, the first of two Buchan novels set against the backdrop of World War I, the narrative is placed firmly in a real historical-political context. Hannay is discovered along with his old friend, the chameleon-like Sandy Arbuthnot, recuperating from wounds received in the Battle of Loos, which places the action sometime after September, 1915. Since his last appearance as a civilian engineer freshly returned from Bulawayo, Hannay has now achieved the rank of Major in the Lennox Highlanders. But for all this, he remains modest and conscious that compared to his organized friend Sandy, he is “only the dabbler” in matters of the state (Buchan 42). Once again bored by inactivity, he is roped in by Sir Walter Bullivant of British Intelligence, who asks him to investigate rumours of a German plan to foment an Islamic *jihad* in the empire’s Middle-Eastern possessions. As in his first adventure, Hannay is equipped only with a set of cryptic phrases obtained by the British War Office, the proper interpretation of which becomes vital to the success of his mission. Whereas the use of the enigmatic verbal puzzle has been pointed out as a set device used in most of the Hannay books (Panek 50), the complex process of encryption, interception, timely decryption and swift transmission has been an essential element of intelligence gathering in both factual and fictional espionage. (Horn 181) The moment Hannay accepts this dual task of decryption and covert penetration into enemy territory, therefore, he becomes transformed from the heroic adventurer of colonial adventure fiction or even a normal War time combatant into a secret agent, operating beyond the pale of established legal protection or ethical sanction.

Hannay sets off, disguised as a Dutchman, Cornelius Brandt, to Turkey via Portugal, Netherlands, Germany, and the Austro-Hungarian empire, whilst his old crony, Sandy and an American collaborator, John Blenkiron, head for the same destination through other routes. In a narrative driven greatly by coincidences (Panek 48), he meets another old friend, Pieter Pienaar, in Lisbon, and convinces him to join the adventure.

Hannay's foray into dangerous enemy territory leads to a series of close encounters and hair-raising escapes, including confrontations with villainous Germans of both sexes—namely Colonel Ulric von Stumm and Hilda von Einem—and even *tête-à-tête* with the Kaiser himself. Whereas the cold and beautiful Hilda Von Einem derives from the alluring temptresses of le Queux's novels, Buchan creates in von Stumm a prototype of the monstrous German which persists in spy narratives a full decade beyond the end of World War II:

He was a perfect mountain of a fellow, six and a half feet if he was an inch, with shoulders on him like a shorthorn bull. He was in uniform and the black-and-white ribbon of the Iron Cross showed at a buttonhole. His tunic was all wrinkled and strained as if it could scarcely contain his huge chest, and mighty hands were clasped over his stomach. That man must have had the length of reach of a gorilla. He had a great, lazy, smiling face, with a square cleft chin which stuck out beyond the rest. His brow retreated and the stubby back of his head ran forward to meet it, while his neck below bulged out over his collar. His head was exactly the shape of a pear with the sharp end topmost. (Buchan 64-65)

From the overbearing physical presence to the menacing, bestial appearance, this portrait may be seen to recur in innumerable spy fiction villains, for instance in Valentine William's characterization of the villainous Dr. Adolf Grundt in *The Man with the Clubfoot* (1918) and even in Ian Fleming's portrayal of Hugo Drax in *Moonraker* (1955). By contrast, Buchan shows the German emperor in an oddly sympathetic light. He presents Hannay's view of the emperor thus: "He was no common man, for in his presence I felt an attraction which was not merely the mastery of one used to command" (Buchan 97). However, to be fair to Buchan, this isn't the only positive portrait of German characters in the book. Hannay encounters an elderly German railway engineer whom he declares "a good fellow, a white man and a gentleman" (Buchan 85) and a group of Friesian sailors who remind him of English lads of the Essex coast (Buchan 138). A poor Bavarian war widow nurses Hannay back to health when he falls to a bout of malaria after attacking von Stumm, running away and spending a night in a snow-filled hole,. The experience affects Hannay sufficiently to ruminate on the folly of war:

What good would it do Christian folk to burn poor little huts like this and leave children's bodies by the wayside? To be able to laugh and to be merciful are the only things that make man better than the beasts. (Buchan 127)

The ambiguity inherent in these instances ultimately underscores the divided nature not only of the spy's loyalty, but the illusory nature of the spy's identity also (Hepburn "Intro" xiv). The matter of Hannay's identity is doubly emphasized through his repeatedly emphasized skill with disguises. He poses first as a Dutchman for the benefit of the Germans as well as a group of English prisoners inside Germany. Next he poses as a member of the German Secret Service before the poor widow and then again the captain of a train of Essen barges on the Danube carrying armaments for Germany's Turkish allies, which he boards to reach Constantinople. In Constantinople Hannay becomes, by turns, an American engineer and a German soldier for the benefit of the Turks. It is here that he teams up with his friends, who also adopt various guises to evade capture by Turkish forces, defeat Hilda von Einem's bid to rally the Muslim populations against the British Empire, and eventually contribute to the defeat of the Germans against Russians in the Battle of Erzurum. The defeat of Hilda von Einem is achieved through the stratagem of Sandy Arbuthnot adopting the disguise of the new leader of the Islamic world, the wearer of the Green mantle. This disorienting shifting of identities as a strategic maneuver, albeit derived partly from Kipling's *Kim*, becomes a standard trope in the spy narrative after Buchan.

The climactic battle of Erzurum is decided on the strength of secret German battle plans bravely conveyed to the Russians by Hannay's Boer friend Peter Pienaar, who crawls across enemy lines. Yet, this traversing of an uncharted, secret-filled, necessarily "dangerous space" (Horn 119) only replicates and reiterates the earlier journey of Hannay across Germany, where he too gathers "secret intelligence" (Horn 101) by reconnoitering the enemy in moments of conflict, correctly interpreting intercepted ciphers and transmitting privy information about the German plot. The process of obtaining and transmitting the collected intelligence to the appropriate authorities in the spy narrative involves personal danger to the spy's corporeal existence, as well as scope for the demonstration of "bodily durability" (Hepburn 5). Hannay repeatedly displays his physical endurance not only through his recuperation from disease, but by overcoming the larger von Stumm in a fistfight, for instance and numerous chases where he manages to stay just out of reach of his pursuers, including one across the rooftops of Constantinople (Buchan 269-270). Indeed, there are

recognizable patterns of flight and pursuit, violence and physical endurance in all the Hannay books (Panek 55) which may be seen becoming standard formulaic tropes of the spy narrative thereafter.

In this context it is also useful to remember the frequency of journeys and flights undertaken by Hannay the spy by means of mechanized transport. Quite apart from the voyage on the river barge, he travels by train in the company of von Stumm and escapes from the German at least thrice using stolen motor cars. The technological trappings of modernity which have facilitated communication also make it possible for the spy to transgress political divisions at will. This aspect of the spy narrative also becomes part of the spy narrative after Buchan. Thus trans-national journeys by ship or train become an important part of novels such as Graham Greene's *The Stamboul Train* (1932), Eric Ambler's *Journey into Fear* (1940) and Ian Fleming's *From Russia with Love* (1957).

Another defining element of Buchan's spy novels is the typically colonial attitude that presumes and professes proprietary knowledge over other people and cultures. Hannay's sympathy towards the German widow and her kindness notwithstanding, he imagines that the poor German woman could not possibly have the "liberal allowance soldiers' wives get in England." (Buchan 127)

Such presumption, so much a part of the imperial baggage, comes easily to Hannay. For instance, he feels competent to speak authoritatively and dismissively about the German army:

...under-officers of the good old burly, bullying sort I knew well. That was the cement which kept the German Army together. Her men were nothing to boast of on the average; no more were the officers, even in crack corps like the Guards and the Brandenburgers... (Buchan 74)

In his guise of the Dutchman Brandt, he says, "I know the ways of the Kaffir as no Englishman does. We Afrikanders see into the black man's heart, and though he may hate us he does our will." (Buchan 70) The totalizing nature of the imperialist gaze is available in sundry other pronouncements, such as the one Hannay/Brandt makes about Africans:

They are all African. You can bear me out. All African peoples are alike in one thing - they can go mad, and the madness of one infects the others. The English know this well enough. (Buchan 84)

Reflecting an attitude described as Orientalism by Said, Hannay initially imagines Constantinople to be another “Fairytale Eastern city” (Buchan 159), but is soon disappointed and cannot see much beyond wretchedness:

But it was the rabble that caught the eye—very wild, pinched, miserable rabble. I never in my life saw such swarms of beggars, and you walked down that street to the accompaniment of entreaties for alms in all the tongues of the Tower of Babel. (Buchan 193),

In another scene that sets up intertextual resonances in the postcolonial context, While walking together through the city streets Hannay’s American friend Blenkiron, unable to converse with a Turkish policeman who accosts them, throws him a few cigars. The policeman grins and catches them in the air, allowing them to go their way (Buchan 194), This imperial discourse of the venal Easterner elicits very different responses from Ian Fleming and le Carré, as the next chapter shows. The implicated nature of the race-nation-national interest ideology is perhaps most clearly manifested in lines spoken by Hannay’s friend, Sandy Arbuthnot, in a priggish rebuff to Hilda von Einem: “You must know, Madam, that I am a British officer (Buchan 325). In the heroic spy novel, there is never any doubt that the spy is motivated by patriotism.

Buchan is also the writer who converts Kipling’s metaphor for spying into a generic commonplace. Sir Walter Bullivant, Head of the British Intelligence services, is shown saying to Buchan’s hero Richard Hannay, as he sends him off on another adventure: “It is a great game, and you are the man for it, no doubt” (Buchan 15). The reason Bullivant gives for picking Hannay is his apparent ordinariness, for he suggests, “soldiering today asks for the average rather than the exception in human nature.” (Buchan 15) Citing the memorable phrase “the chancelleries of Europe” from *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, John Atkins suggests that another genre commonplace Buchan helped perpetuate is the device of having the fate of nations, or even the world, hanging on the actions of a single heroic individual (Atkins 63) In Denning draws on his reading of Lukacs in interprets this as the inscription of an ideological ‘world historical’ significance to the actions of an ordinary individual in a world where human agency is becoming highly suspect (Denning 14).

Although the typical British spy hero tends to represent “the high born Englishman, strong in his ordinariness” (Atkins 55-56), Buchan’s insistence on ‘English’ rather

than the more appropriate 'British' to describe his hero is noted by Atkins, who draws attention to the irony inherent in the "Celticness [sic] of his proud Englishness" (Atkins 55-56). Despite the accent on Hannay's ordinariness, Buchan's hero remains self-conscious about being above average. He is offended for instance, by the fact that the beautiful Hilda von Einem remains indifferent to his charms:

To be valued coldly by those eyes was an offence to my manhood, and I felt antagonism rising within me. I am a strong fellow, well set up, and rather above the average height, and my irritation stiffened me from heel to crown.
(Buchan 219)

This element of the spy hero being a particularly distinguished specimen of average manhood can be seen becoming increasingly underlined in the works of subsequent writers until the spy becomes remarkably iconic and loses all semblance of ordinariness altogether.

The patriotic motive in Buchan's quintet of novels featuring Hannay is complicated. Although Hannay does take up missions at the behest of Sir Walter Bullivant, senior official of the Foreign Office, in *Greenmantle* and *Mr Standfast*, frequently, the personal antagonism between the British hero and his adversaries tends to overshadow the patriotic dimension (Atkins 35). As it has become evident, the Hannay novels also introduce the element of spy heroics, including dangerous missions inside enemy territory, as a collaborative endeavour. Hannay, despite his facility with disguise and languages, is not a solitary hero. He is helped in his adventures by a memorably realized group of loyal friends which includes the aristocratic Sandy Arbuthnot, the Boer scout Peter Pienaar, and the American John Blenkiron. One further point of interest is the fact that Hannay and his friends are not a-historic characters inasmuch as they are shown to gradually achieve rank and status and also to mellow with age as the series progresses. However, Buchan's fiction evinces the same the pervasive racism of much early spy fiction:

"'Europe is a poor cold place,' said Peter, 'not worth fighting for. There is only one white man's land, and that is South Africa.' At the time I heartily agreed with him." (Buchan 9).

Such instances of racism appear even more disturbing when it is rendered casually. In *Greenmantle*, for instance, Hannay speaks quite smugly about his own managerial skills, "I hadn't been a nigger-driver for nothing." (Buchan 141)

This ideology of the racial/ethnic superiority of the White man is alluded to by John le Carré who uses a line from Buchan's *Mr Standfast* as an ironic epigraph to the second of three sections in *The Looking Glass War* (1966): "There are some things that no one has a right to ask of any white man" (*Looking* 29).

The awkward nature of Hannay's relationship with Mary Lamington, who later becomes his wife, reveals Buchan's inability to portray women convincingly. At the same time, it also points to the reluctance of the spy fiction writer to let go of the convenient female prop. In fact, the stereotyping of women, is generically balanced in Buchan's popular fiction by the traditional school boy adventure romance, containing "the whole cultural baggage of Victorian masculinity—honesty, manliness, reverence, good sportsmanship" (Panek 46). As Panek suggests this link explains Buchan's consistent depiction of a close-knit circle of male intimates—bound by a code of honour and united in a morally edifying adventure—as also the somewhat incongruous "athletic heartiness" of the female characters (45-46). Buchan's consistent use of a hunt or chase sequence between the hero and his adversary, which invariably ends in the victory of the hardier English hero (Atkins 36), becomes another motif that sustains the Boy Scout type of male heroes in many later writers, most memorably Geoffrey Household in the 1950s and 60s.

Panek attributes this to the influence of Lord Baden-Powell (B-P)'s scouting tales, especially his autobiography, *My Adventures as a Spy* (1915). He suggests that the cult of physical hardiness celebrated in these books and inculcated through the English public school system offered too tempting a market for Buchan, the young Scotsman on the make, to resist (Panek 39). Another pertinent point relates to the attitude towards spying itself. B-P departs from the standard insistence on spying as base activity by asserting; "A good spy—no matter which country he serves—is of necessity a brave and valuable fellow" (Baden-Powell 10). It is possible to argue that his elaboration on the theme holds clues to the changing perceptions regarding the spy, especially among adolescent males who would in time become substantial consumers of the "bloods" (Denning 47):

"Except in the case of the traitor spy, one does not quite understand why a spy should necessarily be treated worse than any other combatant, nor why his occupation should be looked upon as contemptible, for, whether in peace or

war, his work is of a very exacting and dangerous kind. It is intensely exciting, and though in some cases it brings a big reward, the best spies are unpaid men who are doing it for the love of the thing, and as a really effective step to gaining something valuable for their country and for their side.” (Baden-Powell 17)

The emergence of the ‘good’ spy adds value to the portrayal heroes in spy fiction, even though the former is not admitted as a regular spy. Yet, some of the moral design of spy fiction is hinged on the adventures of the good spy.

It should be pointed out that apart from the first three Hannay novels the business of spying remains a relatively insignificant adjunct to other concerns in Buchan’s work. However, it should also be noted that Buchan invests more in characterization and suspense, and a better realized immediacy of setting, which also marks his spy novels off from the tales of Le Queux and Oppenheim. If Greene’s allusion to le Queux in *The Ministry of Fear* suggests a nightmarish world of grotesque intrigue, then John le Carré seems to acknowledge Buchan’s influence on his chosen genre more than once: for example in *The Honourable Schoolboy* (1973), where Smiley adopts the pseudonym ‘Mr. Standfast’, and again in *The Tailor of Panama* (1996), where ‘Buchan’ is the code name given to the expatriate English tailor and reluctant British spy Harry Pandel.

Buchan’s introduction of a set of recurrent characters can be seen to influence a series of novels featuring the monstrous German spy Dr. Adolph Grundt alias ‘Clubfoot’, written by Valentine Williams (b. Douglas Valentine). The first of these, *The Man with the Club Foot* (1918), emerges just three years after the first Hannay adventure, and evinces a similar anti- German sentiment typical of the war time Britain. In subsequent adventures such as *The Return of Clubfoot* (1922), and *The Gold Comfit Box* (1932), with the German threat removed, the Byronic figure of Clubfoot serves to provide variations on another standard spy fiction trope: of one extraordinary individual posing a threat to the English nation or to western civilization. Clubfoot’s repeated defeats at the hands of a variety of stalwart British heroes serves also to underscore the aggressive nationalism this variety of spy fiction seeks to cater to. This, in a way, prepares the ground for later adoption of postcolonial settings and characters in the spy novel.

2.05 Sapper and Fleming: The Cult of Violence

The racist ideology underlying much of early spy fiction may be seen to find its crudest expression in the works of Herman Cyril “Sapper” McNeile (1888-1937). Sapper’s hero, Captain Hugh “Bulldog” Drummond, makes his appearance in *Bulldog Drummond* (1920). In the next three adventures, *The Black Gang* (1922), *The Third Round* (1924), and *The Final Count* (1926), McNeile establishes his recurring pair of protagonist and antagonist; Drummond and his archenemy, Carl Petersen. After Petersen is killed off in the fourth book, Irma Petersen, a female substitute, is introduced in *The Female of the Species* (1928), a female spy cat in the mould of a *femme fatale* or a deadly woman, a type which is also to be found in Hilda von Einem from Buchan’s *Greenmantle*.

Quite in the spirit of Buchan, Sapper introduces his hero as a British male belonging to the comfortably off class—a demobilized soldier to boot—suffering from the tedium of peacetime in the aftermath of World War I and thirsting for action. Like Hannay, Drummond is surrounded by faithful coterie of reliable friends (Panek 78). References to the fact that he was “fag” (McNeile 34) to Sir Bryan Johnstone, chief of the Criminal Investigation Department, also connect him to the code of the public school educated male. His upper class roots are evident both in references to his titled relations such as Lady Meltrose and scenes depicting his interplay with his valet Denny, which are powerfully reminiscent of Bertie Wooster-Jeeves scenes in P.G. Wodehouse. At times when Drummond is not up to his neck in action, he is shown lolling about, cane in hand, at the Ritz or the Regency Club, where a decent policeman sums up his class as, “idle, perfectly groomed, bored” (McNeile 96).

In Drummond’s second outing, the narrative focuses on a threat to Britain that remains largely located within its territorial space rather than in the outer fringes of the imperial possessions. A rag-tag group of foreigners, Italians, Germans, Greeks and Polish Jews included, are engaged in anarchist activity in the industrial towns of England. Then members of this anarchist group begin to disappear mysteriously, or end up being tossed out on the street after being thrashed, whipped or kicked within an inch of their lives. The police are bemused when it becomes clear that this is the work of a mysterious gang of anonymous black clad vigilantes who take it upon themselves to show the Bolshevists (sic) the error of their ways. There is even an uninhabited island to which the worst of the abducted offenders are ferried off and submitted to the rigors of a truly classless and moneyless society (McNeile 280). The

narrative leaves no doubt as to the identity of the gigantic leader of the black gang; none other than Bulldog Drummond. It also transpires that the arch-villain behind this “organised and well-financed conspiracy to preach Bolshevism in England” (McNeile 270) is Drummond’s nemesis Carl Petersen newly arrived in England to avenge his earlier defeat. The two adversaries engage for a time in a game of cat and mouse but matters come to a head when Petersen stoops to abduct Drummond’s wife Phyllis for leverage. The climax is set in a remote Manor converted into headquarters for the apparently alarming Proletarian Sunday School, complete with an electrified fence. The electrified fence, incidentally, functions as a cipher for at least two issues central to spy fiction. First, it becomes emblematic of the role played by technology in espionage, and second, it demarcates and encloses space designated as enemy territory. Therefore, even though Drummond never moves out of England in his covert battle against anarchists, he still forays into the unknown and dangerous when he climbs through it. The fence operates both as a barrier, preventing access and as an enclosure, deterring egress. Drummond is shown reconnoitering the premises both for a way in, and later, also for a way out when pursued by armed thugs and one huge hound. He experiences anxiety as he ponders whether or not to try and escape while it was still dark:

There was a risk—a grave risk. It meant going out into the open. It meant exposing himself for a considerable period.” (McNeile 246)

Drummond’s anxiety mirrors the feelings of the spy as he prepares to negotiate the metaphoric and political barriers of the modern nation state, such as the checking of train tickets and the stamping of passports. In the final fifty pages of the action, Drummond undertakes a one-man nocturnal assault on the villain’s lair, where he stabs, throttles, electrocutes, shoots, skewers and otherwise dispatches innumerable thugs before sparing Petersen’s life on his wife’s request, thus ensuring a third round in the next installment. The graphic depiction of violence here far exceeds Hannay’s war time efforts and attains a celebratory exhibitionism that becomes ritualized in time. In all this, Drummond is motivated partly by a mixture of patriotism and xenophobia and partly by a desire for “a certain amount of sport.” (McNeile 102)

It is this insistence on the sporting aspect of Drummond’s defense of Britain that connects him to the Great Game. Whereas it has been pointed out that the very titles of the early Bulldog books serve to remind the reader of the sport of boxing (Panek 74), in *The Black Gang* there are numerous occasions where Drummond imagines his

battle of wits with Petersen in terms of a game of cards. In the events leading up to the novel's denouement, Drummond plans his next move even as he sits captive before Petersen:

Just as in Bridge there comes a time when to win the game one must place a certain card with one of the opponents; and play accordingly—so that card must be placed in Peterson's hand. If the placing has been done correctly, you take your only chance of winning: if the placing is wrong, you lose anyway. (McNeile 252).

The extended card game as a formulaic prefiguring of the spy hero's final victory over this enemy as well as metaphoric representation of the Great Game of spying can be seen occupying a significant space in works like Fleming's *Goldfinger*.

Like Hannay, Drummond is a figure of the average British male with “no claims to brilliance” (McNeile 102) but gifted with a shrewd common sense and having an ugly face “rendered utterly pleasant by the extraordinary charm of its owner's expression.” (McNeile 34) Yet his extraordinary qualities are repeatedly emphasized. His gigantic size finds repeated mention as does his brute strength and remarkable agility. These, when considered together with his transparently patriotic motives and a willingness to render service without reward or recognition, align him with the notion of a heroic defender of British interests. However, the issue of his secret identity, and the fact that he operates in the shadowy nexus between legal sanction and criminal activity that truly connects him with the figure of the spy. There is even an instance of a coded message—a telephone number—is transmitted by Phyllis and decrypted by Drummond while they are both being held at gunpoint by the enemy. Further, the narrative insistence on Drummond's success in averting Petersen's “gigantic attempt at world revolution on the Russian plan” (McNeile 271) remains consistent with the spy fiction trope of ordinary individuals effectively influencing and directing the course of events having world historical significance. This, it is useful to remember, also corresponds to the function of ideological covering spy fiction performs in apparently returning human agency into a world where the totality of human relations have been disorienting and indecipherable (Denning 14).

Drummond also remains a fascist figure who abducts and metes out summary justice to all persons deemed undesirable in Britain, which includes all manner of foreigners.

Names become a marker of ethical quality, English names being liable to appropriation and contamination by the alien other. Thus, in the narrative those charged with concocting “foul schemes” in their “slimy minds” (McNeile 18), like the indoctrination of young English minds, fomenting industrial unrest and the planting the odd bomb in the waterworks, not only bear exotic names such as Waldock, Zaboieff and Zadowa, but are also marked by their aversion to “soap and water” (McNeile 55). In the particular case of the Count Zadowa, who poses as a moneylender William Atkinson, the narrative stresses the disjuncture between the sacrosanct English identity and the corrupting alien cultural practice of usury: “the appearance of Mr. Atkinson’s minion caused the prospective borrower to wonder how he had acquired such an aggressively English name” (McNeile 55). Usury becomes inextricably linked to Jewishness and corruption. Drummond unambiguously declares to a couple of “Hebrews,” My friends and I do not like your trade, you swine” (McNeile 18-19) before proceeding to lash them with a cat-o’-nine-tails.

The sympathies of Sapper’s hero, however, lie firmly with the forces of Capital. Drummond dismisses representatives of the British laboring classes with unabashed contempt as:

those who are jealous of everyone better placed than themselves, but who are incapable of trying to better their own position except by the relative method of dragging back their more fortunate acquaintances; the look of little men dissatisfied not so much with their own littleness as with the bigness of other people. (McNeile 12)

And yet, the same narrative seems to describe with perfect clarity the very type of the ordinary British citizen, “nondescript specimens of humanity...that may be seen by the thousand hurrying into the City by the early business trains.” (McNeile 12) The conservative pro-Capitalist bias of Sapper’s spy fiction is also directly available in his portrayal of the “unmoral” (*sic*; McNeile 74) Member of Parliament, Charles Latter, who addresses gatherings of striking coal miners, among others things, even though his “his principal supporters in his constituency were coal owners.” (McNeile 76) From this inherent ideological antipathy towards the laboring classes comes the desire to hang the domestic disaffection on alleged foreign sources, as the Chief of Criminal Investigation does at the end, blaming Russia for sponsoring

the appalling spread of the Proletarian Sunday Schools, with their abominable propaganda and their avowed attempt to convert the children who attend them

to a creed whose beginning is destruction and whose end is chaotic anarchy.
(McNeile 271)

Sutherland refers to the persistence of this racist and xenophobic ideology of the spy hero directed against specific targets: “Bulldog’s violence is directed, typically, against cosmopolitan Jews. As with their lineal descendant, James Bond, saving England from the un-English is the great project” (Sutherland 92). The complicity of spy fiction with a certain ideology of race, class and masculinity is evident from the popularity of Bulldog Drummond adventures in cinema and radio.

The impact of Buchan and Sapper on the course of popular fiction from the 1920s to the 1950s is manifest in the writings of several now forgotten practitioners of the genre, especially Francis Beeding, Sydney Horler (1888-1954), Manning Coles, Peter Cheyney (1896-1951), and Geoffrey Household (1900-1988). Much of the works of these writers retained key ingredients derived from Buchan and Sapper, such as the heroic ‘ordinary Englishman’ at the centre of the action, the fantastically resourceful German/Nazi or later Communist villain, the frequently abducted beloved of the hero, the gruff but caring superior paternal figure presiding over the British Secret Service and the overriding notion of espionage as a ‘game’ played in accordance with a code of honour.

The tradition of the heroic spy may thus be seen to follow a formulaic pattern, which continues well into the aftermath of the World War II and the height of the Cold war period, when the arrival of Ian Fleming’s James Bond transforms the spy into a glamorous icon on a scale unprecedented in the global cultural imaginary.

In the period that spans the inter-War years to the rise of Bond mania in the Cold war era, the status of the spy novel in the domain of popular culture is influenced by real world factors. Stories of Cold War era espionage, often in the form of sensational revelations of identities by double agents, both British and Russian, are frequently cited to explain the explosion of spy fiction in England. Even more importantly, the rise in the popularity of spy fiction also appears to inject into the Cold War body politic unforeseen ideological imperatives and shifts, particularly interrogations of popular self-fashioning. It is instructive to note that the production of and improvisations in the spy novel continue through the inter-war years. However, the

genre cannot be said to have dominated the field of popular fiction until the heightened tensions of the Cold War era, particularly the exposure of the several senior British Intelligence officers as Soviet spies, create a fertile ground for espionage fiction in Britain. Historically, the defections of Guy Burgess and Donald MacLean to the Soviet Union in 1951, and Kim Philby, in particular, ten years later, have been cited as signal events heralding a new found public interest in espionage activities (Koger 5565). What needs to be added is the rise of a new reading culture in smaller towns of England, identified by Denning and others through three concurrent processes in post war Britain: expansion of the public library system, establishment of “book clubs” as arbiters of literary taste, and the publication of Pan paperbacks and other low cost editions in the 1960s (Denning 18-19).

It is in these circumstances that the rise of the bestseller acquires a new turn. Given the institutionalization of popular fiction in the form of low-cost paperbacks, there is also the additional factor of fan clubs and opinion polls determining categorization and choice of books and authors within what was once, clearly, a non-hierarchical space, completely market dependent, and in an academic sense, non discriminatory. The market gets increasingly complicated through the intervention of the apparently non-judgmental fan. The example historians have traditionally used is President Kennedy’s self-confessed affair with Bond books (Seed 125). Another outcome of this market phenomenon is the introduction of serials and sequels, as if to signal the end of the innocent popular bestseller. It is as if popular fiction recognized the need to adopt the stratification of canonical and classical texts admitting into the body of spy fiction an unmistakable element of class. This dissertation recognizes that the admission of hierarchy into an otherwise hierarchy-innocent product such as the popular spy novel is not accidental. Instead, we see this as a mode of appropriation in competitive markets. In other words, spy fiction is not only admitted into the world of market economy and competitive circulation, but also serves the interest of the market itself.

Among the most notable beneficiaries of the new conditions of production and circulation are Desmond Cory and Ian Lancaster Fleming. Cory’s *Secret Ministry aka The Nazi Assassins* (1951), and Fleming’s *Casino Royale* (1953), start at least two long running series of spy novels. The last of Cory’s fifteen Johnny Fedora’ novels,

Sunburst (1971) appears five years after Fleming's final effort *Octopussy and The Living Daylights* (1966), but it Fleming who is credited with single-handedly, reviving "popular interest in the spy novel, spawning legions of imitations, parodies, and critical and fictional reaction" (Woods 114). It is necessary to recall that the transformation of Fleming's Bond into a global icon is a complex narrative that combines deft market moves, the magic of cinema, and popular imagination. It must also be remembered that the figure of James Bond created by over a score of feature films differs drastically from that available in the novels of Ian Fleming. Raymond Benson pleads, somewhat unconvincingly, for a distinction between the realistic literary Bond and the superhuman filmic version (Benson 175). Lars Ole Sauerberg makes a similar claim of relative realism in the early novels (Sauerberg 11)

Fleming's *Goldfinger* (1959) again revives the established trope of the megalomaniac and physically monstrous foreigner, intent upon destabilizing the West/ the world. This type, in fact remains a standard villain in Fleming—from the gray skinned Mr. Big in *Live and Let Die* (1954), the scarred and splay-toothed German giant Hugo Drax in *Moonraker* (1955), to the half Chinese scientist in *Dr. No* (1958). The eponymous villain in the seventh book of the James Bond series, Auric Goldfinger—rich as Midas and afflicted by a host of problems including a fear of open spaces, deafness, and an inferiority complex on account of his short stature and disproportionate body parts (Lindner 40)—has been memorably described as a "walking tautology," (Ladenson 186). Obsessed with gold and all things golden, he is suspected of being a gold smuggler with Soviet connections by British Intelligence and it falls upon James Bond to investigate his affairs. However, it turns out that Bond has already had an unpleasant encounter with the magnate in Mexico over a crooked game of Canasta, catches Goldfinger cheating and makes him pay. Bond and Goldfinger meet a second time over a game of high stakes golf in an exclusive English country club, where the latter again cheats, like most Bond villains (Britton 94). Bond wins another crooked game by cheating a bit himself. Here, the depiction of Bond as a *habitué* of Clubland is significant insofar as it locates him in the tradition of Buchan and Sapper. Like the ingenious spies of the Hannay-Drummond mould, Bond surreptitiously plants a homing device on Goldfinger's Rolls Royce and follows it to France where he discovers that the car is the key to the gold smuggling operation.

But he is caught snooping by Goldfinger's deadly Korean factotum, Oddjob, and a thoroughly exasperated Goldfinger then gives memorable voice to his suspicions:

'Mr Bond, they have a saying in Chicago: "Once is happenstance. Twice is coincidence. The third time it's enemy action.'" (Fleming *Goldfinger* 222)

The book, incidentally, is divided into a three part structure corresponding to the Happenstance-Coincidence-Enemy Action pattern of the encounters between the two adversaries. Bond is then forced to accompany Goldfinger to New York, where the latter unveils a plan to rob the US gold reserves at Fort Knox with the help of organized crime in America. Bond, the resourceful spy, eventually manages to get a secret message through to his old friend Felix Leiter, former Central Intelligence Agency operative and turns the tables on Goldfinger. The narrative ends with a climactic fight-to-the-death between the Bond and Goldfinger, high up in a jetliner shortly before it crash lands onto the sea. Once more Bond prevails, killing both Goldfinger and his Korean henchman, but only because all through he receives crucial help from three beautiful women, two of whom he manages to seduce.

Together with the hideous villains of foreign origin the figure of the heroic spy, engaged in the defence of the nation's interests, resurfaces in this tale. Once again we find the narrative emphasizing the individual faced with a crisis of global proportions: "Goldfinger was not making the money for himself. He was making it for the conquest of the world!" (Fleming *Goldfinger* 93). Unlike Hannay and Sapper, however, Bond is the archetypal professional, routinely being assigned a new task by his superior M in every novel. The repetitive nature of this trope in the spy narrative may be judged from Alfred Hitchcock's reluctance to shoot such a scene for his spy film *Torn Curtain* (Truffaut and Scott, cit in Britton 89). In *Goldfinger*, this occurs in Chapter 6. Unlike Hannay, who had scraps of cryptic verse and numerals to help him on his way, Bond' is aided by technology and specialized intelligence. This takes the form of a special session with the Head of Research at the Bank of England who briefs him on the gold trade, and a department to prepare a dossier on Goldfinger, not to mention a state-of-the-art "Identicast" portrait (Fleming *Goldfinger* 63). But perhaps the defining piece of espionage technology on display—later taken up in the film version and expanded infinitely thereafter—is the Aston Martin car equipped with a tracking device (Benson 313) which allows Bond to follow his quarry all the way to Northern France.

Throughout chapters thirteen and fourteen, Bond's elaborately detailed drive through various Swiss-French motorways replicates the cartographic survey of alien terrain in spy fiction. The clearing of travel documents at Le Touquet merits a mention in the novel, which marks the spy's action of surmounting a barrier to penetrate alien territory. But the fact that he drives a high-end sports car through scenic European locales transforms the journey itself into a hedonistic consumerist catalogue of exotic hotels, restaurants, food, wines and women. Bond catches a brief glimpse of a young girl who overtakes him on the motorway and starts fantasizing:

Bond thought: That would happen today! The Loire is dressed for just that - chasing that girl until you run her to ground at lunch-time, the contact at the empty restaurant by the river, out in the garden under the vine trellis. The *friture* and the ice-cold Vouvray, the cautious sniffing at each other and then the two cars motoring on in convoy until that evening, well down to the south, there would be the place they had agreed on at lunch - olive trees, crickets singing in the indigo dusk, the discovery that they liked each other and that their destinations could wait. (Fleming *Goldfinger* 187).

But the spy remembers his mission just in time and breaks off: "Bond smiled at his story and at the dots that ended it. Not today. Today you're working. Today is for Goldfinger, not for love." (Fleming *Goldfinger* 188). The spy becomes a site for conflicting and conflated identities, where the leisured consumer tourist and the professional become indistinguishable. In keeping with the convention of the heroic spy novel, however, the spy hero falls back on the ideology of nation and national interest as the principal motive for action. One further point that must be remembered about in the Bond novels is the centrality, on the one hand, of women as objects of consumption and on the other, recreational rather than procreative sexual relations, is manifest in the presence of as many as three different women in *Goldfinger* who become objects of Bond's sexual desire. He is shown successfully seducing two of these while the third is emphatically projected as a lesbian who rejects Bond and dies as a result (Ladenson 193). In fact, Bond's first encounter with Goldfinger is sandwiched between a rather lavish meal where he eats "like a pig" (Fleming 27) and the sex with the latter's mistress, Jill Masterton. The connection between consumption of food and consummation of sexual desire can hardly be more blatant.

While Fleming's critics have identified "good living, sex, and violent action" (Palmer 206) in the Bond narratives, the ideological imperatives of these codes need a little attention. On the one hand these codes are suggestive and symptomatic of excessive brand naming through toiletries and gourmet menus routinely described in detail (Atkins 83). On the other hand, the recognition of new consumerist tendencies highlights a voyeuristic "narrative code" comprising travel, tourism and pornography (see Denning 100,102). While this explains the setting of the novels in 'exotic' locations around the globe, there is also the question of the spy fiction reader getting exposed to not only sex and good living but the underbelly of colonial rule. In the early spy novels the representation of the colony is inscribed into a narrative of legitimization of colonial intervention, materially introduced by the fight between a native rogue the western spy hero. This may be observed in Bond's encounters, both verbal and physical, with Goldfinger's Korean henchman.

One trope that remains essential to spy fiction is the incidence of danger and violence in the act of surreptitious intelligence gathering. Alan Hepburn suggests that violence produces the spy as a political subject (Hepburn 10). But the violence in the Bond novels exceed even the efforts of Sapper, it is possible to find critics commenting about Fleming's tendency to "luxuriate in the cruelty" (Atkins 97). Bond is, Christoph Lindner reminds us, agent 007, licensed to kill" (Lindner 1) in the national interest. Bond becomes the epitome of the spy as a figure simultaneously representing the legal and ethical imperatives of state authority and operating outside of it (Goodman. 26). He is, in other words, both the embodiment and the instrument of the State of Exception. In *Goldfinger*, Bond does execute his brief, twice—Oddjob and Goldfinger, two foreign-born enemies of the British state—and both actions are imaginatively conceived and graphically described. The violence becomes a fetishized exhibition of blood sport for the reader's vicarious pleasure. Indeed, the spy narrative has fully become a thriller insofar as market forces in a rapidly developing consumer economy contribute to establish a generic paradigm that involves a rising curve of danger, violence or shock (Glover 135).

Umberto Eco suggests that the device of Bond competing with his principal antagonists in various exciting sports and games serves to symbolically prefigure his inevitable victory over them. (Eco155). What is perhaps even more interesting is that the metaphor of the Great Game of espionage, which in Hannay and Sapper derived from the tenet of mettle-building public school physical exercise, now begins to be

reconstituted by an emergent culture of sport as leisure (Denning 100). Indeed, in *Goldfinger*, the trope is extended far beyond the specific contests of canasta and golf highlighted in the text. While pursuing Goldfinger's yellow Rolls Royce in France, for instance, Bond relishes the prospect of "playing hare and hounds across Europe" (Fleming *Goldfinger* 182). The very act of pursuing the enemy on his swift moving vehicle becomes an exciting sport, sending "a moment's sharp thrill down his spine" ((Fleming *Goldfinger* 182). Eco also presents a structuralist reading of the Bond the typical novel as a narrative machine driven by "a limited number of permutations and interactions" (Eco 146-7). In this reading, the Bond novels are patterned around certain invariant features such as the opposition of characters and values, and a prearranged pattern of play situations wherein Bond is shown to work his way through a set of engagements with the villain(s) and the obligatory feminine object of sexual desire, through capture and pursuit to his eventual triumph. That these tropes have become, since the 1960s, commonplaces for a host of imitative or derivative spy thrillers flooding the bookstalls, cinema and television screens has been noted (Bennett and Woolacott "Moments" 26). Conversely, the "Bond mania" may also be seen leading to a reaction against the glamorized depiction of international intrigue in spy fiction. The two writers credited with leading this literary reaction against what le Carré calls Fleming's "saccharine picture of a perfect enemy, a perfect hero, layable girls, the magic carpet world of big expense accounts and crashable (*sic*) Ferraris" (Watson 12-13), are Len Deighton and John le Carré. They can be consequently seen as the leading practitioners of the ironic spy novel, written more in the spirit of Ambler, Maugham and Greene rather than Kipling or Buchan. Whereas Denning (91), suggests that the arrival of James Bond leads to the domination of the espionage thriller over the entire field of popular fiction, it may be argued that the combined output of writers like Desmond Cory, Ian Fleming, Graham Greene, Deighton and le Carré—all working concurrently and in contrasting styles—contributed to the "Golden Age" (Rollyson *Long Fiction* 5565) of the spy narrative, both in fiction and on film, in the 1960s and 1970s. By the mid-1960s the success of these authors seems to fuel a tendency to produce "serial" spy novels, centered on a recurring protagonist or group of characters.

It has been suggested that the Bond books offer an imaginary outlet for a historically blocked jingoism (Bennett and Woolacott, "Moments" 19). Michael Denning further

suggests that the spy novel itself is a generic “cover story” or compensatory ideological narrative for the loss of Britain’s imperial glory (Denning 92). Still, the importance of James Bond films in legitimizing a particular form of global capitalism, however limited, is borne out by what Lindner calls a “circular market” (Lindner 77), referring to movies boosting the sale of books and vice versa.

The point to be noted is the appropriation by spy fiction of the role of ISA in an increasingly globalized economy. When we see this economy travelling without any concern for cultural codes and boundaries—circulating endlessly reproduced codes of success, now available, and recognized as such in popular art forms—we realize just how powerful this ISA may have become. In other words, the production, circulation and consumption of James Bond as an instantly recognized international brand are not particularly restricted to the world of Bond romance. Rather, we see the brand providing for a new critical spectrum that fashions, and is fashioned by the market.

Given that the market is not insulated from the world, English spy fiction is implicated in a process of layering of ISAs. We could see spy fiction covering for other ISAs such as imperialism, capitalism, hegemonic knowledge production, including science and technology. Spy fiction can now be seen competing with and creating market epistemologies, that is, images created for and by the market.

And yet, it must be remembered that from the very early years of the twentieth century, there has also existed in England, a second, and very different tradition within the genre of spy fiction. The ironic spy novel reacts and defines itself against the tradition of the heroic spy, and the use of the anti-hero spy becomes a major characteristic of the spy narrative at this stage.

2.06 Conrad and the “Ironic Spy Novel”

Four years after Kipling’s tale of *Kim*, the heroic spy, appears Joseph Conrad’s *The Secret Agent* (1905). While Conrad’s tale apparently shares some of the elements of Sapper’s *The Black Gang*—the perceived threats from within England, for instance—it becomes much more by virtue of its ironic subversion of the typical invasion narrative. In effect, we find the spy novel incorporating into itself modes of subversion that would, in course of time, help the genre resist its putative ideological imperatives.

The most obvious departure in *The Secret Agent* is in the choice of its protagonist, Adolf Verloc, the very antithesis of the smart, well-groomed, athletic, clean-cut cosmopolitan Englishman who graces le Queux or Oppenheim's spy stories., Verloc is "burly in a fat pig style" (Conrad 13), a fact that is echoed by his employer who comments to a colleague: "He is fat—the animal" (Conrad 13). Ponderous and habitually somnolent with "fanatical inertness" (Conrad 12), Verloc is a creature clearly shaped by his depressing urban environment. The ironic narrative highlights the "shadows gathered about the humble abode of Mr. Verloc's domestic happiness" (Conrad 151), and drains away all semblance of hope even as points to the fact that they make it "more sullen, brooding and sinister" (Conrad 151). His house, which doubles as seedy pornography shop, is a small "square box of a place, with the front glazed in small panes" (Conrad 3). The repeated reminders about the big man occupying a small space provide an ironic counter-narrative to Britannia, a small nation attempting to occupy a vast global space. Verloc himself, far from heroic, is shown to have an air "common to men who live on the vices, the follies, or the baser fears of mankind; the air of moral nihilism common to keepers of gambling halls and disorderly houses..." (Conrad 13) His identity and allegiances are also signaled as dubious from the very first chapter, because apart from being marked by an un-English name which demands explanation (Conrad 22), he is also described as an infrequent inhabitant of his home, generally arriving in London, "(like the influenza) from the Continent, only he arrived unheralded by the press" (Conrad 6). In other words, Verloc is an embodied contagion and moves surreptitiously, like a spy.

Verloc is a long standing employee of a foreign embassy in London which seeks to perpetrate a "series of outrages" in England (Conrad 30). Yet, his usefulness as an agent is constantly denied by the narrative. First Secretary Vladimir, his handlers at the embassy, reflects on his spy:

This was then the famous and trusty secret agent, so secret that he was never designated otherwise but by the symbol Δ in the late Baron Stott-Wartenheim's official, semi-official, and confidential correspondence; the celebrated agent Δ ,... This fellow! And Mr Vladimir indulged mentally in an enormous and derisive fit of merriment,.. (Conrad 27)

Nevertheless, Vladimir reminds Verloc of his obligations as an *agent provocateur* to earn his keep, failing which he is liable to lose his job. Verloc is charged with bombing the Greenwich Observatory, which apparently symbolizes science, the

current "sacrosanct fetish" of the bourgeois (Conrad 33) and the perceived "source of their material prosperity" (Conrad 33).. Vladimir is convinced of the world historical significance of such an act, for he says that the "whole civilized world has heard of Greenwich" (Conrad 35). The repeated claims to a "higher philosophy" (Conrad 34) that Vladimir keeps making to assert his intellectual authority over Verloc, are decisively undermined by the narrative:

And Mr Vladimir developed his idea from on high, with scorn and condescension, displaying at the same time an amount of ignorance as to the real aims, thoughts, and methods of the revolutionary world which filled the silent Mr Verloc with inward consternation (Conrad 29).

Whereas the attempted bombing of the observatory ostensibly provides the conventional spy fiction trope of sabotage, Conrad's focus in the narrative, however, is on neither of the two elements which might create suspense. He eschews, on the one hand, the actual conveyance of the bomb to the site and its detonation by the Anarchists, and on the other, the anticipation of the event or attempts to prevent it, on the part of the police. As for the detonation itself, the narrative undermines the significance of the "explosion caused by a political simpleton who blows up nothing except himself" (Berthould 109). Instead, Conrad examines the grimy underbelly of London, the heart of Britain, through his depiction of Verloc's domestic and social circumstances, thereby providing an ironic counterpoint to Kipling's narrative of Britain's imperial glory. Clearly, Verloc undertakes the bombing mission for economic, rather than ideological reasons, following Vladimir's threat to terminate his employment. Indeed, the very first chapter of the novel is devoted entirely to a depiction of Verloc's domestic responsibilities. He shares his cramped residence with his incongruously young wife Winnie, her mentally deficient younger brother Stevie and his widowed mother-in-law. The economic pressures of living in the Imperial city are brought home repeatedly. Verloc's mother-in-law is shown first giving up her own "business house" at Belgravia to stay with him, before finally moving off to a almshouse so as not to be a burden to her children (Conrad 161). More than reflects on Verloc's goodness for sheltering young Stevie, and the text clarifies that her act of abandonment is "only an arrangement for settling her son permanently in life" (Conrad 164). It is also hinted that Winnie's decision to marry Verloc is also motivated by a concern to protect her brother, whom she earlier also shield from her

abusive father (Conrad 242). The irony underlying this situation is that Verloc disappoints these expectations by causing Stevie's death when he makes the boy carry the dynamite. Stevie trips on the way and the dynamite explodes, killing him.

Stevie himself, on account of his innocence perhaps, occupies the ethical centre of the narrative. In an extended sequence in the middle of the narrative, he joins his mother and sister in a miserable ride on a cab pulled by an scrawny old horse. He protests when the driver whips the horse and the driver responds with: "'Ard on 'osses, but a dam' sight 'arder on poor chaps like me'" (Conrad 171). Thereafter Stevie keeps repeating, "Poor brutes, poor people!" (Conrad 174). The narrative here reveals the darkness in the empire where proverbially the sun never set. Significantly, this mythic imperial image is destabilized by a pointed reference to Verloc's home life, "nestling in a shady street, behind a shop where the sun never shone" (Conrad 258). Winnie is devastated when it dawns on her that her husband "took the boy away from his home to murder him" (Conrad 242). She kills her husband with a carving knife and the pathetic end of Verloc's dysfunctional family appears to present a prescient foreshadowing of the hidden dissensions and fissures which would lead to the dissolution of the British empire in about another thirty years. The novel therefore serves an interrogation simultaneously of the Victorian ideal of domesticity, the dream of Britain's imperial glory and industrial capitalism,

However, Conrad's novel is by no means an unambiguous endorsement of radical politics. The underground anarchists who hold their stealthy meetings in Verloc's house are unremittingly grotesque: Michaelis, who has "come out of a highly hygienic prison round like a tub, with an enormous stomach and distended cheeks..." (Conrad 41), Karl Yundt, the bald old terrorist marked by the "extraordinary expression of underhand malevolence" in his eyes (Conrad 42), Ossipon, the ex-medical student with the red hair and flat face and the neurotic Professor, "the perfect anarchist" (Conrad 82), who walks about with a bomb strapped to his body. The hollowness of their pretensions to political faith is revealed through Verloc's awareness that each depends for his existence on willing and submissive women. Besides:

"The majority of revolutionists are the enemies of discipline and fatigue mostly. There are natures too, to whose sense of justice the price exacted looms up monstrously enormous, odious, oppressive, worrying, humiliating,

extortionate, intolerable. Those are the fanatics. The remaining portion of social rebels is accounted for by vanity, the mother of all noble and vile illusions, the companion of poets, reformers, charlatans, prophets, and incendiaries (Conrad 52).

But the narrative does not allow Verloc to escape the scope of his own condemnation:

And Mr Verloc, temperamentally identical with his associates, drew fine distinctions in his mind on the strength of insignificant differences (Conrad 52)..

Each of the anarchists is shown to be burdened by the same bourgeois values that he formally denounces. What is interesting is that the narrative appears to emphasize the moral bankruptcy of both the anarchists and the representatives of the law. The Professor claims that “the terrorist and the policeman both come from the same basket” (Conrad 69). When the Stevie asks his sister what the police were for, her reply strikes at the very foundations of the benevolent capitalism: “They are there so that them as have nothing shouldn't take anything away from them who have” (Conrad 173).

Chief Inspector Heat, one of the principal executives of British justice, knows that Verloc is a spy, but keeps his superiors in the dark regarding his operations (Conrad 132) and is quite willing to overlook Verloc's involvement in the Greenwich incident provided he agrees to continue acting as his informer. Heat, in fact, becomes central to Conrad's ironic evocation of two key themes in spy fiction. The first is the trope of the Great Game (Thompson 103), which is evident in a chance encounter between Inspector Heat and the Professor, where the latter threatens to detonate the bomb strapped to his body if case he is held (Conrad 94-95). Heat assures the anarchist that he can afford to bide his time, and so the game begins. More important perhaps than the outcome of this game itself is the yoking together of Kipling's playful intrigue to the idea of immediate and mortal danger. This new insight may be seen to influencing subsequent practitioners like Greene and le Carré.

The other element is the agent of the state consciously participating in an event of global significance. This occurs as Heat comes away from his encounter with the Professor, determined to have his day:

All the inhabitants of the immense town, the population of the whole country, and even the teeming millions struggling upon the planet, were with him—

down to the very thieves and mendicants. Yes, the thieves themselves were sure to be with him in his present work. The consciousness of universal support in his general activity heartened him to grapple with the particular problem. (Conrad 96)

However, it is necessary remember that the novel reveals more about the inhabitants of the great town than it does about anarchism. Jacques Berthoud uses a chemical analogy in suggesting that the novel drops anarchism into London life, and show “that life suddenly losing its transparency and precipitating its murkier essences (Berthoud 106).

These essences include the issue of bureaucratic mistrust infighting among the forces representing legal and executive authority. The Assistant Commissioner, anxious to protect Michaelis shown to pursue purely personal agenda in instituting his own inquiry into Verloc unbeknownst to Chief Inspector Heat. This becomes one of the more noticeable themes in le Carré’s Cold War spy fiction.

The Secret Agent can thus be seen to provide several key elements of an alternative narrative to the heroic spy novel. Unlike the heroes of Kipling, Childers or le Queux, Conrad’s spy is physically unattractive and ethically flawed. This figure can be seen to recur in the works of later writers such as Somerset Maugham, Graham Greene and John le Carré, among others. The moral equivalence between characters representing two sides of the law can also be seen to become a major theme of the ‘ironic spy novel’ (Thompson 9) in its historic evolution. Stefan Kanfer characterizes this as the “higher road” taken by the spy novel (see Kanfer 8). The novel’s investment in the moral and spiritual crises which mark the characters leads Jon Thompson to conclude that the “ironic accentuation Conrad gives to the rhetoric of the Great Game ... indicates not only a nihilistic authorial ideology, but authorial investment in a general ideology, an ideology of modernism” (Thompson 113). Conrad’s experiments not only stretch the genre, but also anticipate anti-types of the genre. In other words, a genre given to perpetuating a certain ideological imperative, now appears ready to interrogate the same imperative, marking a certain amount of maturity in the genre.

2.07 Spies and Sensibility: Ambler and Greene

The formulaic pattern of the heroic spy novel, more or less seen set with predictable regularity until World War II, is challenged by the “ironic” or realistic spy narrative,

thus marking a subtle ideological shift. introduced by Conrad, may be seen coming into its own through the works of three writers—W. Somerset Maugham, Eric Ambler and Graham Greene. Interestingly, whereas Atkins insists that, “...to the professional spy writer Somerset Maugham is a father-figure, as Wells was for Science Fiction and Zane Grey for the western” (Atkins 164), Panek ignores him completely. This could be because Maugham is regarded as a mainstream writer who ventured into spy fiction. The fact that Maugham introduces an anti-hero in *Ashenden, or the British Agent* (1928), perhaps indicates the kind of challenge spy fiction faces from mainstream realistic fiction. The increasing absorption of contemporary history into spy fiction is grudgingly acknowledged by critics and historians of the genre. It is interesting to note that one of the tasks assigned to Ashenden involves the forging letters in order to lure Chandra Lal, a German agent of Indian origin, into British captivity. The depiction of Chandra Lal, on the one hand, and the dubious nature of the methods employed to capture him on the other, serve as a tacit acknowledgement of the political and ethical challenge posed to the British empire by its overseas colonies. To this extent, Maugham’s focus must be seen to depart from the implicit advocacy of imperialism in heroic spy fiction. The stories insistently undercut the assumptions of spying as grand adventure. Maugham’s spy is generally taken to be “the first of the anti-heroes” in spy fiction (Atkins 164). *Ashenden* is critical of his masters, leading a dull and uninspiring existence, disgruntled and dubious about the ‘dirty work’ he is called upon to perform. Inter-textual resonances between *Ashenden* and the fiction of John le Carré have been noted (Atkins 164; and Seed 122). The investment in the spy hero’s ethical and political dilemma, which allows him to interrogate his institutional obligations from the vantage point of his individual preferences, aligns Maugham as a writer of spy novels with the fiction of le Carré.

Eric Ambler is another figure credited by some critics for investing the spy novel with a semblance of aesthetic sophistication and literary respectability. Leroy Panek proposes a chronological and thematic division of Ambler’s spy novels into two broad categories— those written before WWI and those written afterward (Panek 138). Of these, critics have reserved special praise for *Coffin for Dimitrios*, which has been described as “an imaginative history of the decisive years between the World War I and the rise of Hitler” (Woods 67) rather than a work of spy fiction.

The pre-war novels retain some trappings of the action-oriented spy story. It has been noted that the ordinary man, not necessarily an Englishman, usually a skilled professional such as a journalist, an engineer or doctor, participates willingly and sometimes unwisely in dangerous intrigue, in the process realizing the essentially deceitful and dishonourable nature of espionage (Panek 150; Britton 25). In Ambler's *The Mask of Dimitrios* (1939), the average Englishman is Charles Latimer, University lecturer turned mystery novelist who becomes embroiled in intrigue while convalescing in Turkey just before World War II. He meets a Turkish policeman, Col. Haki, an avid reader of police procedurals, who tells him about an actual corpse recovered the previous day from the Bosphorus. He learns from Haki that the murdered man is Dimitrios Makropoulos, a Greek with a lengthy police record of criminal activities. Latimer follows an impulse to delve into the career of the dead man, ostensibly as research for his next novel. As Latimer crisscrosses Central and Eastern Europe scouring for materials relating to Dimitrios—official documents, former associates, et al.—he finds out about the latter's hand in every sort of crime from extortion to espionage, drug smuggling, prostitution and political assassination. Latimer is alarmed to realize that other people are interested in Dimitrios as well, and his researches have drawn their attention. Besides, Dimitrios might still be alive after all.

On the one hand, Ambler's narrative owes much of its verve to the adroit handling of genre tropes like the virtuous hero, suspenseful quests, the threat of imminent danger, frequent changes of scene and graphic violence. Yet, Ambler's novel manages to move off the beaten path primarily on account of his focus on historical processes rather than individuals. Latimer's researches, for instance, reveal as much about the sordid history of Europe between the wars as Dimitrios himself (Seed 122), insofar as Dimitrios is viewed "not as an isolate, a phenomenon, but as a unit in a disintegrating system" (Ambler 64). Ambler's narrative manages to interweave a fictional tale with a considerable bit of authentic European history, such as the assassination of the Bulgarian Prime Minister Stambulisky and the Ottoman massacre of Greek and Armenian minorities in Smyrna, in 1922. Into this narrative of reluctant victims caught in the middle of desperate situations arising out of geopolitical crises across the globe, Ambler introduces an alternative set of malign forces to replace the German, Jewish, or Russian villains that abound in the popular spy novel of his time. Ambler's projection of "Eurasian Credit Trust" (Ambler 61) as the source of socio-

political malaise introduces the element of socialistic sympathies in spy fiction. The ruthless nature of multinational finance is articulated quite clearly: “International big business has made revolutions before now to safeguard its interests” (Ambler 70). The pervasive presence of ISAs and RSAs in non-Communist states is also signaled through a brief conversation Latimer has with a Greek friend, who suggests the name of a journalist in Bulgaria who might help him with his enquiries.

‘There is only one trouble about him from your point of view. I happen to know that he has ...’ The voice sunk still lower in tone. Latimer was prepared for nothing less horrible than leprosy. ‘... Communist tendencies,’ concluded Siantos in a whisper. (Ambler 52)

What is revealed in this passage is not only the extent to which Communism has been demonized in Greece, but also a possible awareness of surveillance. Ambler’s clear inclination towards an ideological orientation that goes counter to capitalistic and imperialistic motives strikes an altogether new note in spy fiction. It is perhaps best articulated in Ambler’s oft cited insistence on “not who fired the shot, but who paid for the bullet” (Ambler 21). This element, in a way, prefigures the ideological ambivalence manifest in the later works of Graham Greene and le Carré. Atkins echoes Donald McCormick in stressing Ambler’s “a note of neutralism” (Atkins 247) for his refusal to follow the ‘God-King-Empire’ paradigm of his most popular precursors in spy fiction. A veteran spy who provides Latimer with an insight into the sordid facts of intelligence gathering, adds these words in parting: “There is no hero, no heroine; there are only knaves and fools. Or do I mean only fools?” (Ambler 129) This can be seen to mark a major ideological shift in spy fiction. The fact that spy fiction accommodates changes in its formulaic conventions, allowing for the insertion of new elements, including newly created social types, perhaps to notify the emergence of a new class of readers, is well established (see Denning 78-79). What needs to be recognized is that this accommodative gesture is part of a larger ideological shift, often noted, but not discussed by critics of the genre.

Dimitrios also happens to be one of the most striking reminders that the spy’s identity is illusory (Hepburn “Intro” xiv). Latimer’s attempt “to explain Dimitrios, to account for him, to understand his mind” (Ambler 63) is constantly undermined by the narrative (Denning 82), as the object of his search changes names and identities at will; from the Greek Makropoulos and Taladis to the Turkish Talat, the French

Rougemont to the finally indeterminable “Monsieur C.K.” (Ambler 162) The experience of modernity, the “maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal” (Berman 15), and its role in the fragmentation of identities which essentially constructs the spy becomes a central concern of Ambler’s narrative. Latimer, the ordinary person, becomes a mirror image of the spy as he traverses international boundaries in search of potentially dangerous knowledge.

Latimer also becomes a cipher for modernity’s contrary desire to construct perfect epistemic structures. His quest originates in a challenge by Haki to discover the “tidy, artistic” (Ambler 21) unity of his own detective stories in the real world. Latimer’s efforts are reflected and magnified in the numerous police files and state archives he examines, all of which attempt to construct a comprehensive and verifiable body of knowledge about Dimitrios, only to reveal varying degrees of slippage and ambiguity. Yet, that this tendency towards totalizing knowledge is an essential part of the modern state apparatus is repeatedly emphasized. An archivist in Athens tells Latimer, “Organization... that is the secret of modern statecraft. Organization will make a greater Greece” (Ambler 48). This is echoed, both by way of presumptuous attitudes and by similar claims of bureaucratic and procedural efficiency, in Istanbul, Sofia and Paris. It is hard to miss the resonance of Foucault’s insistence on the inextricably intertwined nature of Power/Knowledge in this context. The assumption of authority based on greater access to knowledge is also evoked and ironically undermined through the long journalistic report on the illicit trade in morphine and heroin which Latimer effectively shares with the reader. Significantly, Latimer is denied the credit for genuine awareness. His immersion into the ‘real’ world of danger, duplicity and disorientation does not cure him of his urge for the sham artistic unity of the detective novel (Panek 145). However, it is also possible to see that the newspaper article as a standard genre trope, inserted as authentic detail much in the same way as Fleming inserts a chapter on the gold trade in *Goldfinger*. Besides, Latimer the English hero, at home in Greek and French, remains a relatively more cosmopolitan figure than Hannay or Drummond. Still, Ambler makes him the object of the occasional jab at British complacency. A Greek friend says to him:

You know...you English are sublime. You are the only nation in the world that believes that it has a monopoly of ordinary common sense. (Ambler 71)

Already, through this self-deprecatory irony which allows the subjective identity to be filtered through the gaze of the other, Ambler's narrative indicates a new trajectory of evolution for the spy novel.

Ambler's invocation of the Game metaphor too carries an unmistakable ironic twist. Mr. Peters/Petersen, a bloated manifestation of human avarice in the novel, asks Latimer, "Who are you, Mr Latimer, and what is your game?" (Ambler 94) As far as Latimer the ignorant bystander is concerned, he is involved in a game of role playing, and is constantly shown to be out of his depth. That this game is deadly, and Latimer's luck will not hold forever, is made amply clear in his second outing, *The Intercom Conspiracy* (1969). Increasingly, after Ambler, the quality of innocence in a situation of continual conflict becomes problematic in spy fiction.

Although Ambler's novels until *A Coffin for Dimitrios* are set in the political "hot-spots" of European intrigue like the Balkans, the later novels avoid the world powers or their machinations and use "political situations that are local, empty and futile" (Panek 147). By making the pursuit of money the primary motivation of espionage, Ambler can be said to have simultaneously subverted both the ideology of espionage as an enactment of faith, duty or patriotism and a pivotal generic code of the spy novel. Michael Denning describes as the serious thriller such works of spy fiction as address issues of "the uncertainty of the authority for the protagonist's actions, the lack of a clear cut 'good,' and the ensuing issues of innocence and experience, of identity and point of view" (Denning 63). Indeed, it is precisely this cynical, deglamourized and morally ambiguous vision of espionage presented by Maugham and Ambler that can be seen resurfacing in the "entertainments" of Graham Greene.

Greene, like Maugham before him, is another mainstream writer who has been credited with transforming the spy narrative. Also, like Maugham, his association with the British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) has been documented (Atkins 191; also see Diemert). His works in the genre reflect an insider's knowledge of the moral ambiguities inherent in espionage.

In *The Quiet American* (1955), the setting is set far afield in the moral-political quagmire of Indo-China. Thomas Fowler, a middle aged English reporter working for

the *Times* in Saigon, befriends Alden Pyle, an idealistic young American, who soon becomes a rival for the attention of the Fowler's much younger Vietnamese mistress Phuong. After spending eight years in Vietnam, Fowler has become a jaded, opium smoking dissolute, separated from his wife in London. He does not like war, but is very clear in voicing his preference for the literal jungle to the ideological-political one that surrounds him: "The human condition being what it was, let them fight, let them love, let them murder, I would not be involved...even an opinion is a kind of action" (Greene 28).

His indifference is shaken when it becomes clear that Pyle is a threat both to his hold over Phuong, and his epistemic authority over the Orient (Said 19-20). The nearly silent Phuong, who vacillates between the two men in her life, serves perhaps as an embodiment of her homeland Vietnam, a site for the clash of western interests and ideologies. Fowler's resentment against his younger rival is evident in his contemptuous rejection of Pyle's views when he says, "I had suffered from his lectures on the Far East, which he had known for as many months as I had years (Greene 12). Pyle, on the other hand is something of an improbable creature, the quiet American of the novel's title. Fowler, who describes him thus, is immediately struck by the oddity of the phrase, and likens it to other constructions such as "'blue lizard, 'a white elephant'" (Greene 17). Fowler's detests Pyle for his youth, his idealism, his innocence, affluence, and perhaps, his better education. His condescending reference to Pyle's "good degree in...one of those subjects Americans can take degrees in" reveals that his attitude extends in some part to Americans in general.

Pyle works ostensibly for the Economic Aid Mission, but Fowler discovers that this is merely a cover for his real job as an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency. Pyle becomes instrumental in a CIA attempt to create an anti-Communist 'Third Force' in Vietnam with the help of local leader named General Thé. Thé's men bomb a crowded marketplace in Saigon killing many women and children, and it becomes clear to Fowler that Pyle has had a hand in it. To matters worse Pyle remains "impregably armoured by his good intentions and his ignorance" (Greene 163) despite being surrounded the horrific consequences of his misguided meddling in a situation he clearly does not understand. Apparently deciding that non-involvement is

no longer an option, Fowler conspires with the local Communist leadership to have Pyle murdered and is left resigned to a guilt-ridden life thereafter.

Critics have suggested that Fowler's act of betrayal constitutes an act of commitment, where "as an ordinary, nonpolitical, moderately selfish, but intelligent human being he is moved to act against violence and stupidity" (Allott 196). Others have averred that both Fowler's "rather shabby act of resistance" (Thomson 197) and the anti-American bias of the narrative may best be understood in terms of Greene's well known leftist leanings. However, one thing that does emerge unambiguously is the senseless carnage that occurs at the cleavage of old world imperialism and ideologically oriented interventionism. Greene achieves an overwhelmingly graphic depiction of the cost in human lives. Fowler is shown coming across the corpses of a mother and her boy:

They were very clearly dead: a small neat clot of blood on the woman's forehead, and the child might have been sleeping. He was about six years old and he lay like an embryo in the womb with his little bony knees drawn up. (Greene 53)

Fowler's immediate thoughts are rendered pithily: "I hate war" (Greene 53). Indeed, it is this issue at the core of the novel that resonates most in *The Quiet American*, notwithstanding the espionage elements featured in the narrative.

The character of Vigot, a local French policeman investigating Pyle's death, becomes a crucial tool for the examination of the moral dilemma involving commitment and betrayal. When Fowler asks him if he were really trying to find Pyle's killers, Vigot admits that he is "just making a report, that's all." (Greene 27) Against the political backdrop of the power struggle between the old colonial power France and the emerging superpower USA, where the local Vietnamese remain hapless victims, Greene juxtaposes a triangular tale of desire, betrayal and ethical ambiguity. *The Quiet American* is also significant because remarkable portions of le Carré's *The Honourable Schoolboy* (1978) can be seen echoing Greene's exploration of post colonial angst in South East Asia.

By discovering the potential of the spy novel for examination of moral and spiritual crises fundamental to the human condition, Greene has been credited with lifting the

genre out of the rut of romantic escapism (Silverstein 24-44). The game metaphor of early spy fiction may be seen to occur in Greene's spy novels, but ironically inverted, so as to show them being played by adults who have remained "confident, sadistic children"; and in which the "clumsy, introspective and intelligent boys" are always doomed to lose (Panek 136). This is an attitude that has implications for the genre as a whole, insofar as Greene deviates from the confident affirmation of the Cold War spy as a representative of positive values. To the extent that some of the early Cold War novels of le Carré, including *The Looking Glass War* and *A Small town in Germany* also portray similar situations—where adults play insensitive games with the lives of unsuspecting individuals—they may be said to offer intertextual responses to Greene's spy novels. In effect we see how a singular vision unites Greene's spy fiction with the rest of his literary output, "where violence and brutality are fundamental, where the decorums of "civilized" behavior are but a thin veil over naked power relations where nations and empires are less the expression of a civilizing mission than the mask for exploitation" (Denning 62). This remark helps to understand another fundamental similarity between the spy novels of Greene and le Carré. Yet, we see how both offer unique critiques of the ideological underpinnings of conventional spy fiction.

There are perhaps two further points that require clarification. First, despite its significant impact on the form the tradition of the ironic spy novel—with its morally conflicted protagonists—has always been weaker in comparison with the other tradition featuring the heroic spy engaged in the defense of the realm. Against the noted instances of Maugham, Ambler, Greene and le Carré—with the possible inclusion of Len Deighton and Charles Cumming in England, and Charles McCarry in the United States—spy fiction as a popular genre has always been dominated by writers like Edward S. Aarons, Frederick Forsyth, Alistair Maclean, Andy McNab, Robert Ludlum, Tom Clancy and Stella Rimington, whose patriotic spies never fail in their mission. Therefore, it is the heroic tradition of spy fiction, represented most famously by Ian Fleming and his creation James Bond, that this study regards as most representative of the conventional spy narrative. Second, notwithstanding the conveniently polarized taxonomy offered here, distinguishing the heroic from the ironic spy narrative, there has been an undeniable cross-fertilization of ideas and elements between the two traditions. It has been pointed out, for instance, that one of