MACMILLAN STUDIES IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERATURE

· LARS OLE SAUERBERG ·

# SECRET AGENTS IN FICTION

## *Ian Fleming, John le Carré and Len Deighton*

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# SECRET AGENTS IN FICTION

## Ian Fleming, John le Carré and Len Deighton

Lars Ole Sauerberg

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# Preface

When an undergraduate student of English at the University of Aarhus, Denmark, I began to take a considerable interest in thrillers for the simple reason that I liked them. Then, as now, that particular branch of literature did not have a regular appearance in the curriculum of English studies, and my reading of thrillers remained a leisure activity. However, there is no doubt that I have profited indirectly from thrillers with regard to my studies programme in such matters as British upper-class country-house mores and British foreign-office activities, Californian law, New-York-state police methods, etc! My liking for thrillers soon developed into a more systematic and scholarly interest in thrillers as literary genres, in particular the British secret-agent story. I was given a chance by the Department of English at Aarhus University in the autumn term of 1974 to try out my ideas in confrontation with an interested though critical group of students. The seminar helped me formulate possible analytical approaches to the secret-agent story, which I sketched in a successful application for a research scholarship at the Department of English, Odense University, Denmark. The scholarship, which was granted in the spring term of 1977, was followed by a lectureship shortly after. In that capacity I have been able to pursue my interest in thrillers as part of my regular research obligations while at the same time I have been required to teach the traditional disciplines of literary history, literary criticism, etc. The interaction between such established disciplines and my research project on secret-agent fiction I have found extremely stimulating.

In this prefatory note I wish to warn off the reader who expects sensational insights into the secret and mysterious world of real espionage. I have not in any way been interested in that particular kind of realism. My book is a study of a specific thriller genre and based on the stories of three popular writers whose work has appeared since the Second World War. I have asked the

questions which I have considered relevant in a critical context, i.e. questions which the genre itself seems to invite. No doubt many readers would be curious about the extent to which John le Carré uses a story like *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* as a *roman à clef*. Is Haydon, the traitor, modelled on Kim Philby? Such curiosity is, of course, quite legitimate, but hardly within the scope of literary criticism. As regards the particular figure of Haydon, my curiosity has its origin in such areas as his plot function, his significance for thematic emphases in the story, etc.

Instead of the cumbersome repetition of full titles of primary sources, I have preferred the use of reference by initials. Ian Fleming's *Goldfinger*, for instance, is referred to as *G*. For a full list of abbreviations by initial see list of abbreviations and years of publication of primary sources below, p. xiv.

Secondary sources are referred to currently in the text by author's name, year of publication and page(s). If I have used an edition other than the first edition, it is indicated by reference to the first edition before a slash and the edition used after. Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* from 1957, for instance, is referred to as Frye 1957/1971.

I have excluded Ian Fleming's two collections of short stories, *For Your Eyes Only* (1960) and *Octopussy* (containing 'Octopussy' (1966), 'The Living Daylights' (1966) and 'The Property of a Lady (1971)), as the short-story length is atypical of the genre. Also, I am of the opinion that *The Spy Who Loved Me* cannot possibly be included in the genre. Incidentally, this story has been re-written from the film script by Christopher Wood and published in 1977. Kingsley Amis, under the pen name Robert Markham, attempted a continuation of the Bond stories after Fleming's death. The only title which appeared was *Colonel Sun* (1968). Two other James Bond stories have appeared since: John Gardner's *Licence Renewed* (1981) and *For Special Services* (1982).

John le Carré's other fiction includes the regular detective story from 1962, *A Murder of Quality*, and the novel *The Naïve and Sentimental Lover* from 1971.

Deighton's interest in the history of war has resulted in a number of war studies, *Fighter: True Story of the Battle of Britain* (1977), *Blitzkrieg: From the Rise of Hitler to the Fall of Dunkirk* (1979), *Battle of Britain* (1980), two war novels, *Bomber* (1970), and *Goodbye, Mickey Mouse* (1982) about raids on

Germany during the Second World War, and a collection of short stories, *Declarations of War* (1971). Besides his regular novel *Close-up* (1972) he has written three mixed-genre thrillers: *Only When I Larf* (1968), *SS-GB* (1978) and *XPD* (1980).

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to those who have given advice and help at different stages of my work on this book: lektor Michael Davenport, MA; Mrs Lise Høyer; prof., dr. phil. Andreas Haarder; red. Harald Mogensen; lektor Thomas Pettitt, MA; førstebibl., cand. mag. Ejgil Søholm; and lektor, cand. mag. Finn Vergmann. I am indebted to the late prof., dr.phil. Hans Hartvigson for his stimulating interest and advice. I also wish to thank Lis Fischer Nielsen, Jill Hansen and Marianne Jensen, secretaries at the Department of English, Odense University, for miscellaneous help in the course of my project, and humanistisk skrivestue for allowing me to draw on their typing skill. Last, but not least, my thanks to research librarian, cand.mag. Herdis Lyngby and to the University Library of Odense University, whose service has been unfailingly first-rate.

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John le Carré: *Call for the dead*, repr. from the Penguin 1964 edn, with permission from John Farquharson Ltd; *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*, repr. from the Pan 1964 edn, with permission from John Farquharson Ltd; *The Looking-Glass War*,

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# Notes on Terminology

1

For the purposes of my study I have preferred the term *secret agent* to *spy*, and I have avoided *espionage* and used terms like *secret-agent activities* instead. These are, I believe, more precise references to what the genre is about. Spy and espionage are terms denoting the gathering of intelligence not officially available, especially about military matters. Since the Second World War espionage has largely been a matter of electronic surveillance, but most secret-agent stories are about men who take an active and physical part in thwarting the hostile purposes of their opposite numbers in foreign secret services. The genre emphasizes individual action, not seldom in the form of counter-espionage and *agent-provocateur* activities, and therefore terms which focus on manner rather than matter seem preferable.

2

I use the term *story* in the neutral sense of narrative fiction or prose fiction in order to restrict my use of *novel* in accordance with Frye's definition of the novel as a form distinct from romance:

> When we start to think seriously about the novel, not as fiction, but as a form of fiction, we feel that its characteristics, whatever they are, are such as make, say, Defoe, Fielding, Austen, and James central in its tradition, and Borrow, Peacock, Melville, and Emily Bronte somehow peripheral. . . . In novels that we think of as typical, like those of Jane Austen, plot and dialogue are closely linked to the conventions of the comedy of manners. . . . It is perhaps the link with history and a sense of temporal context that has confined the novel, in

> striking contrast to the worldwide romance, to the alliance of time and Western man (1957/1971 : 304–7).

For further details on the distinction v. chs. 2 and 3. Another reason for maintaining the distinction is that the term secret-agent story is in harmony with the established *detective story*, which denotes a particular genre, not a particular length.

I am in agreement with American rather than British usage of *thriller*, that is, as a very loose and comprehensive term. The British tradition is represented by Julian Symons's suggestion that '. . . detective stories and crime novels are of a different strain from spy stories and thrillers' (1972/74 : 234). American usage seems to have undergone a development away from this kind of restriction, as expressed by a leading American thriller critic, George Grella:

> The term 'thriller' was once applied only to the more sensational kinds of suspense fiction, but in recent years critics and readers have specifically used it to describe detective, mystery and spy novel. Though these novels may range from the cerebral whodunit to the action-filled spy story, they are all concerned with violence, crime, murder, mystery, and suspense; they are all thrillers. The term is handy, practical, and comprehensive (1968 : iii).

# Abbreviations and Dates of Publication

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Ian Fleming:* | | |
| *CR* | *Casino Royale* | 1953 |
| *LLD* | *Live and Let Die* | 1954 |
| *M* | *Moonraker* | 1955 |
| *DAF* | *Diamonds Are Forever* | 1956 |
| *FRWL* | *From Russia with Love* | 1957 |
| *DrN* | *Dr No* | 1958 |
| *G* | *Goldfinger* | 1959 |
| *T* | *Thunderball* | 1961 |
| *OHMSS* | *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* | 1963 |
| *YOLT* | *You Only Live Twice* | 1964 |
| *MWGG* | *The Man with the Golden Gun* | 1965 |
| *John le Carré:* | | |
| *CFD* | *Call for the Dead* | 1961 |
| *SWCIFC* | *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* | 1963 |
| *LGW* | *The Looking-Glass War* | 1965 |
| *STIG* | *A Small Town in Germany* | 1968 |
| *TTSS* | *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* | 1974 |
| *HS* | *The Honourable Schoolboy* | 1977 |
| *SP* | *Smiley's People* | 1979 |
| *LDG* | *The Little Drummer Girl* | 1983 |
| *Len Deighton:* | | |
| *IF* | *The Ipcress File* | 1962 |
| *HUW* | *Horse Under Water* | 1963 |
| *FIB* | *Funeral in Berlin* | 1964 |
| *BDB* | *Billion Dollar Brain* | 1966 |
| *EPD* | *An Expensive Place To Die* | 1967 |
| *SS* | *Spy Story* | 1974 |
| *YS* | *Yesterday's Spy* | 1975 |
| *TTLS* | *Twinkle Twinkle Little Spy* | 1976 |

# Secret Agent Fiction: a Formula Genre

# 1 Contexts of History

## *The Genesis of the Genre*

The genre of the secret-agent story is less than a hundred years old. Erskine Childers's *The Riddle of the Sands* was published in 1903 and is usually considered the first of its kind. Some critics, however, prefer to trace the genre further back, to J. F. Cooper's *The Spy*[1] from 1821, and two of them even further back. The Swedish critic Jan Broberg agrees with his American colleague Vincent Starrett that we see the first manifestation of the genre in the Old-Testament account of how Moses sent his 'secret agents' into the land of Canaan (Numbers, ch. 13) (1964 : 143). Obviously Broberg cannot have been in earnest, but he probably meant his observation as a humorous gibe at critics, who, like Dorothy L. Sayers in her anthology of stories of detection, mystery and horror, have proposed such an ancient heritage for the detective story. Sayers boldly prefaced her anthology with the assertion that the 'detective-story proper and the pure tale of horror are very ancient in origin' (1928 : 9), and cites passages from the Jewish *Apocrypha*, *Herodotus* and the *Aeneid* to prove her contention.

The puzzle element which constitutes the core of the modern detective story is an element common to many literary works, and so is the sequence of physical ordeals which forms the backbone of the action in the secret-agent story. But the tracing of genre origins only becomes interesting when there is common consent that a new and independent genre has been formed and has proved viable.

Eric Ambler, himself a prolific writer of suspense stories, once reflected on the question why the secret-agent story did not appear as a genre at an earlier date, as, he argues, 'There seems to have been no period in recorded history when secret agents have not played a part, and sometimes an important part, in political affairs' (1965/1966 : 7). Ambler, however, bases his

observation on a simple reflection theory which is clearly insufficient for dealing with relations between fiction and society.

The fact that detective and secret-agent fiction, along with other kinds of mass-appeal fiction, came into being between 1850 and 1920 may be interpreted as a consequence of the general cultural development of the period. Those who lived at the time saw a transition from a society with an élitist culture to one in which the possibilities for sharing the benefits of education came within everybody's reach.[2] The spread of literacy created a demand for literary entertainment, and the growth and extension of leisure time provided the time necessary for the enjoyment of reading. But while this cultural landslide may explain the emergence of various kinds of thriller, it does not explain the seniority of detective fiction to secret-agent fiction.

For a fictional genre to be successful it seems that two requirements must be met. One is so simple that it is easily overlooked: a new kind of fiction must have been attempted; a *text* must have been published. The other requirement is of a more intricate nature: the genre must have created a resonance among readers; it must have aroused *interest*.

In the case of the detective story both requirements were met during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Two writers suddenly showed full command of the new genre: E. A. Poe and A. Conan Doyle.[3] Other writers were likewise trying their hand at stories of detection, but within the tradition of the Victorian novel. Of chief interest to us today are Dickens (*Bleak House*, 1852-3 and the unfinished Edwin Drood mystery, 1870), and Wilkie Collins (*The Woman in White*, 1860 and *The Moonstone*, 1868).[4]

With regard to the resonance which depends on readers' interest, Jerry Palmer (1978) has offered an explanation which goes a long way to elucidate the success of the thriller.

Palmer isolates two factors which he sees as constituting the thematic basis of the thriller: competetive individualism and the fear of conspiracy. The mystery or puzzle structure, the figure of the hero and the relationship between hero and suspected culprit are, according to Palmer, expressions of the concept of a liberal and competitive individualism which nineteenth-century England considered natural law. The late Victorian society welcomed such a fictional expression of its own ethos, as proved by the success of the new literary form. But the genre lived on

after the disintegration of Victorian England, and the thriller developed into various sets of literary conventions. However, Palmer does not distinguish clearly between different thriller genres, and consequently there is no distinction between different times of genre geneses. Ambler's paradox remains enigmatic: how is it that fiction about secret agents, whose activities have been known in all recorded history, appears at a later date than the fictionalization of detective investigations which were organized as late as the nineteenth century?[5] For the elucidation of this paradox I believe that it is necessary to consider the special role of England in the transition phase between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as the secret-agent story is a characteristically English *and* twentieth-century phenomenon.

Obviously, the *raison d'être* of secret-agent activities is to support national interests in peacetime or in a period of war. In the genre the secret agent's support is manifested as his ability to secure a situation of international status quo so as to minimize a loss of power for his own nation. Most English secret-agent fiction is set in peacetime, and the activities of the secret agent are mostly of a defensive nature: the secret agent's aim is to make sure that English prestige and influence are not endangered by international tensions.

After the turn of the century it became clear to many people in England and outside that its world power was in the process of becoming a thing of the past. Under pressure from changing international political and commercial relations the nineteenth-century English attitude of 'splendid isolation' was beginning to give way to a more modest assessment of the nation's influence. The fictional secret-agent probably owes some of his appeal to the way he provided, and still provides, an imaginative compensation for a feeling of nationalistic frustration. It is possible to see in him the continuation - clandestine, it is true - of English superiority, that is, the international status quo of the nineteenth century.

The beginning of the twentieth century, however, meant not only the change in international political relations to which the compensatory and conservative significance of the new genre was a welcome response, but also a fundamental change in terms of the individual's general life conditions. At the risk of making a sweeping generalization, I suggest that the conspicuous and exclusive nature of the fictional detective and his comedy-of-manners environment (v. Grella, 1970) constitute a perfect

metaphor for a prevalent English nineteenth-century ethos, whereas I see the genre centred on the pseudo-anonymity of the fictional secret agent as a congenial response to the individual's sense of his situation in the mass society of the twentieth century.

The transition from the Victorian to the modernist novel is usually considered a symptom of the growing awareness of the insufficiency of a meaningful and 'realistic' world view as offered in the nineteenth-century English novel tradition (cf. e.g. Woolf 1919/1966). The Victorian novel grew out of a society and an ideological outlook which built on notions of order, rationalism and authority, whereas a work like Joyce's *Ulysses* is usually seen as a literary response to a realization of the inapplicability of Victorian standards and ideas to the general disillusionment that followed in the wake of the First World War. But genres with a more immediately popular appeal than the modernist novel also responded to this sense of change. The First World War signalled the definite disappearance of an approach to life characterized by a strong belief in individualism and an optimistic conviction of man's possibilities for exploring and controlling his universe. However, the disillusionment and lack of orientation seen, for instance, in Eliot's early poetry was probably characteristic of the outlook of a cultural avant-garde only. The average reader is more likely to have seen the beginning of the twentieth century in terms of increasing mechanization and automatization which probably produced at the same time hopeful expectations of quick material progress, and an increasing sense of uniformity. The assembly-line production technique introduced by Ford was beginning to establish itself as an equivocal metaphor of the twentieth-century as the social gradation of Victorian society and the period's fundament of authority and liberal individualism was being replaced by a mass approach to life.

In the fictional secret agent we find a more complex figure than in the fictional detective. Superficially the secret agent represents a reflection of the uniformity and anonymity of mass society, but underneath he expresses an individualist rebellion against it, hence his pseudo-anonymity. It is characteristic of the reader's attitude to the detective that he feels at a distance from that hero's brilliant uniqueness. The reader may admire him, but he hardly identifies with him. The anonymity of the secret agent, however, invites empathy. Although we are all now able to identify the secret agent by his grey raincoat, its original

significance as a common kind of coat was to be the hero's protective cover. To be an inconspicuous member of the mass is the secret agent's first law. But, paradoxically, the man in the grey raincoat is able to turn the scales in international affairs, because everything, that is the continuation of international status quo, depends on the success of his mission. The reader is thus encouraged in his wishes to break away from the world of uniformity. He is offered the possibility to escape from his alloted place in mass society and to do something, although by proxy.

I suggest, then, that the appeal of the secret-agent story owes much to a compensatory mechanism on two levels, both levels representing reactions to the political, cultural and social changes characterizing the English experience in the twentieth century as distinct from the triumphant experience of the preceding century: the genre offers a compensation both for the reader's sense of frustrated nationalism and for his sense of having been firmly and irrevocably placed along with everybody else in a system of uniform standards.[6]

The genesis - and the success - of the secret-agent story makes sense if seen against this background of a sense of considerable change. It took the genre half a century to become structurally and thematically consolidated, and already in 1972 Julian Symons predicted its approaching death (1972/1974 : 250). In the three decades since the Second World War, however, the appeal of the secret-agent story has been second to no other mass-appeal genre.[7]

## *Towards Genre Consolidation: From Childers to Cheyney, 1903-45*

As this book is not a history of the secret-agent story,[8] but a genre study of formula and variation in the stories of Ian Fleming, John le Carré and Len Deighton, I do not wish to go into too much detail about the development of the genre. However, a brief outline of its history will serve to show how the genre gradually reached its maturity.

Critics and historians of the genre seem to agree on a parallel development of two different 'schools', based on difference of thematic emphasis rather than structural dissimilarity. One is usually called the *realistic* school, whereas the other goes under a

variety of names, such as *sensational* (Grella 1968) or *pipe-dream* (Symons 1972/1974) or *spy thriller* (Becker 1973). Naturally a broad distinction like this is not accurate enough to describe all the shades of thematic emphasis which a genre boasting so many titles can be expected to show. When individual works are examined, they will often turn out to be mixtures of both tendencies rather than the pure manifestations of only one.

The distinction between realistic and sensational secret-agent stories is a thematic, not a structural distinction. It is possible, however, to establish sub-categories of the genre by comparing, for instance, plot patterns in combination with the hero's status. In most secret-agent stories the hero is employed by his government, but very often, as in John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), he is a common man whirled by chance into international affairs. Or a mixture of both may also occur, as in Geoffrey Household's *Rogue Male* (1938), in which the hero carries out a scheme of personal vengeance prior to his eventual employment by the government. A distinction may also be drawn between plots in which the hero is the active party who is in charge of the events and the kinds in which the hero is constantly pursued by his opponents.

The reason why distinctions along structural lines have been less common, indeed virtually non-existent in the critical literature on the genre, may be due to the circumstance that the thematic division into two easily recognizable schools is supported by an awareness of a difference of quality between them.

It is characteristic of the realistic tradition that the romance element (v. chs 2 and 3) in the formula is played down in comparison with the sensational. Realistic stories pretend to render a true impression of secret-agent activities with special emphasis on bureaucratic monotony and half-hearted commitment. It is not surprising that the realistic secret-agent story has received more praise than its sensational counterpart, as critics have seen in it an attempt to approach the novel proper with its concern for the individual in problematic social and psychological intercourse with his or her surroundings.

Childers's *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903) is in many ways a realistic secret-agent story, although it contains several elements of pure adventure. Its realism is in the author's precise descriptions of setting and in the narrator's common-sense approach to his and his colleague's sudden involvement in

German war preparations. The reason why we consider Childers's story the first real secret-agent story is, of course, that it employs (unharmoniously, though) all the formula features required. In a genre perspective its main weakness is the considerable space devoted to technical descriptions of yachting life, which works as a brake to the quick pace of action that we demand in a secret-agent story. Obviously we cannot expect the genre to have come completely into its own all of a sudden. It is characteristic of the span of time between the publication of Childers's story and the Second World War that the genre was established primarily by its subject-matter of secret-agent activities, whereas it lacked the regularity of a recurrent pattern or structure. Consequently it is hardly possible to consider the secret-agent story a completely consolidated genre before the fifties (v. also note 7).

Joseph Conrad wrote two novels about secret agents: *The Secret Agent* (1907) and *Under Western Eyes* (1911). Both novels are about the effects of pre-Revolutionary Russian anarchism, the first set in London, the other in Russia and Switzerland. To include Conrad's novels in the genre proper resembles the inclusion of Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* in the genre of the detective story. Conrad's novels are only secret-agent stories in a very liberal view of the genre based solely on subject-matter.

Perhaps the best-known early realistic secret-agent story is Somerset Maugham's *Ashenden: or, The British Agent* (1928). Based on autobiographical material, it presents the world of espionage as a despicable and unromantic business.

Eric Ambler began publishing secret-agent stories in the thirties. His first story, *The Dark Frontier* (1936) added a political approach to Maugham's emphasis on drabness and routine. In this story, and in later ones, the reader senses a positive attitude to left-wing politics not expected in this genre. There is none of the patriotic glory normally associated with secret-agent activities, but an emphasis on shabbiness and the lack of ethical considerations in the *métier*. Ambler has written many stories which are good adventure stories (v. ch. 2), but not really secret-agent fiction. His contribution to the development of the genre must be found in his clever use of the secret-agent story to criticize political matters.

Graham Greene also published his first secret-agent story in the late thirties. His *The Confidential Agent* from 1939 uses the structure of the secret-agent story effectively to produce a mood

of tension and fear. Like Ambler, Greene knows how to create a haunting atmosphere, and also he is on the side of the individual against the mass. Greene's novels are satisfactory responses to the formula requirements of the genre of the secret-agent story, but they are also highly satisfactory novels. Greene transforms the patriotic struggle into psychological dramas in which the chief concern is the struggle between good and evil.

There is a straight line of influence from Ambler and Greene to le Carré and, to a certain extent, to Deighton. However, the literary ancestry of Fleming must be looked for in the sensational tradition.

There is no doubt that if we go back to the nineteenth century to trace general influences of attitude and mood, the realistic tradition of the secret-agent story has its roots in realism and naturalism, whereas the literary influences on the sensational tradition must be sought in varieties of literature with an immediate popular appeal, like Eugene Sue's *Les Mysteres de Paris* (1842-3), with their English translations and imitations,[9] and the innumerable so-called *Penny dreadfuls* which saw the light in Victorian times. The accounts of murder and other crime, and, especially, its punishment, published as broadsheets,[10] belong here, and, along with the popular-romance tradition in the manner of Rider Haggard, provided thematic and structural material on which the secret-agent story could build. It is true that the stories of William le Queux, E. Phillips Oppenheim and 'Sapper' from the turn of the century are often about espionage and other secret-agent activities. However, they stand in the same relationship to the genre as does Conrad. These works of snobbery, violence and highly-strung patriotism really belong in the much broader category of the adventure story.

John Buchan, however, came straight to the genre with his stories about the self-made man Richard Hannay. In Buchan's famous first story *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915) the romance pattern of the genre is woven together with the political and ethical attitude met with in the fiction of le Queux, Oppenheim and 'Sapper'. Hannay's motives have nationalistic overtones which few of us today are able to accept, but which seem plausible - though extremely right-wing - in a 1915 setting. Despite these overtones *The Thirty-Nine Steps* is a good story, and this is due to the author's effective use of the episodic ordeal structure. Also, Hannay is a hero convinced of the rightness of his

cause. Since then, the protagonist's emphatically heroic stature and his nationalistic self-assurance have been germane to the sensational secret-agent story.

Although Sax Rohmer and Edgar Wallace contributed to the genre from the sensational side, the great name of the thirties was Geoffrey Household with his *Rogue Male* from 1938. Basically of the sensational kind, the story adds a theme to the genre which has been much exploited by Fleming: the hero's motive in Household's book is personal revenge. Household, like Childers and Buchan, is very topical and his story draws considerably on the war panic of those years.

The sensational secret-agent story is the kind practised by most hack writers of the genre, probably because it is a cruder version of the formula than its twin development. Among those who have been severely castigated by the critics is Peter Cheyney,[11] best known for his imitations of American 'hard-boiled' private-eye stories. During the war he wrote a number of secret-agent stories called the *Dark Series*, meant as support for national morale on the home front. His shortcomings are obvious, but for historians of the genre his stories can be read as forming the background to Fleming's James Bond epic. This is specially apparent when Cheyney's novels are compared with the secret-agent stories of Michael Innes, also written during the war. Innes's stories are rather formless mixtures of both schools, whereas the *Dark Series* presents the firm formula structure employed so successfully by Fleming.

## *Post-War Genre Consolidation: Ian Fleming, John le Carré and Len Deighton*

Apart from the fiction which represented a continuation of the modernism initiated by Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1922, the English literature of the fifties expressed a reaction to the values of the past, including modernism itself. Undoubtedly the disillusioned anti-hero who appeared on the stage, in narrative fiction and as the persona in the poetry of the decade responded well to the lack of orientation after the war.[12] But whereas the anti-heroism of the Angry Young Men and the Movement have developed into the recognized historical labels of the decade, the fifties also saw the continuation of an essentially heroic appeal in the emergence and

quickly growing popularity of Fleming's 'sub-literary' James Bond. The impact of the 'new sobriety' (Miller 1968 : 13) did not fail, however, to manifest itself also in the inherently conservative mass-appeal genres. With the introduction of le Carré's and Deighton's disillusioned heroes at the beginning of the sixties, the new sobriety had finally won through, also in the secret-agent story.

Fleming's work was not really popular until the end of the fifties and the beginning of the sixties, although his first story was published as early as 1953 (*CR*).[13] At the time when his success was certain, Fleming suddenly changed his mimetic technique from one in which international politics formed a credible background to his hero's ordeals to one in which the realistic approach was largely abandoned in favour of a background modelled on pure fantasy instead. The change took place in the *G-T* (1959-61) phase. It is evident why Fleming felt it necessary to abandon the realistic approach at the time: the Cold War was on the wane and international *détente* was well under way. Fleming realized that his anachronistic presentation of the role of England in the international game was no longer acceptable to the reader (v. ch. 8). His solution was a choice which meant the sacrifice of a kind of realism based on the facts of international politics, a sacrifice which apparently did not disturb his readers. In the James Bond adventures he expressed a reaction against the new sobriety thematized in contemporary fiction, at the same time as he satisfied a need for political nostalgia and provided a confirmation of the post-war worship of consumerism which was gaining speed in the fifties.

At the height of Fleming's success, which was much furthered by the film versions of his stories[14] or their titles, as his plots were increasingly abandoned,[15] le Carré and Deighton began writing secret-agent stories.

Le Carré had published two stories before the enormous success of his *SWCIFC* in 1963:[16] the neat secret-agent story *CFD* from 1961, and the detective story *A Murder of Quality*, featuring George Smiley as the detective, from 1962. Deighton's first secret-agent story is *IF* from 1962, which introduced the bizarre circumstance that the hero is never mentioned by name. Le Carré's and Deighton's secret-agent fiction was received with praise for its realistic and humanistic qualities which made it so different from the James Bond stories. The new emphasis a decade after the

introduction of Anger may be seen as the delayed response to political, cultural or social change typical of mass culture: a new tendency must have been tested thoroughly and proved viable before it is universally accepted, and so found useful in mass literature.

Le Carré has used the secret-agent story as a form which he sees as well-suited for the interpretation of the climate of the sixties and seventies in England. In an interview from 1976 he made the point that:

> At the moment, when we have no ideology, and our politics are in a complete shambles, I find it [the secret-agent story] a convenient microcosm, to shuffle around in a secret world and make that expressive of the overt world. . . . the figure of the spy does seem to me to be almost infinitely capable of exploitation for purposes of articulating all sorts of submerged things in our society (Bragg: 90).

Le Carré intends the genre as a medium for criticizing a society which has developed a dangerous indifference to the grave threat of the Bomb against humanity (cf. Wood 1970: 33), a kind of society in which the gap between the decision-makers and those affected by their decisions he sees as having been widened to an intolerable degree (v. also le Carré 1977: 25).

One of the reasons why le Carré finds the secret-agent story so apt for expressing a critical and uneasy attitude is found in the theme of treason that runs like a red thread through all le Carré's stories. Ever since the Second World War English governments have been shaken by the exposure of Soviet agents infiltrated in leading government and civil-service circles. The 'mole' theme, so exquisitely employed in *TTSS*, modelled on the Philby affair, provides good and suspenseful story material, but it also becomes a symbol of the precarious state of the modern (British) society (v. Page *et al.* 1968: 22). Insecurity and suspicion are dominant attitudes in all le Carré's stories. His intention is to appeal to readers living in a period characterized by material prosperity, but at the same time threatened by top-level political decisions which may bring everything off balance at a single stroke - as it happens when a mole is exposed.

Fleming's anachronistic tendency and le Carré's disillusionment are countered by the carefree tone in Deighton's stories. He shows

another attitude to the sixties than le Carré's constant worrying, an attitude characterized by the energy of the meritocracy (v. ch. 6) combined with a lack of social commitment. Deighton's hero lives his independent and bohemian life among the technical wonders of our electronic age - this is his variation of the consumer theme so obvious in Fleming's stories - but asserts himself and his humanism by displaying an attitude of arrogance towards the traditionally glittering world of the secret agent. There are touches of black humour in Deighton's novels, and his hero often invites comparison to the hero of the picaresque tradition.

It is tempting to see the atmosphere of Deighton's stories as a reflection of the rebellious cultural tendencies that have characterized the sixties: the Flower Power and Hippie movements, Beat Culture, etc. Deighton's hero rebels against the varnish of the welfare state, but is really ambivalent in his attitude to the post-war Americanization of traditionally European standards of life. In the development of Deighton's work his hero, however, grows less and less rebellious. It is of interest to note that after some fantastic adventures *à la* Fleming's sixties stories, Deighton seems to have turned to a position of nationalistic humility in his acceptance of the matter-of-course protection of England by the USA.

Between them, Fleming, le Carré and Deighton have written a number of stories enjoyable for their ingenuity and suspense but also worth reading as a series of responses to the political, social and cultural climate of post-war England. In comparison with the 'serious' contemporary novel, which will record, sometimes even create, new cultural directions, a mass-appeal genre like the secret-agent story has the nature of repeated control probings to examine the constancy of widespread attitudes, feelings and convictions.

# 2 Contexts of Criticism

## *Thrillers and Literary Quality*

There are many kinds of thriller,[1] and some have gained better reputations than others. There is no doubt that the classic or formal detective story (e.g. Agatha Christie and Michael Innes) has established itself as a legitimate form of literary entertainment, and this is also, I believe, the case with the good secret-agent story (e.g. le Carré and Len Deighton) and the psychological thriller (e.g. Patricia Highsmith and Ira Levin). But there seems to be a rather negative attitude towards the kind of thriller that I shall call the adventure story (e.g. Alistair Maclean and Desmond Bagley). The adventure story is often quite close to other kinds of thriller as regards plot, roles and setting, but on the whole it is more formless than detective or secret-agent stories. We feel justified, however, to talk about the adventure story as a specific thriller genre, because, like other thrillers, it is characterized by a conspicuously high priority given to elements of suspense, and because it employs structural and thematic material from, first and foremost, the rougher kinds of detective and secret-agent fiction. The negative attitude with which many readers meet the adventure story may be due to its frequent lack of intellectual challenge that we find present in other thriller genres, typically in the puzzle structure of the formal detective story.

Thrillers constitute a considerable part of the fiction offered to the reading public,[2] a fact which indubitably contributes to many readers' aversion to the various thriller genres. The argument that whatever enjoys mass appeal does so because it caters to the lowest common quality denominator is of central significance in much academic criticism, and not, of course, without reasons.[3]

Thriller criticism may be divided roughly into three kinds. Up to the middle sixties it tended to assume the shape of genre-fascinated amateurs' enthusiastic but seldom penetrating or

systematic appreciation.[4] Recently, however, a genre approach has established itself with roots in traditional critical interest in history and form.[5] The success of the thriller has, of course, also provoked a hostile attitude which I shall call moral criticism, because it is primarily concerned about the possibly pernicious effects of thrillers.[6]

Already in the Middle Ages the church warned against the detrimental effects of secular literature,[7] but moral criticism did not gain real momentum until the mushrooming of mass culture from about the middle of the nineteenth century.[8] Since then, however, there has been no shortage of warning voices.[9] In the last two decades we have seen, especially in Continential Europe, a development of moral criticism in the particular direction of interest in the ideological content of mass literature, and this development has had some influence on thriller criticism.[10]

In the perspective of quality evaluation the fundamental difference between a genre approach and a moral approach is that the genre approach will rely heavily on text-immanent criteria, whereas a moral approach will build on certain presuppositions about what literature can, will or must do.

Moral evaluation of mass literature rests on a general assumption of the ideal function of literature, which may be described by the word *formative* (cf. Møller Kristensen 1971): the reader will read literature in the expectation of being formed, that is, being provoked into seeing things in ways he is not accustomed to. When the reader feels genuinely disturbed, then the text in question will be considered good. ('Genuinely' excludes such reactions as those provoked by pornography, sentimental literature, etc.) A classic, for instance, is a text that has proved its quality by being able to provoke its readers irrespective of period. If the reader has no wish to be stirred in his ideas or attitudes, he will avoid texts which he may suspect exert such an influence and turn to texts which he expects will leave him undisturbed, perhaps even confirm his views.

The emphasis on the formative value of literature seems to be the basic line of argument used in moral criticism and evaluation, and it explains why mass genres, like the thriller, are - *a priori* - considered literature of poor quality. It also explains why attitude analysis has dominated moral criticism, as the difference between a formative and a confirmative function of literature is, on the whole, a question of the clash or the agreement of attitudes

expressed in literary texts and readers' attitudes. As mass literature is seen to confirm already existing attitudes, a sweeping judgement is passed once and for all, and it remains for the moral critic to point to the elements in the text which agree with the readers, expectations and to discuss the premises, effects, etc. of that relationship in detail.

The difference between evaluation based on considerations of possibly pernicious influence and of genre is accompanied by a difference in outlook on the reading public. The moral critic will necessarily have to form an idea of the nature of the attitudes that the thriller reader will be supposed to see reflected in the literature of his choice. He will also have to believe that readers of mass literature allow themselves to substitute their sense of reality by the characteristically refracted reality such literature offers, an effect sometimes called escapism.[11]

Escapism is an ambiguous accusation. In its 'mild' form of 'imaginative stimulation', 'suspense of disbelief', etc., it is a necessary element for a literary text to work successfully, but in connection with mass literature it is assumed that the ability of literature to make the reader forget his own reality for a while is suspicious. However, there seems to be no unanimous critical opinion about the exact nature of escapism in relation to mass literature. There seem to be as many opinions as there are ideas of the purpose of literature: critics of an ideological bent will emphasize that most thrillers make their readers escape from the economic realities ruling their everyday lives, as the thriller neglects any consideration of economic structures; psychological critics will point to the lack of facets in the *dramatis personae* to the effect that the reader is persuaded that simplicity is the norm; etc. I do not wish to deny that the thriller has these characteristics, and that it does offer its readers an escape from the complexities of life by presenting a universe in which the only complication is a plot complication. But I suggest that the nature of the thriller as a highly conventionalized kind of fiction is experienced by the reader not as a serious challenge to his sense of reality, but as a literary artefact designed primarily to entertain for which purpose the reader's momentary absorption seems to be a necessary lever.

Genre criticism does not ignore problems of the kinds discussed above, but as the genre is always of central importance for analysis, interpretation and evaluation, such considerations will

not immediately lead to quality judgement, but suppositions about readers' attitudes to reality will be considered a genre element and consequently of primarily structural and/or thematic interest.

The interrelationship between the readers' supposed sense of reality and the fictional universe presented in thrillers and other mass genres is a delicate point in both moral and genre evaluation. To me there is no doubt that the ivory-tower position of genre criticism neglects an important aspect of mass literature by isolating a purely literary context. On the other hand, the willingness of the moral critic to accept the reading public as uniform and rather naive is an equally distorted view. A more precise critical approach, and consequently a more fair evaluation, seems possible if we were able to differentiate in more detail in mass literature and in the great unknown called the reading public. The acceptance of a term like mass literature emphasizes the lack of finer distinctions in the literature under consideration, and the acceptance of the idea of a large and amorphous reading public distinct from a cultural élite is so generalized as to be quite misleading.

I agree with the view that literary genres which enjoy a wide and constant appeal must be seen to do so because they meet certain reader expectations, but I disagree with the moral critics who suggest that this is necessarily harmful. Readers who live on an unvaried diet of thrillers written more or less mechanically - trivial thrillers - plus the occasional weekly-glossy love story and whose education is minimal will, I believe, always be a 'risk group'. For such readers the momentary absorption that entertainment offers may become a second but much preferred reality. In contrast, readers of sophisticated thrillers who are familiar with the classics of literature and important new literary tendencies and who belong in the professional layer of society will probably read their thrillers fully conscious of their limited entertainment value.

Although the present study of the secret-agent stories of Ian Fleming, John le Carré and Len Deighton is primarily a genre study, and although I shall pass some quality judgements on a purely generic basis as I go along, I fully recognize the genre's confirmative function: it agrees with probably widespread attitudes and feelings both about the situation of twentieth-century man in general and about a sense of nostalgia in the

specific matter of Britain's position in international politics. I do believe, however, that complete acceptance of the tenets of moral criticism requires differentiations in genre distinctions and, especially, in the chartings of the reading public much more systematic and penetrating than those currently available.[12]

## *The Concept of Formula Fiction*

All literature relates to conventions in that authors may either make use of already existing patterns and themes or react against them. But the relationship between what an author wants to express and the availability of conventions is not a matter of free choice:

> Conventions are not arbitrary; they are the creations of human minds seeking forms of expression. The same acts and facts, if treated in a different way in a different spirit, become something different. . . . The experience *creates* the conventions, because it cannot be described so well in any other way. The same experience *re*-creates the same conventions (Stevens 1973 : 17).

A literary convention is available both to the author as a means of expression and to the reader/critic as a useful tool for his approach to a text or a number of texts.

The term *formula* has found its way into literary criticism some time ago to describe recurrent expressions in oral traditions like popular ballads, and recently John G. Cawelti (1976) has adopted it for his analysis of westerns and different kinds of thriller. Cawelti defines the formula as a 'combination or synthesis of a number of specific cultural conventions with a more universal story form or archetype' (1976 : 6). In the case of the western the specific cultural conventions are 'images and symbols such as cowboys, pioneers, outlaws, frontier towns, and saloons along with appropriate cultural themes and myths' (1976 : 6). The images and symbols selected for the individual story 'support and give significance to the action' (1976 : 6), which is lodged in the 'more universal story form or archetype' (1976 : 6).

All narrative forms make use of a universal story form or archetype, and it is not possible to distinguish between the

western and other narrative forms on that basis. However, the nature of the specific cultural conventions in formula fiction depends on the degree of availability of the conventions and on repetition. The specific cultural conventions of the western form some kind of package which is available to anyone familiar with the western, irrespective of nationality and individual cultural experience, and the familiarity with the package depends on its repetition.

It is an attractive idea to follow Frye's reductionist argument that all literary patterns are developments of one central fertility myth which, in its narrative aspect, is the quest-myth (1963). If we also accept Stevens's view as quoted above that literary conventions are created by specific kinds of experience, it follows that changed kinds of experience will manifest themselves in changed conventions. As demonstrated by Watt (1957/1963), the emergence of the novel as the successor to the epic may be seen as a response to the needs of a society increasingly dominated by middle-class interests to see its central experiences expressed in a form essentially realistic. But the emergence of the novel does not signify the introduction of a completely new form in literature. It represents a shift of emphasis from what Frye calls a high mimetic mode in narrative to a low mimetic mode ('Theory of Modes' in 1957/71). Frye argues that the novel, which is one kind of specific continuous forms (prose fiction), and which is typically represented by authors like Defoe, Fielding and Austen, combines with the three other constitutive forms of prose fiction: confession, anatomy and romance ('Theory of Genres' 1957/1971 : 303-14). The character of individual works of prose fiction is determined by the degree to which the constitutive forms appear and 'exclusive concentration on one form is rare' (1957/1971 : 312).

In contrast to the novel, as Frye describes it, formula fiction is characterized as being very close to the central quest pattern in the form of romance. This is typical of thrillers as of westerns and the kinds of love story that appear in weekly glossies. The unquestioned meaningfulness of life which is of great thematic significance in romance is clearly of great appeal today as it was a long time before the novel came into being. In some formula genres romance is more clearly felt than in others and, as I shall argue in Chapter 3, in the secret-agent story the romance pattern is very close to the surface.

The circumstance that formula fiction is modelled on the

romance pattern to a greater extent than the novel is a distinctive trait of this kind of fiction. However, the utilization of romance is not a sufficient trait to establish the concept of the formula, as there are other kinds of prose fiction that exhibit a similar characteristic without being formula fiction. (Frye points to *Wuthering Heights* and *Moby Dick* (1957/1971: 304).) The complex of relations to be called the availability complex complements the emphasis on romance in formula fiction so that the two elements together establish a necessary and sufficient premise for the concept of formula fiction.

The availability complex is an integrated whole of different interdependent elements. I have suggested above that what Cawelti calls specific cultural conventions constitute a generally available package of literary conventions, removed from any immediate need to give literary response to some experience. In other words, the conventions that we know from the formal detective story such as the hero's characteristically bizarre habits, or the setting in typically middle-class environments are now mere conventions, although at the time of the emergence of the genre they were felt as conventions created by a need to express a certain experience. Cawelti's specific cultural conventions form the same relation to the original need for expression as the cliché does to the original metaphor. For the dynamics of writing and reading formula fiction the general availability of the specific cultural conventions functions as cause as well as effect: the complex provides the writer with a relatively small number of elements that he must base his story on, and it constitutes for the reader a set of expectations that determine his response to the text.

As the romance pattern is at the core of all formula fiction, the thematic possibilities of the various genres depend on the extent to which the thematic potential of the pattern is used, but not all formulas offer the same thematic possibilities. In the formal detective story, for instance, the romance pattern remains mere plot material, whereas in the secret-agent story there seems to be agreement between the thematic potential of romance and the specific cultural conventions drawn on in that genre (v. ch. 3).

As regards the relationship between formula and genre, I see no point in trying to make watertight and absolute distinctions. Traditionally the concept of genre is subject to liberal use, and the attitude towards the use of genre labels is characterized by a

pragmatic attitude rather than a wish for scholarly accuracy. In this study I use genre as a handy but, admittedly, somewhat imprecise label, because it is a traditional way of demarcating categories of literary texts which are felt as different from each other on premises of common sense. As I see it, there is no progression from mere formula to genre depending on readers' growing familiarity with a given formula. For instance, in the case of the secret-agent story, the genre was recognized on a basis of subject-matter and theme before the formula was consolidated structurally after the First World War (v. ch. 1). Thriller genres are formula genres, and the formula is a label that indicates that such genres are characterized by a strong resemblance to romance and by what I have called the availability complex.

The modern secret-agent story shows five formula elements which are genre-distinctive: a dichotomy structure reminiscent of romance, a characteristic concern for ethics, a fixed role structure metonymically arranged around the hero and his adversary, a formula plot consisting of a departure-and-return pattern and a series of ordeals in between, and, finally, a persistent thematic concern for the British loss of power in international affairs.

At this point I want to emphasize that the formula features which I have found to be genre-distinctive exist simultaneously on several levels of abstraction. The fact that a given element appears to contribute to the formation of one feature does not imply that its formula-constituting possibilities have been exhausted. An element may appear with a different significance on another level. The role of the adversary (v. ch. 6), for instance, has a plot significance (v. ch. 5) as well as a significance for the dichotomy structure (v. ch. 3).

Like a game, formula fiction must be seen to function in the reader's life as response to his reality, not a correspondence to it; and, also like a game, the truth values of the different formula features depend on a total acceptance of the conventions in the fictional universe. Once we have accepted that we are in a completely self-supporting world, however, we allow ourselves to be kept in a state of suspense of disbelief by the means available to the formula.

# Formula and Variation (I): Dichotomy Structure and Ethical Dilemma

# 3 The Hero at Home and Abroad

## *The Dichotomy Structure*

It may seem a truism to observe that the genre of the secret-agent story is characterized by a fictional universe of secret-agent activities. However, as in the case of Graham Greene, we may come across prose fiction which is about secret agents but which is not formula fiction. Secret-agent activities must be understood to constitute a necessary but not a sufficient premise of the formula, which is a complex of literary conventions belonging in the romance tradition.

The dichotomy structure is the formula feature in which we see the romance pattern most clearly. Fundamentally, it is constituted by a distinction between representations of elements which are familiar to the reader and elements which are not. The dichotomy structure is revealed most evidently in the opposition of the hero to his adversary, but in the fictional universe created by the formula the two contrastive figures are symbolic expressions of oppositions between ways of life, opposite political persuasions, and opposite ethical considerations. In terms of plot development, the dichotomy structure appears as a journey (the quest of romance) of a cyclical nature: home - abroad - home.

The difference in the approaches of moral and genre criticism (v. ch. 2) is seen clearly in the various kinds of significance attributed to, for instance, the configuration of elements in which I see a dichotomy structure. Bernard Bergonzi suggests that the special appeal of Fleming is in his ability to stimulate the reader with interesting, but superfluous information. Bergonzi distinguishes between plot and an 'affective supperstructure'.[1] As he sees it, Fleming's 'affective superstructure' is mainly concerned with 'gambling, potent fantasies of 'High-Life', and, of course,

'sex and violence' (1958 : 222). It is correct, I think, to assert that there is such an affective potential in the Bond stories, but I also think that to contrast plot and 'affective superstructure' so absolutely is to miss some structural and thematic implications which are revealed by employing the concept of the dichotomy.

It is an important function of the sensationalism criticized by Bergonzi to help divide the genre's fictional world into two: one which is the reader's own, another to which he looks with interest, curiosity, sometimes even fear. The distinction between the known and the unknown is implied by Jens Peter Becker in his explanation of the choice of Scotland as the hiding-place for Buchan's hero, Richard Hannay: 'weil die Landschaft Schottlands einer der wenigen Räume innerhalb England ist, die für den Normalleser noch exotischen Character besitzt,' (1973 : 55) ('because the Scottish landscape is one of the few parts of Britain the average reader still feels as exotic,'). The genre employs every means available to suggest the opposition between the familiar and the unfamiliar, and one such means is to contrast the London of Richard Hannay's which is the London that we all know with some part of the world that we do not. By doing so, the author of the secret-agent story not only arouses the reader's interest in the way a travel booklet does, but he also places the genre in the traditional literary context of romance.

The dichotomy convention is revealed statically in the opposition between the hero and his adversary, as I suggested above. But it is part of the formula of the genre to have the hero meet his adversary only after some initial steps. In other words, the dichotomy structure is made gradually visible by the dynamic movement of plot. With plot as the guiding line it is possible to isolate the most significant elements of the dichotomy pattern.

It is usual for the secret agent of fiction to receive his assignment and then go abroad. This initial plot movement makes an orientation around two, mutually exclusive, poles apparent. Either the hero is at *home*, safe with his own people, or he is *abroad*, in the 'alien land' of his adversary, with all its menaces. This constitutes the basic dichotomy structure, and all other, not least the 'superfluous' elements criticized by Bergonzi, can be seen to establish the contrast.

In Fleming's and Deighton's stories the home-abroad distinction is upheld as the difference between England and other countries, whereas le Carré often transforms the abroad pole into

a general sense of unease on the part of the hero, even if, strictly speaking, he is at home.

The comfortable security felt by the fictional secret agent in between-assignments phases is regularly accompanied by a good measure of boredom. The hero has to pay for his security, as it were. It is emphasized by all three authors that the heroes' normal lives (assignments being the exception rather than the rule) are so full of routine work and idleness that melancholy and depression become almost obsessional. A fictional secret agent, no matter how realistically drawn, is not made for desk work.

Fleming always makes a point of describing Bond's *accidie*[2] when his hero is restlessly waiting for M. to assign him to some dangerous mission. Although Bond's home life contains a good many wishfulfilment elements, their significance is clearly to emphasize his feeling of being bored by routine. Here is Bond in the customary pre-assignment phase:

> It was the beginning of a typical routine day for Bond. It was only two or three times a year that an assignment came along requiring his particular abilities. For the rest of the year he had the duties of an easy-going senior civil servant - elastic office hours from around ten to six; lunch, generally in the canteen; evenings spent playing cards in the company of a few close friends, or at Crockford's; or making love, with rather cold passion, to one of three similarly disposed married women; week-ends playing golf for high stakes at one of the clubs near London (*M* : 10).

Despite the obvious differences between Bond and le Carré's heroes, they are in similar moods before they receive new assignments. In this pre-assignment phase both Fleming and le Carré emphasize everyday triviality and its contrast to the adventure and mystery of secret assignments. Smiley, like Bond, lives in Chelsea, constantly waiting for his unstable wife to show up, and, supported by le Carré's realistic style, his life is shown to be occupied by routine and petty nuisances:

> It had been from the start a day of travail. He had risen too late after working too late the night before, a practice which had crept up on him since retirement last year. Discovering he had run out of coffee, he queued at the grocer's till he ran out

> of patience also, then haughtily decided to attend to his personal administration. His bank statement, which had arrived with the morning post, revealed that his wife had drawn the lion's share of his monthly pension: very well, he decreed, he would sell something (*TTSS*: 22).

Le Carré's heroes are men ruefully considering the disadvantages of middle age when not preoccupied with some new assignment. The anti-heroism of Deighton's nameless hero is not based on the kind of psychological interpretation attempted by le Carré, but is the effect of the hero's disrespectful attitude to things which are equally holy to Bond and to Smiley. Typically, Deighton has his hero live south of the Thames, not in some fashionable part like Chelsea. But his pre-assignment mood remains the same. The pathetic fallacy is at work in Deighton's technique of making the setting agree with his hero's ostentatious fatigue:

> I woke up saying to myself, 'Today's the day,' but I didn't feel much like getting out of bed just the same. I could hear the rain even before I pulled the curtains back. December in London - the soot-covered tree outside was whipping itself into a frenzy. I closed the curtains quickly, danced across the ice-cold lino, scooped up the morning's post and sat down heavily to wait while the kettle boiled. I struggled into the dark worsted and my only Establishment tie - that's the red and blue silk with the square design - but had to wait forty minutes for a cab. They hate to come south of the Thames, you see (*IF*: 9).

When setting off for the alien land of his mission, the hero may experience a transition phase, in which he is initiated into the new locality. This phase does not appear regularly with the dichotomy of home and abroad, as its presence depends on the writer's presentational technique, not on the fixed elements of formula plot (v. ch. 5). Fleming often includes it, le Carré sometimes. Deighton does so only infrequently, as he usually relies on an abrupt, film-like cutting technique. However, when this phase appears, it makes the transition from the well-known but boring London life to the strange and dangerous country of the hero's adversary into a gradual process. At the same time, it heightens the impression that a flight from London to, for instance, Berlin, is not just a geographical move, but a move from one mental condition to another.[3]

Fleming has two conspicuously long passages in which he describes Bond's gradual approach to the alien land. One occurs in *FRWL*, when Bond flies to Istanbul; the other, from which I quote here, appears in *LLD*; Bond is panicking because of a thunder-storm in mid-air:

> Don't lose faith in your stars. Remember that hot stitch of time when you faced death from the Robber's gun last night. You're still alive, aren't you? There, we're out of it already. It was just to remind you that being quick with a gun doesn't mean you're really tough. Just don't forget it. This happy landing at Palisadoes Airport comes to you by courtesy of your stars. Better thank them.
>
> Bond unfastened his seat-belt and wiped the sweat off his face. To hell with it, he thought, as he stepped down out of the huge strong plane (112).

In *SWCIFC* Leamas is brought into enemy territory in three stages: first to Holland, then to West Berlin, from where he is taken by car into East Germany. Although there is none of the panic experienced by Bond in the following passage, the reader is left in no doubt that a transition into something dangerous is being made:

> As they crossed the fifty yards which separated the two check-points, Leamas was dimly aware of the new fortifications on the Eastern side of the wall - dragon's teeth, observation towers and double aprons of barbed wire (117).

As I suggested above, Deighton only infrequently makes use of the accompaniment of a transition description. In the few cases when he does, as in the passage below describing the hero's take-off from London Airport, the impression is of a change similar to the one felt by Bond and Leamas. The transition the hero experiences here is expressed in the change from normal (real) to toy (unreal) size:

> Past airport buildings and parked aircraft, a couple of jolts as the machine gained buoyancy and air speed. The cars on the London road became smaller and smaller and the sun glinted dully on the many sheets of water around the airport. Strange

> castles, baronial mansions, that appear only when you are in an aeroplane (*IF*: 28).

There is a complete change of key when the hero arrives in the alien land of his adversary. The general numbness of between-assignments existence is converted into a condition of sensual acuteness. But only seldom are the heroes of Fleming, le Carré and Deighton sent into well-defined enemy territory, as it happens in *SWCIFC*, *LGW* and *BDB*. As a rule, the alien land is either a neutral or even a friendly nation, but the neutrality or friendliness is covered by a film of distortion.[4]

In most cases Bond has to leave England to carry out his orders, but the few times he remains there, the usually idyllic and well-known qualities of the south of England are transformed into their oppositions.

In *T* Bond meets his adversary for the first time in a vegetarian health institution to which he has been sent to recover. Nothing can be more alien to Bond, whose diet is not at all vegetarian at home in his Chelsea flat. And of course strange things happen there. In *G*, Bond's second meeting with Goldfinger takes place in a typically English country-house made ominous and alien by the presence of the monster-like Oddjob.

In *M* Bond is sent down to Kent to investigate the mysterious death of a fellow secret agent. On the white cliffs of Dover he finds his adversary protected by security installations worthy of a military encampment. Bond is well aware of the unnatural violation of this usually so attractive area, and he registers carefully the strangeness of Hugo Drax' fortification:

> He motored slowly along the new tarmac road that had been laid across the fields behind Kingsdown. He could hear the distant boom of the sea at the foot of the tall cliffs and from somewhere close at hand there was a high-pitched whine of machinery which grew louder as he approached the trees. He was stopped again by a plain-clothes guard at a second wire fence through which a five-bar gate gave access to the interior of the wood, and as he was waved through he heard the distant baying of police dogs which suggested some form of night patrol (77).

The most obvious instances of the alien land qualities are given

in *LLD, DrN* and *OHMSS*. In all three stories the adversaries live in places of so fantastic descriptions that any sense of reality must be left behind.

Even when the downright fantastic is not resorted to, the reader of Fleming's stories is given a strong impression of the strangeness of the alien land. In *LLD* the drive from Idlewild Airport to New York City, as Bond experiences it, is one long emphasis on the unfamiliarity of the USA; not only because of the difference between the general English shortage of goods in the fifties and American prosperity indicated in the passage, but also because of the difference between two fundamentally different ways of life:

> 'Go ahead,' said Bond. He was glad to keep silent and gaze out at his first sight of America since the war. It was no waste of time to start picking up the American idiom again: the advertisements, the new car models, and the prices of second-hand ones in the used-car lots; the exotic pungency of the road signs: SOFT SHOULDERS - SHARP CURVES - SQUEEZE AHEAD - SLIPPERY WHEN WET; the standard of driving; the number of women at the wheel, their menfolk docilely beside them; the men's clothes; the way the women were doing their hair; the Civil Defense warnings: IN CASE OF ENEMY ATTACK KEEP MOVING - GET OFF BRIDGE; the thick rash of television aerials and the impact of TV on billboards and shop windows; the occasional helicopter; the public appeals for cancer and polio funds: THE MARCH OF DIMES - all the small fleeting impressions that were as important to his trade as are broken bark and bent twigs to the trapper in the jungle (9).

Part of the affective superstructure censured by Bergonzi is in Fleming's predilection for the description of meals. Such descriptions, however, may also be seen as integral elements of the dichotomy structure, not only in Fleming's, but also in le Carré's and Deighton's stories. There is a difference similar to the one between boredom and excitement in the description of Bond's attitude to eating at home and abroad:

> James Bond was not a gourmet. In England he lived on grilled soles, oeufs cocotte and cold roast beef with potato salad. But

> when travelling abroad, generally by himself, meals were a welcome break to the tension of fast driving, with its risks taken or avoided, the narrow squeaks, the permanent background of concern for the fitness of his machine (*OHMSS*: 23).

Bond himself seems aware of the change which happens to him when on his way to, or in, the alien land. His life achieves a new significance as soon as he sets off from home. In words which are somewhat stereotyped, Bond reveals an almost poetic mood when following Goldfinger to his hiding-place in Switzerland: '... at the station one could hear the heartbeat of the town. The night-sounds of the trains were full of its tragedy and romance' (119).

That Bond's response to being abroad is not a Fleming idiosyncracy, but a genre convention of dichotomy, appears from a passage parallel to it from le Carré's *CFD*, in which Smiley reflects on the 'magic noises of a night journey across Europe, the oddly cacophonous chimes and the French voices suddenly waking him from his English dreams' (98).

Whereas *fantastic* is a key-word to the nature of the alien land in which Bond usually has to go through his ordeals, the corresponding region in le Carré's stories is generally a mock world of English familiarity. Le Carré shuns the fantastic, as one would expect it of a realistic writer, but by changing the *atmosphere* of his version of the alien land into a quality best described by words like *falsity, pretense* or *sham*, the dichotomy structure is made to stand out clearly.

To le Carré the difference between home and abroad is a difference based on the presence or absence of positive and warm human contact: friendship, love and understanding. In the following passage from *CFD* the reader is left with a strong impression of cold artificality:

> Merridale Lane is one of those corners of Surrey where the inhabitants wage a relentless battle against the stigma of suburbia. Trees, fertilized and cajoled into being in every front garden, half obscure the poky 'Character dwellings' which crouch behind them. The rusticity of the environment is enhanced by the wooden owls that keep guard over the names of the houses, and by crumbling dwarfs indefatigably poised over goldfish ponds. The inhabitants of Merridale Lane do not paint their dwarfs, suspecting this to be a suburban vice, nor,

> for the same reason, do they varnish the owls; but wait patiently for the years to endow these treasures with an appearance of weathered antiquity, until one day even the beams on the garage may boast of beetle and woodworm (23).

An even better illustration of le Carré's method is found in his description in *STIG* of the English colony in Bonn. The imitation of an English home-county suburb is so complete that placed among the low mountains surrounding the German capital the colony is made to look ridiculous by its refusal to adapt itself:

> Behind the English church, on a wooded hill, in a semi-rural avenue from the centre of Bad Godesberg, the Embassy has built itself a modest piece of suburban Surrey. Comfortable stock-brokers' houses with open fireplaces and long corridors for servants they no longer have, hide behind the exiguous privet and laburnum of splendid isolation. The air trembles to the gentle music of the British Forces Network. Dogs of uncertain English breed ramble in the long gardens; the pavements are obstructed by the runabout cars of British Counsellors' wives. In this avenue, on each Sunday throughout the warmer months, a more agreeable ritual replaces the Chancery meeting. At a few minutes before eleven o'clock, dogs are summoned indoors, cats banished to the garden, as a dozen wives in coloured hats and matching handbags emerge from a dozen front doors, followed by their husbands in Sunday suits (36).

Although le Carré shuns such obvious distinctions between home and abroad as suggested by Fleming's technique of making Bond show different attitudes to his food, there are also in his stories meal contrasts which make good sense if read as indications of the dichotomy tension. In *TTSS* Smiley must endure the tedious and irritating company of an old and pompous colleague before he knows that he is to take upon him a new assignment. As the genre convention demands, Smiley is in a depressed state at this phase, explained as a consequence of economic worries. Smiley and his former colleague discuss the past over dinner at a mutual club:

> When evening came he was still full of luncheon at the White Tower where his solicitor, a very self-indulgent man, had

> decided that only a great meal would recover George from his doldrums. Martindale, by a different route, had reached the same conclusion and for four long hours over food Smiley did not want they had bandied names as if they were forgotten footballers (24).

Smiley's attitude to food is here part of his melancholy. He is indifferent and nauseated. But once on his new assignment, Smiley's depression is gone, and although not at all taking the culinary interest of a Bond in his meals, the note is clearly changed. While having a very poor dinner at a road-side restaurant normally patronized by lorry-drivers, Smiley reveals an interest based on better habits: '"I hear the *coq au vin* is always reliable", said Smiley with a poor effort at humour' (173), and:

> The boy appeared, swinging a bottle of Burgundy like an Indian club. 'Would you please let it breathe a little?'
> The boy started at Smiley as if he were mad.
> 'Open it and leave it on the table,' said Guillam curtly (173).

To pass this passage off as local colour only is not very convincing, because exactly here the local colour is not in any way needed. Perhaps the culinary observations have a certain suspense significance. Smiley and Guillam are discussing some important information they have got not long ago, and the effect of suspense is reinforced by putting in material which distances starting point and point of resolution from each other (cf. ch. 5). And in the perspective of characterization it confirms the reader's impression of Smiley as intellect and Guillam as the man of action. But primarily the passage makes sense as the contrast to the indifference to food shown by pre-assignment Smiley.

Although le Carré's *LDG* lacks the pivotal role of the British secret service to focus instead on the Israel - PLO conflict in an Israeli perspective, the dichotomy structure is also in this story of fundamental significance for the overall pattern. When Charlie, the decoy heroine, reflects that 'Coming home is like going abroad' (246), there is more to it than just the emotional hangover resulting from a prolonged stay away from England. In this story her native country is part of the alien land. The English - secret service as well as civilians - are described in ways that the reader recalls from Bonn in *STIG* and Leclerc's forgotten depart-

ment in *LGW*. Although the tone towards the Israeli secret task force is not invariably kind, there is no doubt that we are at home with the Israelis, in Jerusalem and in their various hide-outs and safe houses, and that the Near East and Europe, particularly Western Germany, are the Israeli agents' unfamiliar, mysterious and often threatening game preserves. Le Carré may have changed his setting in accordance with the formula requirement of up-to-date problems and settings, but even the changed points of geographical orientation contribute to shape *LDG* in accordance with the formula feature of the dichotomy structure.

The specific natures of the alien lands as they appear in the stories of Fleming, le Carré and Deighton seem to agree with the heroes' individual personalities. Bond is inclined to hedonism, and neither sadistic nor masochistic means are avoided by Fleming to give Bond his pleasures abroad. Smiley and the other le Carré heroes are constantly endeavouring to restore the world according to their sense of human decency (v. ch. 4).

Deighton's hero is at home whenever he feels accepted, even though the concrete setting may be in the alien land, as his friendship with the Russian Colonel Stok testifies. Abroad is whenever he feels out of place, which is often. Ultimately, then, the locations in which the nameless hero finds himself, acquire significance as projections of the hero's attitude to his situation.

Deighton's hero seems genuinely interested in food, but also in Deighton's stories the descriptions of meals are not just affective appeals to the reader. In the passage below Deighton manages to have his hero comment ironically on the mores of the English executive class at the same time as he slips in a comment on his own daily food habits, so that a simultaneous realization of both poles of the dichotomy structure is the result:

> Dalby didn't fool about with expenses; he went into Wiltons and settled for the best of everything. The iced Israeli melon was sweet, tender and cold like the blonde waitress. Corrugated-iron manufacturers and chinless advertising men shared the joys of our expense-account society with zombi-like debts with Eton-tied uncles. It was a nice change from the sandwich bar in Charlotte Street, where I played a sort of Rugby scrum each lunch time with only two Ph.D.s, three physicists and a medical research specialist for company,

> standing up to a toasted bacon sandwich and a cup of stuff that resembles coffee in no aspect but price (*IF*: 45).

And this is another alien land opposition; the hero's enthusiasm is visible:

> By the time I got back to the dining-room, the table was arrayed with the tiny dishes that the Arabs called *mezze*. There was miniature kebabs, sliced tomato, shiny black olives, stuffed vine leaves and bite-sized pies of soft flaky pastry (*TTLS*: 210).

The genre-specific difference between home and abroad is a structure, then, which is manifested as the difference between the secure, but uninspiring life of the civil servant, and its highly dangerous, but at the same time strongly appealing counterpart of the mysterious and unknown.[5] The hero personifies the difference in his reactions. He is depressed when at home, but excited and enthusiastic when abroad. However, the alien land has its appeal to the hero because it is the exception, not the rule of his life. It must be remembered that the hero undergoes his ordeals in order to be able to return to the humdrum at home. This seems contradictory, but is in agreement with the hero's function as instrument for recreating a situation of status quo.

### *Empathy*

It is quite obvious that the contrast between familiarity and unfamiliarity, home and abroad, is an efficient means of attracting and keeping the reader's interest.

Empathy is of particular importance in formula fiction because the characteristic of predictability necessitates a willing acceptance of the hero's lack of formula knowledge. The hero is supposed to move around in the real world, in which things do not usually happen according to a pre-established pattern. The reader, however, knowing that he is reading fiction, expects a universe based on intentionality and consistency. It is the task of the writer of formula fiction to overcome this barrier: to persuade the reader out of his formula expectations and invite him inside a universe in which connections are made to seem accidental, not part of an already established pattern.

For this purpose, empathy, or reader identification, is of vital importance. When the reader is captured, he leaves his own outsider position, and enters the world of fiction. But to get captured, the reader must be convinced of the lack of any such barrier between the fictional world and his own. We may assume that the scene of James Bond on Dr No's island is too much of a good thing, if the reader plunges directly into it. But James Bond driving his car in well-known streets from his home to the Secret Service headquarters is not a strain of the reader's credulity. James Bond, Smiley, Leamas, Deighton's nameless hero always bring with them their realistic if somewhat extraordinary 'size' wherever they go, at home or abroad. The reader is hooked by his identification with the London he knows, the office routine he abhors, the food he gulps down for lunch, etc., and these features form a link between himself and the hero.

It is characteristic of the conflict pattern of the genre that the action starts at home where everything is balanced and harmonious. And this warming-up facilitates the bridging of the gap between fiction and the reader's own everyday reality. The hero and the reader start off in a world with a realistic emphasis.

The reader gives in to identification when he admits: 'This is my world!' His admission starts him on a search for landmarks which may confirm the obliteration of the barrier between fiction and reality. In the figure of the hero the reader sees a continued confirmation of the world as he knows it, even when the hero is taken to the alien land of his mission.

The identification with the hero starts as an identification on the basis of shared elements of the familiar world, but, of course, wish-fulfilment also plays an important role. Wish-fulfilment or day-dreaming presupposes a starting point in reality. For wish-fulfilment or day-dreaming to work, there must be a basis of common experience on which to build the wishes or dreams. A man may dream of becoming the President of the United States or St. George slaying the dragon, because these figures are developments of ordinary men. There must be an element of the possible in wish-fulfilment, or else the necessary identification mechanism fails to take effect. There is a good illustration of the point in James Bond in the usual pre-assignment phase. He has his regular English breakfast, and he goes to his office by car, like so many other people. But his car is somewhat unusual, a converted Bentley, and this is where wish-fulfilment is slowly introduced.

Who would not like to own that special car? The reader may be the possessor of an ordinary, common-sense car, and he would like Bond's if he could afford it. His wish is rooted in reality.

The *action* of the hero, the anonymous man against international conspiracy, is also part of the wish-fulfilment element in the genre. The contrast between the hero in his emphatically human appearance, maintained also in risky situations, and his resistance to threats from an alien land, is a basic day-dream situation, and as such it enhances the effect of empathy.

The alien land is strange and unknown country, but like any alien land, there is in this region and all it contains a subtle note of attraction. The violence of the James Bond adventures has been severely criticized because of its possible effects on the human psyche towards aggression. This may be so. But in this context I wish to restrict myself to observing that as part of the empathy complex, this feature is indeed efficient. Experience shows that man has a longing for forbidden fruit, and several elements in the genre contribute to satisfy the reader's wish to enter this area, especially the scenes of violence and sex. Fleming has exploited this feature to a high degree, but violence is certainly not absent from le Carré's and Deighton's stories, despite their altogether much lower key.

The dynamics of empathy in the secret-agent story may be seen as working neatly with the progression of plot. Identification begins as an invitation to the reader to ignore the gap between reality and fiction. In the pre-assignment phase there is a confirmation of the daily-life reality shared by reader and hero, and, perhaps, an incipient day-dream potential. In the alien-land phase both identification on the premises of the ordinary (the hero) as well as day-dreaming (the hero's action and the alien land setting), are at work supporting the reader's acceptance of the fictional universe as real. When the action is finished, there is a return to the normality of daily life. The hero to whom the reader says goodbye at the end, might have been his own neighbour, as far as the feeling of shared experience is concerned.

## *Romance, Novel, Myth*

The proposition that the thriller has its roots in medieval heroic literature has become rather commonplace. When critics have

traced genre origins and developments, terms like 'folk epic' (Brosnan 1972 : 11), 'historic epic and romance' (Grella 1964 : 17), 'fairy tale' (Amis 1970 : 110) and 'hero-romance' (Webb 1968 : 1) appear with almost mechanical regularity.

My contribution to genre comparison is not meant to be just another confirmation of the hypothesis that St. George and the Dragon can be seen to provide the model for the modern secret-agent story. I should like to change the perspective, as it were, so that we no longer discuss exclusively in terms of genre *developments*, but in terms of *shared* genre conventions. Remembering Stevens' definition of genre as a 'creation of the human mind seeking forms of expression' (1973 : 17), I wish to disregard the purely chronological angle of literary history and consider romance and the secret-agent story as literary expressions of similar human concerns.

The modern secret-agent story appears as the combination of romance and novel. The structure of the story (dichotomy, plot, distribution of roles) is the structure of romance, whereas the novel is clearly present in the many elements of realism in the genre.[6]

Frye sees two central features in romance. One is its plot structure: 'The complete form of romance is clearly the successful quest' (1957/1971 : 187), with three stages: preliminary minor adventures, crucial struggle and exaltation of hero. The other is its conflict structure: 'The central form of romance is dialectical: everything is focussed on a conflict between the hero and his enemy' (1957/1971 : 187). In Frye's mythological conception of literature, romance constitutes a confirmation of the 'cyclical movement of nature' (1957/1971 : 187), an 'ever repetitive movement of nature' (1957/1971 : 187), an ever repetitive movement proving to listeners and readers that life will go on exactly as it has always done.

The parallels between a romance like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*[7] and a modern secret-agent story are numerous. In both the heroes are men of extraordinary abilities. Their adversaries are men of extra-human dimensions, wicked either by nature or because forced by circumstances. (The Green Knight reveals to Sir Gawain that he is being manipulated by a witch.) The adversary of the secret-agent story frequently owes his evil nature to the witch of neurosis stemming from various repressed traumata. The monsters in Fleming's novels are excellent

examples of such neuroses, but the stories of le Carré and Deighton do not require much analysis before similar traits are revealed (cf. Bill Haydon in *TTSS* and Steve Champion in *TTLS*). The quest or ordeal structure is likewise common to both genres, and the thematic implications are surprisingly similar.

The dichotomy structure is based on the hero - adversary conflict, and in secret-agent story and romance alike positive and negative values are personified and projected into the setting as well.

If we compare the introductory events of *Sir Gawain* with those of the secret-agent story, we note that *Sir Gawain* starts with a description of the Christmas festivities at Camelot. The atmosphere there is happy, the spirits high and the feeling of being together pervades everything:

> This king lay at Camelot at Christmastide;
> Many good knights and gay his guests were there,
> Arrayed of the Round Table rightful brothers,
> With feasting and fellowship and carefree mirth.
> There true men contended in tournaments many,
> Joined there in jousting these gentle knights,
> Then came to the court for carol-dancing,
> For the feast was in force full fifteen days,
> With all the meat and the mirth that men could devise,
> Such gaiety and glee, dancing by night.
> High were their hearts in halls and chambers,
> These lords and these ladies, for life was sweet (Borroff 1968 : 2).

Although the two genres differ in mood at this introductory stage of the action, the sense of belonging to a community, in contrast to the hero's subsequent solitude, stand out as the important feature in this phase of the action. The feeling of integration receives its strong emphasis, in both genres, because it is negated when the hero sets out to accomplish his mission: 'All alone must he lodge through many a long night' (Borroff 1968 : 15).

A monstrous creature, a knight green all over, suddenly intrudes on the company and challenges 'any in this house' to cut off his head. Sir Gawain accepts the challenge and succeeds. But the Green Knight, head in hand, leaves the court reminding Sir Gawain that now he must complete their arrangement: he is to

subject himself to similar treatment by the Green Knight at the Green Chapel in a year's time.

There is no explicit assignment episode in this romance, but as the king's, and consequently his subjects' and country's honour depends on Sir Gawain's courage, there can be no doubt that the knight must go. The prestige of the court is at stake and thus the normality of life represented by it.

All the stories of Fleming, le Carré and Deighton, unlike *Sir Gawain*, begin shortly before the hero is given his assignment (disregarding flash-backs). At this time the violation of the stable order has already taken place, and the hero has the events summarized to him by his superior. This means that the structural similarity between romance, exemplified by *Sir Gawain*, and its modern parallel, only begins with the immediate pre-assignment, not the pre-violation phase. The boredom that Bond experiences may be read as a parallel to the mood of unease felt at King Arthur's court after Sir Gawain's disturbing feat. Both moods suggest a restlessness to which only action is the proper response. This interpretation of the pre-assignment situation in romance and secret-agent story may help us to understand something about the nature of the relationship between the hero and his community in the two related genres.

The depression of the fictional secret agent is not only due to the vogue of alienation in modern literature. The depression is not caused by the prospects of an early death, either. Sir Gawain is forced by his commitment to set off for the unknown, and thus he must abandon his role as an integrated member of society. In this romance we see very clearly that the new role of potential saviour is connected strongly with the rites of preparation preceding a sacrificial death. Sir Gawain is distinguished from his fellows by being made into a god-like figure (dressed, given presents, etc.), and his relations with his community are thus changed from integration to distance. As he now combines characteristic features of the sacrificial god or the scapegoat, his community can no longer contain him, and the new development in the relations express themselves as the knight's strong sense of solitude.

We must assume that a situation similar to the one described at the beginning of *Sir Gawain* precedes the hero's pre-assignment depression phase in the secret-agent story, i.e. a situation of harmony and joy in the society relations of which the hero is an

element. The modern genre, however, has developed into a series fiction, in which the hero is the element of continuity. The phase in which the hero was integrated in society must therefore have preceded his first adventure. We see such a situation hinted at by all three novelists, most obviously, perhaps, by le Carré. There was a time when Smiley was actually a member of the established academic community as a promising research student at Oxford, a period which has come to mean a state of grace to him. He joined the secret service in order to protect the values he felt to be manifested in this kind of life against Nazi Germany (cp. *CFD*). Bond's background consists of 'emphatic' integration, all the way from public school, via language studies in Switzerland, to a career in the war army (cp. his dossier in *FRWL*). Deighton's nameless hero, whether the same one through all the stories, or different ones in each, boasts accomplishments which can only have been acquired in 'normal' life: regular army, university, etc.

Against this background of integration, the pre-assignment mood and the ensuing solitude of the hero underlines his half voluntary, half enforced outsider position as saviour. In *Sir Gawain* weather symbolism expresses the hero's feelings when he approaches the day of his assignment:

> At Michaelmas the moon
> Hangs wintry pale in sky;
> Sir Gawain girds him soon
> For travails yet to try (Borroff 1968 : 12).

Sir Gawain must now begin his search for the Green Chapel, just as the secret agent often has to trace the whereabouts of his adversary (cp. *G, IF* and *STIG*). Sir Gawain leaves, and before long he is beyond King Arthur's kingdom and in strange and unknown regions. Sir Gawain is to pass two tests, first by behaving chastely in a strange but friendly host's castle, then by subjecting himself to three mock beheadings performed by the Green Knight. These two settings, the castle and the Green Chapel, constitute the alien land in which the hero has to carry out his duties. As in many secret-agent stories, there is a transitory phase taking the hero into the alien land, by which the known is changed gradually into the unknown:

> Many a cliff must he climb in a country wild;

> Far off from all his friends, forlorn must he ride;
> At each strand or stream where the stalwart passed
> 'Twere a marvel if he met not some monstrous foe,
> And that so fierce and forbidding that fight he must.
> So many were the wonders he wandered among
> That to tell but the tenth part would tax my wits.
> Now with serpents he wars, now with savage wolves.
> Now with wild men of the woods, that watched from the rocks,
> Both with bulls and with bears, and with boars besides,
> And giants that came gibbering from the jagged steeps
> (Borroff 1968 : 15–6).

There is a clear structural resemblance between the ordeals gone through by the secret-agent hero, for instance James Bond on Dr No's island, and the three attempts on the hero's virtue by the host's wife in the strange castle. Sir Gawain does not kill the Green Knight, but finds out that the man is under a spell of a witch, and Sir Gawain's victory must be seen in the explanation of the spell to him. Finally, then, Sir Gawain is made to see everything as it really is, and this implies a return to normality. The 'unravelling-of-the-threads' conclusion is also of regular occurrence in the secret-agent story, particularly in le Carré's and Deighton's relatively complicated stories (v. ch. 5).

Frye describes the interrelationship between romance and novel in mass fiction in terms of Jungian psychology:

> In fact the popular demand in fiction is always for a mixed form, a romantic novel just romantic enough for the reader to project his libido on the hero and his anima on the heroine, and just novel enough to keep these projections in a familiar world (1957/1971 : 305).

It is true that identification, or empathy, plays a considerable role in mass fiction, but as I see it, the significance of combining two complexes of genre conventions, romance and novel in this case, is in the establishment of a unique literary response to a situation or experience (cf. Stevens quoted in ch. 2).

In its employment of the dichotomy structure the secret-agent story, like romance, mediates a central element of quest myth. With its investment of community representativeness in the hero, its pattern of ordeals to test the hero's strength against adversaries

of extra-human dimensions, and its nature of a circular journey from home to alien land and back again, the quest signifies a profoundly serious response to man's need for creating a meaningful universe. It is possible to interpret the quest myth as a poetic way to explain or prove[8] - in the sense that myth explains or proves - that man is eventually in control of his own existence, even though it is constantly imperilled by forces he cannot understand. Understanding or control, however, is not something to be gained once and for all. Man must prove himself again and again, hence the series of ordeals and the repetition of the myth in various manifestations. The necessity for the hero to risk his life underlines the crucial importance of his action, both to himself and to his community to which his is related by metonymy. In the quest myth we may perceive a wish to 'naturalize' the powers that man sees as uncontrollable or ununderstandable, and therefore dangerous.

In the quest myth the hero, on behalf of his community, manages to slay the dragon, find the grail, etc., so that what appeared to be outside man's domain as a threat or a challenge to *status quo*, is 'domesticated', that is, made to fit in with the world as he understands it. In *Sir Gawain*, for instance, the hero's victory must, as suggested above, be seen in his being told about the witch's plot by the Green Knight: things suddenly make normal sense and, in consequence of this act of naturalization, the spell is broken.

In the secret-agent story, King Arthur's court is replaced by the Ministry of Defence and the witch by political forces hostile to the West. But these are, in the perspective of myth, changes of a superficial nature and merely another example of how myth, in this case quest myth, remains appealing story material despite its having ceased to function in the original profoundly serious way. In the modern genre the interaction between the mythical quest pattern and the subject-matter of international politics and secret-agent activities responds to the reader's fondness for wish-fulfilment. Reinforced by the strong element of empathy, the anonymous hero, who has the power to save or consolidate the prestige and security of his own nation, and the West with it, is not any different from other quest heroes in his victorious naturalization of the opposition. It is thus a significant trait in the genre that the initially formidable adversary is eventually reduced to normal human size. The most frequent demonstration of the naturalization of the adversary we see in the fact that he turns out

to be vulnerable and may be killed like any other human being. Also in less violent endings this is the case: in *SP* it is notable that Smiley reacts to the sight of Karla with the words: 'One little man, hatless, with a satchel' (326). In the best mythical tradition, Karla has been reduced from a mystery that menaces world stability to something definable in ordinary human terms.

Structurally, the compensation mechanisms that I suggested as possible explanations for the growing success of the genre (v. ch. 2) owe much to the elements of quest myth present in it. Mythical patterns have always exerted a very strong influence on literature, either because they are immediate manifestations of the human capacity for creating meaning, as modern Structuralist theory suggests, or because, as 'lowest common denominators', they have shown themselves congenial ways to express human experience. The difference between the employment of myth in the novel and in formula fiction, however, is quite similar to the fundamental difference between the uniqueness of the individual novel and the theme-with-variation character of formula fiction. It is possible, for instance, to point to Golding's use of myth in any one of his novels, but interpretative observations on Golding and myth that will prove extremely rewarding in the study of one of his novels cannot be applied deductively to the novel as such in all its enormous variety. The function of myth in the novel is as diversified as the novel itself. In formula fiction, however, it is as if there is only one story for each genre, but one which has been subjected to innumerable variations. Consequently, the significance of the quest myth for the secret-agent novel, as I have interpreted it above, remains fairly stable in all manifestations of the genre. The reader seems to accept this significance of the quest myth as he accepts the other formula features. The thematic potential in the quest myth is particularly effective in response to the reader's craving for wishfulfilment, in that it so easily adapts to the historically determined compensation mechanisms that the genre builds on.

The secret-agent story employs the same happy combination of elements - in terms of thematic suitability and fascination power - as does romance. This traditional literary form allows for the incorporation of novel realism as well as for the quest myth with its insistence on the importance of man's constant domestication of forces that are mysteriously and menacingly beyond his own domain.

# 4 National Cause and Private Conscience: an Ethical Dilemma

*Ethics and Secret-Agent Fiction*

Ethical problems are only rarely referred to by an Agatha Christie or a Michael Innes, but 'healthily taken for granted', as one critic puts it (Thomson, 1931:22). Ethical issues need not be discussed by writers of detective stories of the formal variety, because without the tacit agreement that murder, by far the most popular of fictional crimes, is not only a threat to a stable society, but also felt as an infringement upon what is considered a prerogative of God, Fate, etc., the genre would lose its fundamental rationale.

The criticism expressed by many recent detective-story writers must not be read as refusals to recognize the existence of accepted ethical standards, but as attempts to explain the causes of crime. Sjöwahl and Wahlöö, for instance, have made the modern Swedish welfare state ultimately responsible for criminal offences,[1] and Julian Symons in England has attempted to account psychologically for criminal motivation.[2] But these writers, and others sharing their critical attitude, do not cast any doubt on the unnaturalness and undesirability of murder.

It is a formula difference between the formal detective story and the secret-agent story that the more violent genre cannot rely on such a commonly shared concept of ethics and justice. In the perspective of ethics, the writer of secret-agent stories finds himself in a situation in which he must deal with a dilemma.

It may very well be the case that in espionage proper, 'moral judgements are singularly out of place' (Greene 1969 : 414), but in secret-agent fiction the writer must justify his hero's often violent and lethal actions. There must be an acceptable proportion between the suffering inflicted by the hero and the reasons for it. It may, I believe, be taken for granted that the deaths and pain

inflicted by the secret agent in the course of his work cannot be condoned readily by the reader, because there is no established sense of justice involved as there is, for instance, when the detective hands over the culprit to the hanging judge. The secret agent who kills a man is considered a simple murderer unless the justification of his action can be accepted by the reader as overriding the inhibitions of his own conscience.

The standard excuse for the violent action of the secret agent is that there is a national need for him to do as he does. But the writer may present his cause more or less convincingly, and on his presentation depends the reader's willingness to accept a breach of the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill'.

### *Ian Fleming and Aesthetic Replacement*

Is Bergonzi right when he suggests than in Fleming's stories, in contrast to Buchan's, there is a 'total lack of any ethical frame of reference' (1958 : 227)? Bergonzi goes on to suggest that the Bond stories are all merely evocative of '*sensations*, more or less *fortes*' (1958 : 227). Bergonzi does not, however, analyse the possible interrelationship between the two levels of ethics and sensations. But there is such a relationship, and I suggest that its existence constitutes Fleming's way out of the difficult dilemma.

Fleming appears to have been very much aware of the ethical dilemma when he began his James Bond series. In his first story, *CR*, considerable space is devoted to the discussion of ethics and to Bond's doubts about the justification of the violent and lethal nature of his work. The conclusions arrived at in *CR* must have satisfied Fleming's wish to discuss these matters, as there are only very short and rather banal references to the dilemma in subsequent stories.

Chapter 20 of *CR* is entitled 'The Nature of Evil', and here the reader learns about Bond's nascent, but quickly resolved doubts about his ethical commitment. In this chapter the hero is recovering from the torture inflicted by his adversary, Le Chiffre, and by a Soviet agent of SMERSH. As this story is really constructed as a succession of two formula plot patterns (v. ch. 5), the scene may be interpreted as either post- or pre-assignment phase, with the hero's depression which is normal in both (cf. chs. 3 and 5). Bond is talking with Mathis, a French colleague

apparently unconcerned about ethical qualms. Bond has doubts about the existence of the absolute values he seems to have believed in until now. The origin of his doubts is his realization that values change: 'History is moving pretty quickly these days and the heroes and villains keep changing parts' (119). Mathis replies that Bond is a 'bloody anarchist' (119), which prompts Bond into making a distinction between private and public ethics: 'If he [Le Chiffre] was here now, I wouldn't hesitate to kill him, but out of personal revenge and not, I'm afraid, for some moral reason or for the sake of my country' (120). Mathis retorts with the insinuation that Bond is a simple coward, who just wants to get out of a difficult job. This provokes a speech from Bond, the closest he ever comes to discussing profound existential matters. Bond starts by showing sympathy for the personification of evil, the Devil, whose book, he says, has never been written, in contrast to the Good Book. Bond's defence of Le Chiffre runs along the popular theological line of assuming that evil exists only to make us see the nature of good:

> 'Le Chiffre was serving a wonderful purpose, a really vital purpose, perhaps the best and highest purpose of all. By his evil existence, which foolishly I have helped to destroy, he was creating a norm of badness by which, and by which alone, an opposite norm of goodness could exist. We were privileged, in our short knowledge of him, to see and estimate his wickedness and we emerge from the acquaintanceship better and more virtuous men' (121).

Mathis responds by suggesting that to allow evil, for instance in the shape of Le Chiffre, to live on, would not be consistent with personal conscience which is 'as old as the first family of apes which gave birth to him' (121). Fleming does not allow Mathis any doubts about this supposition about the inherent and unchangeable nature of conscience. His argument would have been invalidated if Bond had suggested that the workings of conscience may be dependent on contemporary concepts of good and evil. Having unknowingly avoided the implifications of such a subtlety, Mathis makes a sudden shift away from the rational basis on which the discussion has been conducted so far. He simply turns the ideals of ethics into a matter of private and immediate emotional response, a change which is intended to

sweep away Bond's previous, and quite rational, distinction. He then elaborates on Bond's willingness to kill Le Chiffre out of personal lust for revenge by emphasizing emotional attachments. Bond, he says, may see similar situations arising everywhere: 'Well, when you get back to London you will find there are other Le Chiffres seeking to destroy you and your friends and your country' (122). And he continues: 'And when you fall in love and have a mistress or a wife and children to look after, it will seem all the easier' (123). The change of direction of the argument away from *ratio* to *emotio* is complete when Mathis says goodbye with the words: 'Surround yourself with human beings, my dear James. They are easier to fight for than principles' (123). Bond's attempt to detain him is unsuccessful, and Bond is left with no chance of answering back. This leaves him in an ambiguous situation. The reader does not know whether his 'hey' after Mathis is an exclamation of protest or an admission of defeat. But Mathis has the final word and it remains in the air, as the conclusion of the argument.

Analysis of this dialogue reveals Mathis' side-stepping. The casual reader probably accepts it as perfectly valid. However, Bond was not contradicted, but led astray by Mathis, who turned the principles of the discussion away from rationality via the common sense of one-killing-saves-many-innocent-lives to a purely emotional and personal appeal instead.

The difference between Bond's arguments at the beginning of the discussion and Mathis's final exegesis of evil at the conclusion is really a difference between principles of behaviour supposed to support the common good and thus of an ethical nature, and principles of personal satisfaction, an aesthetic response.

Ethical demands refer to an ideal formed by norms of behaviour generally accepted at a certain time by a certain community. As changes in norms of behaviour only seem to take place perceptibly over long periods of time, and as geographical boundaries are felt by the inhabitants of a given country to protect against strangers, such norms aquire an abstract significance as something permanent and universal. There is, consequently, in ethical demands and considerations a clear distinction between the individual and the ideal to which he is supposed to conform. The individual is considered the unstable element in relation to what appears the absolute nature of ethical conventions.

The aesthetic response, however, is based on the private experience of the individual, on his personal tastes and preferences. An aesthetic inclination is an inclination to satisfy an appetite, to re-establish some sort of mental harmony. The harmony is not the result of the interaction between an individual and a set of norms which appear to him as absolute, but between a concrete object or event and the individual, hence the characteristically relative nature of aesthetic judgements. For the aesthetic experience, the categories of 'good' and 'evil' are irrelevant, and reference must be made, instead, to 'pleasant' and 'unpleasant'. For the individual, the ethical imperative assumes the nature of *duty*; the aesthetic experience, however, is felt as a voluntary *inclination*.[3]

It appears from the stories subsequent to *CR* that Bond accepts Mathis's substitution of an aesthetic for an ethical response, because this aesthetic replacement agrees well with the general aesthetic dominance of Fleming's fictional universe. In this universe, a great number of elements seem to owe their existence to the hero's personal appetites and satisfactions.

It is obvious that the aesthetic replacement is an efficient way to do away with the implications of the dilemma, because instead of demanding a deeper probing into the nature of conscience or the reasons of state which cause the secret agent to interfere, the reader is coaxed subtly away from the horns of the dilemma and is allowed to escape through them.

The ethical dilemma is an ever-present element in the formula of the secret-agent story, and as such it requires constant attention. But I wish to emphasize that it is something which belongs on the *fictional* level: it is the task of the novelist to present the hero's ethical choices in such a way as to persuade the reader to accept the hero's justification of his action. Either the reader must be persuaded that the hero's cause is unquestionably right, or he must be made to forget about the nature of the dilemma despite its crucial importance. The first possibility is the one chosen by le Carré, the second by Fleming.

## *John le Carré and the Holiness of the Heart's Affections*

In le Carré's stories, the ethical justification of secret-agent activities is much more prominent than in Fleming's or

Deighton's. Whereas the reader is left with the feeling that Fleming had Mathis shove the dilemma under the carpet for good in *CR*, the reader may think that le Carré's interest in it is harmful to the speed of the action.

Le Carré's stories have been called 'anti-thrillers', because they do not follow the convention of exalting the hero whenever a mission is terminated (Palmer 1978: 212). The subdued and sombre atmosphere created by the emphatically naturalistic style, and the fact that some of le Carré's heroes actually lose in the end must not, however, mislead the reader to think that le Carré is in disagreement with the genre formula. That his stories are felt to deviate from the conventional features of the genre is mainly an effect of his particular atmosphere and the sometimes extremely complicated plot structures (v. ch. 5).

In le Carré's stories plot structure and ethical dilemma are two sides of the same thing, provided that Smiley's point of view (in the stories in which he appears) is accepted as the central one. Although the unsuccessful heroes Leamas, Leiser, Turner and Westerby are the formal heroes of *SWCIFC, LGW, STIG* and *HS* respectively, Smiley watches what is actually his action from the wings (with the exception of *STIG*). This trait makes it possible for le Carré to give the reader the impression of secret-agent activities as sordid, meaningless and depressing, as the fates of the agents show. At the same time the survival of Smiley assures the reader that the missions are worth the sacrifices. Le Carré's answer to the dilemma is consequently not a refusal to acknowledge its necessary implication that the end justifies the means. But his special variation is to have Smiley given absolution for his employment of foul means by reminding the reader constantly that English culture has values which make such sacrifices worthwhile.

It is interesting to note similar developments in the stories of Fleming and le Carré towards a growing preoccupation with the hero's own favourite evils. Fleming's breaking away from realism in his description of international politics to fairy-land adventure in the course of Bond's assignments (v. ch. 8) does not necessitate a revision of the hero's sense of his ethical commitment. On the contrary, Bond's actions, when directed in conscious revenge against Blofeld and SPECTRE, are given a new dimension which makes Bond's aesthetic commitment seem more natural than a realistically described political background would allow it to. Le

Carré's increasing attention to Karla, the Soviet masterspy, is parallel to Fleming's development away from realism to myth. The concentration on Karla grows into monomaniac dimensions for Smiley, and seems to assume the status of an aesthetic inclination quite like Bond's.

Smiley is introduced in *CFD* as a man more than mildly confused and filled with a feeling of meaninglessness when at a bureaucratic distance from field work. Smiley finds himself placed between Maston, his superior, who represents official values, and the wife of the man whose death Smiley has been assigned to investigate. She represents the prickings of Smiley's own conscience, and although in the end she turns out to be the adversary's helper, she is able to penetrate at once to Smiley's unease:

> She was motionless, waiting to hear. What could he say: 'I'm sorry I killed your husband, Mrs Fennan, but I was only doing my duty. (Duty to *whom* for God's sake?) . . . She paused, showing no sign of emotion beyond the burning of her dark eyes. 'It's an old illness you suffer from, Mr Smiley,' she continued, taking a cigarette from the box, 'and I have seen many victims of it. The mind becomes separated from the body; it thinks without reality, rules a paper kingdom and devises without emotion the ruin of its paper victims. But sometimes the division between your world and ours is incomplete; the files grow heads and arms and legs, and that's a terrible moment, isn't it? The names have families as well as records, and human motives to explain the sad little dossiers and their makebelieve sins. When that happens I am sorry for you.' . . . 'You call yourself the State, Mr Smiley, you have no place among real people. You dropped a bomb from the sky: don't come down here and look at the blood, or hear the scream' (26-7).

Smiley himself sums up his bewildered attitude when he replies to his superior's observation that secret agents are not policemen: 'No. I sometimes wonder what we are' (41). From this point of confusion and bewilderment, Smiley's never-ending quests begins. There is more to his musing 'I sometimes wonder what we are than mere doubt as to departments. His doubts are of existential importance. Smiley's quest is a quest for values beyond

merely national interest. In le Carré's fictional universe truly ethical behaviour is based on the recognition of the values of rationalism and individualism, including weakness, frailty and doubt, the only possible defence against the denial of the individual in totalitarian regimes.

The quality of life represented by Smiley in *CFD* is, above all, marked by his strong sense of tradition. Smiley is a natural conservative, attached almost physically to the past. When looking back, his object is invariably pre-war Oxford. Before the war he was beginning an academic career based on an interest in sixteenth-century German poetry among likewise tradition-conscious colleagues. Those recruiting him for intelligence work were also people pursuing respectable, academic activities whom Smiley has known before as teachers and colleagues. For Smiley, the step from literary research to intelligence was not a step from one profession to another. His cover was his continued research and teaching activities, and his contacts were his colleagues. The world known by Smiley in those days was one characterized by the protected world of learning, a kind of life marked by civilized intercourse and a sense of values not very much removed from the norms of the literature Smiley was interested in, and which he also recognizes in one of his wedding presents:

> He loved to admire the beauty of those figures, the tiny rococo courtesan in shepherd's costume, her hands outstretched to one adoring lover, her little face bestowing glances on another. He felt inadequate before that fragile perfection (*CFD*: 120).

Smiley's absorbed reflections inspired by the rococo group are significant, because the group symbolizes not only Smiley's belief in love as a redeeming force, but also the permanent nature of ideals. Furthermore, as the rococo group is a work of art, it owes its creation to individual creative power. Belief in love and individualism is Smiley's justification for his crusade against the totalitarian vices of, to begin with, fascism and nazism, and later, communism:

> Everything he admired or loved had been the product of intense individualism. That was why he hated Dieter now, hated what he stood for more strongly than ever before: it was the impertinence of renouncing the individual in favour of the

> mass. When had mass philosophies ever brought benefit or wisdom? Dieter cared nothing for human life: dreamed only of armies of faceless men bound by their lowest common denominators; he wanted to shape the world as if it were a tree, cutting off what did not fit the regular image; (*CFD*: 138).

It is obvious that Smiley's ideas about real human values are closely linked with his appreciation of the Western, especially the English, cultural tradition. The past may appear fragmentary and imperfect, but the cultural achievement seen by Smiley is an interpretation of life in terms of individualism.

At this point it may be objected that Smiley's pursuit of individualist cultural values does not seem different from Bond's hedonistic attitude to life. But the difference, as I see it, is the difference which forms the basic distinction between an ethical and an aesthetic commitment. The norms of behaviour which constitute the imperative in ethical relations will assume the nature of ideals, whereas an aesthetic inclination remains a purely personal and relative matter. Fleming never conceals the fact that Bond actually follows his own inclinations and appetites, also in violent moments. In le Carré's stories, the values symbolized by Smiley's Oxford days are constantly held up as something to be approached in all the hero does. Smiley's sense of values has the status of an ideal goal, a norm of behaviour which constitutes the good, not merely the pleasant.

If in *CFD* Smiley took his first tentative steps towards the formulation of his own ethical convictions, le Carré in *SWCIFC* gives the other side ample opportunity to answer back. In this story Smiley is glimpsed only once, as a reluctant member of the hero's control group.

Most critics have read *SWCIFC* as the story which removes the supposed glamour of the secret agent's world for good, and as le Carré's expression of disgust with cold-blooded planning for nationalistic causes. But it should not be forgotten that Smiley's organization is successful in its conspiracy, and that Smiley must be assumed to accept its results as he does not retire, but emerges again in *LGW*.

Despite its critical tone, the story is also a defence of values which make the sacrifices of Leamas, Liz and the sometimes quite sympathetic Fiedler necessary. The critical tone is directed against the way the plan is executed, not against the reasons for

its execution. In *SWCIFC* le Carré pities the characters for their private fates, but this is something which takes place on the level of formula variation only. On the level of the formula there remains the ideological and political conflict without which the genre could not exist. The story should not, I believe, be read as a complete denunciation of secret-agent activities, but rather as an experiment to transfer the perspective to the victim.

Control's explanation of the ethical dilemma to Leamas is, despite the hollow sound of his words, valid as the fundamental rationale of secret-agent activities, even in this otherwise controversial story:

> I would say that since the war, our methods - ours and those of the opposition - have become much the same. I mean you can't be less ruthless than the opposition simply because your government's *policy* is benevolent, can you now' (20)?

The reader's likely reaction is to feel sympathy for Leamas against this cold and suave Control. Leamas is a man of action, not of words (at any rate, not until the end of the book). Rhetorical proficiency assumes a negative symbolic significance in *SWCIFC*. Leamas's relative inarticulateness, consequently, should not be seen as a liability only. In comparison with Fiedler's stream of words, Leamas's silence and brief statements become marks of strength. In the long dialogue between Leamas and Fiedler (133-5), Fiedler's argument is that the *Abteilung* (the secret service of the GDR) is the extended arm of the communist party, a fact which to Fiedler is the evident justification of the *Abteilung's* activities. But the circumstance that Fiedler has to use so many *words* smacks of too much self-persuasion. The pragmatic attitude *acted* by Leamas my be seen as the practical side of the individualism which Smiley defended in theory in *CFD*. There is a point where rhetoric becomes self-destructive. Fiedler is very close to that point.

Leamas, when we first learn something about him, is convinced of the 'one moral law' of intelligence work: 'it is justified by results' (13). The critical tone throughout the story cannot disguise the fact that Leamas actually agrees in principle with his own superiors, even on the point of his own death. Of course, there is the alternative possibility that le Carré wishes to show us a picture of a man who has been brainwashed by his own organiza-

tion to such a degree that he is no longer able to see through to the rotten core. Although such an interpretation is tempting in view of the general tone of the story, Leamas's common sense and practical group argue against it. When Leamas explains the true situation to Liz, his lover and helper, we overhear a man bitter about his own fate, but nonetheless of the opinion that activities like his own are necessary to prevent worse things from happening, even if this means the loss of a few lives:

> I don't believe in anything, don't you see - not even destruction or anarchy. I'm sick, sick of killing but I don't see what else they [his superiors] can do. They don't proselytize; they don't stand in platforms and tell us to fight for Peace or for God or whatever it is. They're the poor sods who try to keep the preachers from blowing each other sky high (231).

The innovation of the genre which le Carré is so often claimed to have made by his *SWCIFC* is not, at any rate, brought about by a change of attitude towards the ethical dilemma. His innovation is a reorientation taking place on the level of formula variation by continuing the realistic and victim-oriented tradition in the manner of Maugham, Greene and Ambler.

In *CFD* the values of personal friendship are opposed to the absolutism of ideological faith. In *SWCIFC* the perspective is the victim's, and in *LGW* le Carré turns to the necessary, but highly dangerous autonomy of intelligence organizations to examine with sympathetic irony the enormous risks which an immature and selfish exploitation of that autonomy may lead to.

On all levels the events described in *LGW* are mock reflections of things as they should be, even down to the tragic element of necessary human sacrifices. The story may be read as a burlesque on the genre, but it is more than that. It is a warning, not only against egotistical narrow-mindedness, but also against a false sense of human values.

The Smiley of *CFD* sees the past in terms of ideals worth fighting for, ideals rooted in individualism and love. Also the men of Leclerc's forgotten department cling to the past, and they too believe in individualism. But they, like James Bond, have given to the ends the status of means.

Whereas Smiley's constant effort in the stories in which he appears is to shape the present by the ideals of the past, Leclerc,

Smiley's mock counterpart, longs for a mere repetition of the past, and that is his tragi-ironic flaw.

*STIG* is the only one of le Carré's stories in which Smiley does not appear. It is informative to read this story against the background formed by the three previous ones. We may read *CFD*, *SWCIFC* and *LGW* as attempts to examine various angles of the ethical dilemma. In *CFD* Smiley began his search for what to him constituted real values, and the faith in individualism was made a cornerstone. In *SWCIFC* the harshness and cruelty which follow in the wake of secret-agent activities were brought out into the open, though not in order to be wholly condemned, but to be understood as necessary effects. In *LGW*, however, the reader witnesses the downfall of a system of values very close to those of James Bond's aesthetic universe.

The main theme in *STIG* is the relationship between the search for truth and the question of its ultimate value. The situation faced by Turner, the Leamas-like hero, is complicated, because his assignment does not explicitly tell him what is really expected of him. Gradually it dawns on him that the true objective is to silence a minor official at the Bonn Embassy who has got access to war-time information which could prove harmful to England's EEC negotiations. The success of the national cause depends on Turner's suppression of the minor official's information, but to reveal the truth contained in it seems the only ethically justifiable course.

Both the minor official and Turner fail. The minor official because the totalitarian nature of the society he is facing is so powerful. Turner because he is not willing to accept moderation and compromise as necessary elements of existence.

Like *SWCIFC, STIG* presents the reader with an ambiguity of attitude. On the one hand its tone assures him of the general rottenness of the whole system for which the agent works. On the other le Carré's repeated emphasis on individualism as the redemptive virtue in life implies the necessary acceptance of the individual's shortcomings. This brings the reader into the paradoxical situation that the feelings evoked by the description of Bonn are irreconcilable with its symbolical status as the bulwark against totalitarianism: 'There are no absolutes here. . . . It is all doubt. All mist. The mists drain away the colours. There are no distinctions' (280). It is understandable that Turner, the hero in search for some 'bloody absolute' (50), feels frantic at this

indifference, and wishes to crush it. The characters defending what Bonn stands for appear as unattractive pillars of the Establishment. However, individualism implies an acceptance of doubt, unease, compromise and weakness as not very pleasant but necessary ingredients.

The opposition between totalitarianism and individualism is of great significance in *STIG* also, but le Carré's tone should not lead the reader to accept Turner's view as the right one. Absolutism cannot be fought by absolutism. This is the lesson Turner is given.

The three le Carré stories *TTSS, HS* and *SP* (from now on called the *Karla trilogy*) all build on the theme of treason, no doubt inspired by the numerous espionage scandals in post-war England.[4] The three stories can be read as one. In *TTSS* Smiley is assigned to uncover a 'mole' operating in the British secret-service headquarters; in *HS* Smiley heads the reconstruction of the shattered service; and in *SP* he manages to track down Karla, the Soviet mastermind responsible for the mole operation.

It is as if le Carré starts afresh on the ethical dilemma in *TTSS* after having seen it from different angles in the previous stories. In *TTSS* Lacon, a highly-placed senior civil servant, outlines the problem again in all its simplicity:

> You would say that morality was vested in the aim, I expect. Difficult to know what one's aims *are*, that's the trouble, especially if you're British. We can't expect you people to determine our *policy* for us, can we? We can only ask you to further it. Correct? Tricky one, that (65).

Smiley's search for the mole in *TTSS*, and for Karla in *HS* and *SP*, is, from the ethical aspect, an endeavour to draw the line between the individualism defended already in *CFD* and its opposite, totalitarianism or absolutism. The trilogy, then, appears as a series of attempts to close in on a set of existential values which are Smiley's and which make his activities ethically defensible.

Treason means lying: thus the mole trespasses not only on matters of national loyalty, but also on a fundamental sense of human decency. It is characteristic that Guillam, Smiley's helper reacts instinctively with surprise and unease, when for the first time in his life he is forced to pretend: 'Somehow, . . . he had

sinned against his own notions of nobility. He had a sense of dirtiness, even of self-disgust' (*TTSS*: 87).

It is also to the dishonesty of pretense that Smiley reacts most violently, not only in the shape of the mole Haydon, but also in the society under whose anachronistic pretensions Haydon was raised:

> Haydon had betrayed. As a lover, a colleague, a friend; . . . yet there was a part of him that rose already in Haydon's defense. Was not Bill also betrayed? Connie's lament rang in his ears: 'Poor loves. Trained to Empire, trained to rule the waves . . . . Thus Smiley felt not only disgust; but, despite all that the moment meant to him, a surge of resentment against the institutions he was supposed to be protecting. (*TTSS*: 297).[5]

Even to Haydon, the professional pretender and liar, to have to admit to a breach of a fundamental sense of nobility is embarrassing: 'Here Smiley sensed Haydon falter. For the first time, he actually seemed uneasy about the morality of his behaviour. His manner became noticably defensive' (*TTSS*: 311).

Smiley of the final pages of *TTSS* is a deeply disillusioned man, depressed by the web of lies surrounding him, trying to find all kinds of excuse for Haydon's behaviour, to be able to get a glimpse of his human core. But although Smiley is presented as totally frustrated, there remains with him a distinction which separates the ignoble and therefore evil behaviour of Haydon from the *Urkraft* of true humanism.

> Over the flat East Anglian landscape as it slid slowly by, the unyielding face of Karla replaced Bill Haydon's crooked deathmask. 'But you had this one price: Ann. The last illusion of the illusionless man. . . . Illusion? Was that really Karla's name for love? And Bill's' (*TTSS*: 316)?

If we read the trilogy as one story, divided into three phases, it is evident that Smiley must be considered its hero, despite the prominence of Westerby in the plot of *HS*. Smiley was the person called upon by Lacon, because, as the senior civil servant put it: 'It's your generation after all. Your legacy' (*TTSS*: 69). After his realization in *TTSS* that Karla must be behind the mole

operation, Smiley's effort – indirectly in *HS*, directly in *SP* – is to dethrone his own Soviet counterpart. It is Westerby's thematic function to help Smiley in his quest.

There is the same relationship between *TTSS* and *HS* as there is between *CFD* and *SWCIFC*, structurally as well as thematically, including the matter of ethics. It is interesting to note that after the formulation of the humanistic 'platform' in both *CFD* and *TTSS*, the subsequent stories, *SWCIFC* and *HS* respectively, express an endeavour to show the nature of the sacrifices needed.

In *SP*, Smiley comes to the end of his quest. He makes Karla defect. But the circumstances under which Smiley's victory is secured are not at all glorious. Like the Smiley of *CFD*, the Smiley of *SP* is a man who feels a traitor to his own principles. In the early story, Smiley killed a former friend who let him gain the upper hand in the moment of decision. In the third story of the trilogy, the victorious Smiley has won over a man not willing to sacrifice his dearest possession, his sick daughter, to the cause of his nation. Smiley again finds himself in the paradoxical situation that in his own defence of humanism he has to use means which exploit traits of humanism on the other side. Like Smiley, Karla has nothing left but the 'last illusion of the illusionless man'.

In the perspective of ethics, the Karla trilogy begins with an assertion of Smiley's fundamental virtue, his last illusion, which renders him the ethical superior to the mechanistic absolutism of his counterparts. Smiley's humility is his redeeming feature, and as he is the product of the best in the liberal and individualistic British tradition, this tradition, despite its obvious flaws, is understood to possess a potential worth fighting for. There is, however, in *HS* and *SP* an increasing unease to be seen in Smiley. In *HS* it manifests itself as the introduction of an ambiguity in him. When the reader sees him through the eyes of Westerby, he sees a pompous man given to superficial and routine reflections on the justification of their common work:

> 'And you're game and so on?' Smiley asked. 'You're, well, *prepared*? You have the will?' . . . 'A lot of people haven't these days. The will. Specially in England. A lot of people see *doubt* as a legitimate philosophical posture. They think of themselves in the middle, whereas of course really, they're nowhere. No battle was ever won by spectators, was it? We understand that in this service. Our present war began in 1917, with the Bolshevik Revolution. It hasn't changed yet' (114).

These are words to which James Bond would have nodded in agreement, and they are not words which the reader expects from a subtle person like Smiley. However, through the eyes of a person much more familiar with Smiley, we get a more habitual impression of his reflections on ethics. Guillam recalls Smiley formulating the ethical dilemma in a 'disastrous' (461) conversation with senior officers: 'To be *inhuman in defence of our humanity*, he had said, *harsh in defence of compassion*. To be *single-minded in defence of our disparity*' (461). These paradoxes are Smiley's own definition of what has emerged so far between the lines in the stories before *HS*, and they constitute a plausible and intellectual counterpart to what Smiley told Westerby. But in *HS* Smiley is gradually possessed of a feeling towards Karla not unlike revenge. It is partly the introduction of the motive of revenge which makes for Smiley's unease. He has arrived at a point at which he does not seem to care when he briefs an operative on the ethics of their trade. It is a point at which the paradoxes can be given names. It is also a critical point because now Smiley has to persuade himself - and the reader - that the ethical force pushing him on is not just another, stylistically refined, version of Bond's motives.

Smiley's unease owes its existence also to a consciousness which is split between the frustration stemming from the 'greyification' of values,[6] and an only half-recognized knowledge that the goal of his pursuit is not quite definable in terms of nationalism, nor, really, in terms of revenge. In a passage which is deceptively close to the aesthetic orientation of Bond's ethics, Smiley reveals his motives for hunting Karla:

> Yet he advanced without the ultimate conviction. It was no answer to rehearse the steps that had brought him to this point - the Russian goldseam, the imprint of Karla's private army, the thoroughness of Haydon's efforts to extinguish knowledge of them. Beyond the limits of these external reasons, Smiley perceived in himself the existence of a darker motive, infinitely more obscure, one which his rational mind continued to reject. He called it Karla, and it was true that somewhere in him, like a left-over legend, there burned the embers of hatred toward the man who had set out to destroy the temples of his private faith, whatever remained of them: the service that he loved, his friends, his country, his concept of a reasonable balance in human affairs (118).

In le Carré's ethical universe the last clause carries the greatest weight, because it expresses the essence of Smiley's humanism. And this is also where his motivation differs from Bond's. To both, balance is the key word. But to Bond, it is a purely personal - a selfish - balance. To Smiley, it is a shared balance only to be reached against the background of the Western tradition. (It is characteristic of Smiley's humanism that the word 'reasonable' is used here.) Thus Smiley's ethical commitment exists by reference to something outside himself, to a tradition based on values building on restraint and common sense.

If the Smiley of *HS* is an uneasy and rather bewildered figure insofar as ethics are concerned, the Smiley of *SP* is rather more desperate. Now set almost monomanically on the destruction of Karla, he realizes that the concept of duty has no longer any value for him,[7] at any rate not insofar as nationalism is concerned. More than ever, it is tempting to parallellize the developments of Bond and Smiley towards a common goal of hedonism. But again, it should be noted that although Smiley can no longer use the word duty, there is still left in him a spur which owes its existence to a traditionally 'English' set of values: a shared tradition of moderation, common sense, pluralism, skepticism and empiricism, but first and foremost a belief in the possibilities of human endeavour. Smiley, who feels increasingly alienated from his country and his own organization, sees in his pursuit of Karla only restrictions of a basically ethical nature:' . . . the only restraints upon him were those of his own reason, and his own humanity' (136).

Smiley's victory over Karla is not a victory in political terms. As Smiley has developed into a being concerned with a single adversary in the Karla trilogy, he has grown more and more into a being concerned first and foremost with his own integrity. There is no doubt that the Smiley we see the *SP* has become desperate as the result of the growing complexity in the international issues at stake.

Towards the conclusion of *HS* Smiley admits to his confusion in a letter. When he joined the 'secret road' (532), the political issues were clear: '*The enemy in those days was someone we could point at and read about in the papers*' (532). But: '*Today, all I know is that I have learned to interpret the whole of life in terms of conspiracy*' (532). Smiley sees in his pursuit of Karla a chance to confirm the issues he fought for in the past: 'he heard the

drumbeats of his own past, summoning him to one last effort to externalize and resolve the conflict he had lived by' (128). Karla becomes a symbol to confirm that Smiley's quest, after all, has been the right one. The proof of its rightness lies not in the circumstance that Karla defects, but in the circumstance that Karla defects because he too nurses a last illusion of love. Karla paradoxically becomes the ultimate confirmation of Smiley's beliefs.

With the shift of focus away from the East - West tension in *LDG*, le Carré also abandons the attachment of humanistic values to a sense of patriotism, however tenuous it may have been in his previous work. In this story based on the conflict between Israel and the PLO le Carré's sympathy seems to be on the Israeli side, although he makes it clear that he fully understands and pities the Palestinians in their impossible situation. However, his sympathy does not extend to the Israeli hawks, who want the problem settled once and for all by massive military force, but to the doves only, represented by the otherwise fierce Kurtz, who prefers the smoking out of PLO masterminds to indiscriminate retribution.

There are many similarities between the figures of Kurtz and Smiley, not least in the way they defend their occupation. Structurally, it is striking that the obvious tension between Smiley and Westerby in *HS* has a parallel in the relationship between Kurtz and Becker in *LDG*. In comparison with Westerby's honourable conscientiousness, which makes him opt out eventually, Smiley's invocation of traditional values is made to sound pompous and hollow, which may not quite have been le Carré's intention. All things considered, the situation faced by the Israelis is more desperate than the one faced by the English in the Karla trilogy, and Becker does not really question the need for the kind of job he is doing nor the need for measures which would, if brought out into the open, be condemned as downright criminal. His doubt and reluctance may be described as battle fatigue. He is, as he himself expresses it, 'a climber weary of the mountains,' (235). But Becker is also in uneasy agreement with the need for faith in the cause. There is a telling contrast between the slogan uttered by a member of the PLO: '*To doubt is to betray*,' (377) and his own attempt at self-persuasion: 'Let action kill the doubt,' (235). What exactly causes Becker's diffidence seems to be his fear of the results that the escalating hostilities with Israel's enemies may

mean to his country. In the aftermath of the successful action he quotes Arthur Koestler: 'What are we to become, I wonder? A Jewish homeland or an ugly little Spartan state' (426)?

It would be wrong to attribute Kurtz's commitment to one kind of motivation only. As he is a faceted character, the force driving him is likewise faceted. He is a man self-instructed in survival, and the success of this operation also means his professional survival. But there is more to it than this personal stake. As suggested above, Kurtz is a dove: he prefers the undermining of the PLO to open war. And this is not only a result of tactical deliberations. A couple of times le Carré reveals a trait in this character that links him with Smiley and thus continues an important theme in his work. In a passage - by its free indirect speech attributable to Kurtz as well as the author - Kurtz defines his motivation in this way: 'He could fight . . . For love of Israel. For peace. For moderation. And for his own cussed right to make his impact and survive' (28). In a Smiley-perspective the third item is of particular importance, since it makes us realize the author's unchanged belief in rationalism as the only alternative to absolute ideas. The redeeming power of a sense of humanity is also invoked. In one of the first of several discussions between Charlie, Kurtz's decoy agent, and the Israelis, Charlie protests against Israeli actions on the West Bank and in Lebanon. 'Who needs to die?' she asks. And Kurtz replies: 'Only those who break completely the human bond, Charlie,' (107). The insistence on *ratio* and humanity may not stand out with the clarity that repeated emphasis produces in le Carré's earlier work, but is none the less present in this story set in an area with so many confused and apparently insoluble issues.

### *Len Deighton and the Problem of Conscience*

Unlike Fleming and le Carré, Deighton does not discuss explicitly in his first story the issues raised by the ethical dilemma. And the prominence of this formula element does not, on the whole, have the significance in Deighton's stories as it has in le Carré's.

Starting their writing careers at approximately the same time, the beginning of the sixties, le Carré and Deighton cast their heroes as completely different types. Smiley of *CFD* and the nameless hero of *IF* are, superficially, miles apart, socially and

emotionally. One is a gentleman, subdued and obviously not accustomed to violence. He is an owl, as Westerby puts it in *HS* (489). The other has a background in the regular army, does not avoid violent action when the situation requires it, and his ironic attitude to everything supports the reader's view of him as clever rather than wise, the fox rather than the owl.[8] Smiley is an aristocrat of the mind, if not by birth, whose secret-service occupation attains the status of the indulgence of an amateur, along with his interest in German Baroque literature. Deighton's hero is very much the professional agent, with the disillusioned and practical attitude to his job which is the result of the routine of a well-known craft.

On the whole, le Carré's stories express an awareness of the growing relativism of existential values at the same time as they express a wish, though more and more frustrated, to build on the integrity of the individual with a strong reliance on traditionally English ideal virtues. Deighton's stories offer the impression of a disillusionment similar to Smiley's. But, unlike Smiley, the nameless hero is able to adapt himself. Smiley feels alienated because his wish for human decency and reason always meets with disappointment when put to the test. Deighton's hero is likewise alienated, but he accepts this condition as a general symptom of the modern world, so that his feeling of alienation becomes equivocal.

While the nameless hero of Deighton's stories retains a cool and detached attitude to the ethical problem of his occupation from *IF* to *TTLS*, he shows a growing awareness of its existence. That professionalism means ethical callousness is obvious from *IF*. Partly in the circumstance that the hero is forced to remain as ruthless as the other side if he wishes to stay alive, partly in his own ruthless - perhaps forcedly ruthless - comment on a mistake which cost the lives of a number of American agents. Asked by his secretary about the incident, he answers: 'Look, it was a mistake. There's nothing anyone could do. Just a mistake. What do they want me to do? Write to Jackie Kennedy and say I didn't mean it' (121)?

Le Carré's work may be read as a gradual approach to moral allegory: the removal of the political issues from a concrete to a spiritual dimension in which Smiley and his adversaries represent fundamental forces in the human mind. Deighton's ironic stance precludes allegorical interpretation, but throughout his stories it

is made clear that the hero is as suspicious towards his superiors, particularly the political ones, as he is towards his 'official' opponents. In an ethical perspective, the hero's actions thus have a double aim: to protect England (and the West) from inward as well as outward dangers. In other words, Deighton's hero is an ethical safeguard who guarantees the purity of his own nation at the same time as he fights whatever dangers threaten it.

Deighton's hero justifies himself as what may be called an ethical catelyst. He is necessary for furthering a process, but does not himself become involved so that he changes as a result of the process. Deighton's hero is very much down-to-earth when it comes to faith in his own occupation. Although he, like Bond and Smiley, prefers the English way of life, he is not the unreflecting patriot that Bond is, nor is he a believer in some abstract system of general human virtues in the way that Smiley believes in the English variety of humanism. Bond soon changes into an aesthete, Smiley into a rather desperate person, both because they are involved. Deighton's hero never is. He keeps aloof and saves himself and the conscience of the nation at the same time.

In *HUW* the hero makes it clear to his minister that although they agree on the function of secret agents for the welfare of the nation (despite their mutual dislike), the secret agent must give high priority to the protection of his independence. It gives him an ethical justification which would have been hard to find if the minister's words were obeyed blindly:

> 'Your job is an extension of mine. Your job is to provide success at *any* price. By means of bribes, by means of theft or by means of murder itself. Men like you are in the dark, subconscious recesses of the nation's brain. . . . You are a cipher - you are no more than the ink with which History is written' (140).

The hero's response to his minister's angry words is an emphasis on *how* the job should be done, an emphasis which makes all the difference to the ethical aspects of it:

> I'm not interested in doing anything beyond my job. But I want you to remember this: *I* am the responsible person in this investigation, not my boss or anyone else in the department. *I'll* be responsible for what happens to you, whether it's good or bad (142).

The secret agent as protector, not only of the nation in the international power game, but also of the nations's own well-being, is Deighton's answer to the ethical dilemma. The implication is that the enemy is as much an internal or mental as an external enemy.

The importance of the secret agent as the catalyst who ensures the integrity of interhuman relations, internationally and nationally, is repeated in *FIB*. Again the hero makes the point that it is not within the province of secret services to formulate politics, but to be a means of carrying them out. His secretary points out that politicians are often worried about the autonomy of such services. They may even be directed against themselves. The accusation is accepted by the hero as the ultimate justification of their activities: 'The only way a department that pries can run is to admit of no élite which is immune from prying' (157). With his usual cynicism the hero explains the harsh realities behind the charade between himself and Dawlish, his superior. Although Dawlish's tactics are essentially egotistical, they result in a state of affairs which can only by healthy for society as a whole:

> There is the danger that the people who allocate the money are going to feel that they should be immune from prying. That is why, every time someone is after my blood, Dawlish protects me. Dawlish and I have a perfect system. It is a well-known fact that I am an insolent intractable hooligan over whom Dawlish has only a modicum of control. Dawlish encourages this illusion. One day it will fail. Dawlish I have a closeness in inverse proportion to our differences because that's his protection, my protection and, believe it or not, Parliament's protection (157).

The hero's position is a powerful position, which may, of course, be misused. Colonel Stok, in *BDB*, illustrates the power with the image of the vanguards of two armies slowly approaching each other: 'So the very first fingertips of those armies will be two, not very clever, men who when they meet will have to decide, very quickly, whether to extend a hand or pull a trigger' (232). When Colonel Stok claims that the hero and himself, in their secret-agent capacities, are the fingertips, the hero retorts that he is an incurable romantic. But it should be noted that Colonel Stok's

comparison agrees with the hero's implicit and explicit assessment of his own importance in all Deighton's stories.

To make the secret agent the pivot of world security and the conscience of the nation is to place an enormous trust in his own powers of discretion. Isolated as he is (cf. the hero's rendering of his relations with Dawlish in the quotation above), he has only recourse to himself. The conscience of the nation and the status quo of international politics are dependent on the private conscience of a single individual.

Le Carré makes Smiley a representative of something larger, the symbol of the achievement of Western culture. Smiley's frequent frustrations are due to the lack of success of that culture, not to any doubt about its rightness. Bond comes to the result that what he would react against, the nation also would. Deighton's hero is the catalyst whose function it is to keep everything above board, ethically speaking. But this is the result of his action rather than its origin, which must be looked for in his own distinction between right and wrong. Deighton recognizes that the ultimate resource is the private conscience. In *EPD* the point is made twice. First when the hero says: 'The Nuremberg trials were held to decide that whether you work for Coca-Cola, Murder Inc. or the Wehrmacht General Staff, you remain responsible for your own actions' (183). Then when his pragmatic French colleague, inspector Loiseau echoes him: 'Police forces, governments and armies are just groups of men. Each man must do as his conscience dictates. A man doesn't obey without question or he's not a man any more' (213). That the secret agent is supposed to be directed by his private conscience is what produced Bond's doubt in *CR*. And to Smiley it is the clash between his belief that Western humanism is worth preserving and his doubts about the justification of the Jesuitical approach which brings about his frustration. Ethics cannot *be* private conscience, but private conscience probably acts on well-established ethical values. When it comes to the precise nature of right and wrong in Deighton's universe, the author is not very precise about his values.

In his stories from the seventies, *SS, YS* and *TTLS*, Deighton does not trace the theme of the conscience as the lever of professional ethics as suggested in his earlier stories. It is as if the possibility of presenting new facets has been sacrificed along with the hero's independence after the introduction of Americans in

the superior's role in *SS* and onwards. Accompanying the hero's 'exile' there is a new attitude of disinterest, even, at times, defeatism. Deighton's hero has grown into yesterday's spy in more than one sense in the most recent stories. His feeling of distaste towards the inhuman element in his job is visible as a reaction of having had enough in *SS*:

> I wondered how much longer I could go on working in a project that swatted warships like flies and measured wins in 'taken-out' cities (125).

To a superficial reading this is an expression of ethical doubt, but in addition it is a declaration from a man who is free to leave when he chooses. It is this show of ethical sincerity combined with his insistence on having the status of an exile that makes the hero's ethical commitment seem hardly convincing. On numerous occasions in Deighton's 'American' stories the hero demonstrates his newly gained 'irresponsible' position which leaves ethical qualms to others, but when pressed, as in the passage from *YS* quoted just below, he offers only the thinnest possible justification of his activities:

> 'It's a funny thing, Pina, 'I said. 'Every time someone puts a bomb in a supermarket or machine-guns a few airline passengers, it turns out that they are doing it on account of their conscience, or their morals, or some god-damned twisted idea of a New Jerusalem' (79).

This does not differ much from Bond's assertion in *DrN* that he is comparable to a kind of policeman that sees to the abolition of evil wherever in the world it may emerge (91). There is a trace of nostalgia for the earlier stories in the hero's suggestion of his role as collective conscience or ethical catalyst in the defence of his lethal capacity. But the defence builds, as in Deighton's stories from the sixties, on a purely intuitive sense of right and wrong, which is reducible to the imperative of 'Thou shalt not kill', and instead of a clarification of the secret agent's ethical self-justification, we have an argument based on nothing but an instinctive sense of 'our' superiority.

Deighton's latest secret-agent story, *TTLS*, does not throw additional light on the problem about the nature of the con-

science raised implicitly in the previous two. Here too, the hero's position is that of the outsider, the spy of yesterday, who is powerless against the new technology mastered to perfection by his American colleagues. As I suggested above, this development works to the advantage of the hero's ethical commitment by taking responsibility away from him. The ethical distance of Deighton's hero in *TTLS* is well illustrated in a brief exchange of opinions between himself and Mann, his American superior. Throughout the novel Mann has been made to seem somewhat ridiculous as a caricature of the over-energetic, sly but also clumsy American, and this description colours the reader's impression of what would otherwise have appeared as a wholly respectable and humanistic attitude:

> 'There comes a time in your life when you have to do the human thing - make the decision the Computer never makes - give your last few bucks to an old pal, find a job for a guy who deserves a break, or bend the rules because you don't like the rules.'
> 'Even in this job?'
> 'Especially in this job, or you end up as the kind of dispassionate robotic bastard that communism breeds' (84).

It is impossible not to interpret the hero's single line as sarcasm concealed as stupidity, but the point is not that by his sarcasm the hero agrees with Mann's opinions, but that the hero's attitude in this story is of academic significance only. He is simply not involved any longer.

Do Fleming, le Carré and Deighton succeed in convincing their readers that their heroes' actions can be justified ethically? As I argued in the introduction to this chapter, the nature of the action of the genre necessitates at least an attempt to deal with ethical problems, if a show of complete cynicism is not to be the result. The answer to the question should be looked for on two levels.

The reader's conviction that the ethical dilemma has been dealt with properly depends on two factors, which is why the question requires two answers. The successful response to the dilemma is to present it in such a way that the importance of the cause is so prominent that the reader is at once persuaded of the legitimacy of the means to further it. This is a problem of

*presentational technique*. The reader must be shown that the hero has an awareness of the ethical implications of his activities, but the awareness must not be allowed to dominate to such an extent that the action is overshadowed. Whenever that balance tips in favour of too much attention to ethical issues, that is, whenever the ethical dilemma as a formula element becomes to dominant, the danger exists that the action will not be believed in, because it is then suspected really to be unjustifiable. In consequence of this, one answer to the question must be that Fleming and Deighton, by not becoming too preoccupied with ethical problems, are able to give to their adventures the right dose of ethical 'philosophy' to convince the reader of the justness of the cause and therefore the rightness of the means. Most readers will probably not notice the replacement trick made by Fleming, nor the point of Deighton's stories that the hero has a catalyctic function, but they will be persuaded of the importance of the heroes' activities from the results obtained, and they will accept the heroes as human beings because they do show a modicum of conscience qualms.

On this level, le Carré is really the least successful, as he gives the ethical dilemma such an emphasis that it becomes a theme in its own right. Whereas the reader is probably willing to allow himself to be convinced by Fleming's and Deighton's heroes that what they do is justifiable, everything considered, his reaction to le Carré's heroes is different. By being reminded constantly about the relative nature of ethics in le Carré's universe, the reader's attention may be distracted from the action of the stories, and the result may well be annoyance.

Le Carré's failure, intended or not intended, to present his version of the ethical dilemma as glibly as possible, is an asset when the question is answered on another level.

The result of my analysis of Fleming and Deighton with regard to the ethical dilemma is that their solutions are hardly able to stand close scrutiny. Fleming shifts his appeal from *ratio* to *emotio*, Deighton gives up when facing the problems of the nature of conscience. Le Carré, however, presents a Smiley who is never in doubt about his commitment. At the lowest ebb, there is still the last illusion of the illusionless man. The pessimism visible in le Carré's stories is not a result of his inability to handle the ethical dilemma because his values are firm. The pessimism is a result of his apparently growing conviction that the kind of

humanism espoused by Smiley has small chances in the world of today.

There is no doubt that le Carré offers the most profound analysis of ethics of the three novelists, but at the same time this is a liability when it comes to 'efficient' writing. It seems, consequently, that not only is the ethical dilemma a paradox in itself, but its existence as part of a fictional structure forms another paradox: the degree of genuine interest shown in the ethical dilemma may turn out to be in inverse proportion to the reader's sustained interest in the story as a whole.

# Formula and Variation (II): Plot and Role Structure

# 5 Plot

*The Formula in Action: Observations on Reading Dynamics*

As formula fiction is a kind of fiction characterized by an exceptionally high degree of genre uniformity, the reader's recognition of formula elements plays an important role for his reactions. It is true that no two readers' responses to a literary text, not even to formula fiction, are quite alike, because the readers' individual attitudes, educations and general backgrounds will differ. But in the case of formula fiction such differences can be assumed to be of minimal significance for the readers' reactions, as it is in the nature of the formula not to allow the reader too much scope for individualistic approaches. Instead, reactions will differ according to the readers' degrees of familiarity with the formula.

The situation in which a reader encounters a given formula for the very first time is not typical, as it exists only once for each formula. Nor is the opposite situation, in which the reader rereads a particular formula story. There is a difference between comparing an unknown story with one's idea of the formula and repeating a reading of the same story. The tension which there is between the formula and the variations that constitute the individual story - and which makes the story worth while reading - disappears at a second reading, and there are seldom facets present in formula fiction which will justify repeated readings. The situation in which the reader reads an unknown story and compares it with a formula that he is already familiar with as he goes along must be assumed to be the usual one.

The reader's recognition of a specific formula in a story depends on various kinds of signal. He will often know even before opening his book which formula to refer it to. He may either know the name of the writer, which will function as a kind of trademark, or he may recognize the name of a series hero, whose name is brandished on the cover along with the writer's. If not signalled externally, the nature of the formula will be made

plain very early in the reading process, usually in the opening pages.

Any narrative which, like the secret-agent story, is characterized by a central conflict presupposes the existence of two characters to embody the conflict: the hero and his adversary. According to the conventions of the specific formula, the conflict may involve only these two antagonistic roles, or it may involve others as well. If the conflict pattern of the secret-agent story - an obvious instance of the dichotomy structure - is thought of as antithesis, then each side may be thought of as metonymy. On both sides all character roles are personifications of national interests. The hero - and his adversary - do not refer directly to their communities, but through their superiors whose allegiance is to national interests rather than to hero and adversary. In this hierarchy of loyalties the roles of the hero's or the adversary's helper or helpers are characterized by a thrice-removed allegiance to national interests, through hero/adversary and through superiors.[1]

As the genre builds on political conflict on an international scale the reader will attempt to place the characters, in the order of their introduction, according to their supposed allegiances. When the reader is aware of the identity of the hero even before opening the book, he will want confirmation of his expectations about the hero's usual characteristics. Recognizing the adversary may not be as simple as recognizing the hero. It depends on the degree to which the puzzle element is based on concealed identity (v. below).

For the illustration of these observations on the reading dynamics of a formula genre I have chosen the opening page of Fleming's first story, *CR*. I have assumed that the reader is one who is fairly familiar with the formula, as this seems to be the typical situation.

The reader's expectation of incipient conflict is confirmed at once in *CR*. The first paragraph presents a scene in a casino at three in the morning:

> The scent and smoke and sweat of a casino are nauseating at three in the morning. Then the soul-erosion produced by high gambling - a compost of greed and fear and nervous tension - becomes unbearable and the senses awake and revolt from it (5).

To most readers, a casino must be assumed to be a romantic place, at the same time alluring and forbidding by its aura of chance, sudden prosperity and equally sudden poverty, desperation, etc. Consequently, a casino has the very qualities of the alien land of the genre (v. ch. 3), which is where the conflicts are acted out.

In the second paragraph the reader is introduced to James Bond, whose reaction of fatigue is one with which we can immediately sympathise, because it is felt as perfectly normal under the circumstances: 'James Bond suddenly knew that he was tired' (5). The reader's beginning feeling of empathy is at once reinforced by Bond's reflections on his situation. His coolness and common sense is the way we would like to react in a similar situation:

> He always knew when his body or his mind had had enough and he always acted on the knowledge. This helped him to avoid staleness and the sensual bluntness that breeds mistakes (5).

Whereas Bond keeps himself at a distance from the oppressive but enticing atmosphere of the casino, Le Chiffre, to whom the reader is now introduced, seems to be in complete agreement with the place. In contrast to Bond, Le Chiffre has a repulsive effect on the reader:

> Le Chiffre was still playing and still, apparently, winning. There was an untidy pile of flecked hundredmille plaques in front of him. In the shadow of his thick left arm there nestled a discreet stack of big yellow ones worth half a million francs each. Bond watched the curious, impressive profile for at time, and then he shrugged his shoulders to lighten his thoughts and moved away (5).

The reader's repulsion is due to several factors. The circumstance that the action is seen through Bond's eyes forces the hero closer to the reader than the object of observation, Le Chiffre. The difference between the values represented by the two men is clearly underlined in the associations of their names. There are effects on two levels: one of sound and one of semantics. There is no doubt that to most ears 'James Bond' sounds pleasant and harmonious,

whereas 'Le Chiffre' has a harsh quality about it. On the semantic level, 'James Bond' suggests solidity by its very Englishness, and, in addition, associations are readily made to the security of bonds. 'Le Chiffre', however, suggests something about figures and cash, an immediate relationship with money which is, in many circles, not quite respectable. The impression of the names of the two men is an impression of something rather nice versus something repugnant. Also Le Chiffre's appearance at the table has the effect of repelling the reader. Against Bond's fatigue, Le Chiffre by his endurance seems superhuman, and the overtones of a clockwork nature evoked by his name are repeated by his ability to continue without any signs of exhaustion. In the description of the looks of Le Chiffre, his thick arms and curios profile probably add to the reader's negative reaction based on our usual prejudice against the non-average.

It is quite obvious that for the formula to work well there must be a positive interaction between the attitudes, behaviour and ideas expressed in the story and the reader's own. Unlike many novels, formula fiction does not attempt to suggest unique systems of values, but sticks to the expression of values currently accepted. Thus, in a passage like the one analysed just above, there is a double function. Apparently it is a regularly descriptive passage contributing to give the reader an idea of what is going on. At the same time, however, it functions to secure an agreement between story and reader, as it does not present innovative views but remains a reflection of concepts and attitudes typical of the majority of readers.

### *Formula Plot and Variation Plot*

When a cover blurb on a thriller tells us to expect an ingenious, amazing, etc. plot, the term plot is used in another sense than when we talk about the plot of, for instance, the secret-agent story as a genre. The difference between the two is a question of abstraction levels. A comparison of a large number of individual plots of thrillers reveals that also in the perspective of plot there is a rather simple formula according to which it is possible to describe recurrent plot elements of different thriller genres. Like all other formula elements the formula plot remains of conceptual validity only, which does not prevent it, however, from

having a prominent status in the reader's general genre awareness and hence from forming an important part of the anticipations with which he reads a story.

It may seem a contradiction of my central hypothesis of the role played by the awareness of the formula for the response to thrillers that the reader will experience a given thriller as something unique. What I suggest is, however, that in formula fiction the 'distance' between our sense of a lowest common denominator and concrete text - what Structuralists call the discourse - is 'short' in comparison with novel genres like the *Bildungsroman* in which there is also a typical genre-constituting structure, but of so loose a nature that it is hardly felt as a formula.

The difference between formula plot and variation plot - or discourse plot - in the perspective of reading dynamics is that the reader will know about the general outline of a formula-plot phase - when it begins and ends and what kind of activity usually takes place in it - but not to what specific ends the actions of the fictional universe in a specific story are directed: in the secret-agent story the reader will expect a phase, to begin with, in which the hero is given his assignment, because that is part of the formula plot, but what exactly he is asked to do belongs on the level of the individual story, its variation plot.

Our sense of a limited number of phases which constitute the formula plot seems to depend on changes in the hero's situation radical enough for the reader to feel that there is a definite break with the immediately preceding situation.[2] As plot may be defined as the temporal/causal development of relations, most frequently interpersonal ones, the smallest plot unit is to be found between two changes of such relations. Clearly, any paraphase of the plot of a narrative will not include all the plot units thus to be isolated; some are simply more important than others for the forward movement of a narrative. The sorting out of the units which are important and those which are not in a *novel* depends partly on a rather vague notion of the genre in question and its structural characteristics, partly on the way that we are able to compare every new minimal-change unit to the ones preceding it and thus to judge its plot significance. The process of reading is characterized by a current plot summary until, at the end of the reading, a summary including only the sufficient units may be formulated. The reading of a *formula story* implies an awareness of a finished plot summary, and consequently the reader is

ordering his impression of minimal plot units according to his anticipation of the plot phases expected to follow, as well as to immediately preceding phases.

It is characteristic of the secret-agent story that, as in other kinds of fomula fiction, the reader will have his idea of the formula plot consolidated by each new story he reads. He will soon discover that the incidents unique of each story can be inscribed within certain recurrent situations, and it is possible, by simple comparison, to establish the recurrent pattern. Furthermore, as the genre is an up-dated version of romance with its central element of quest myth, the recognition of plot phases is stimulated by the reader's sense of echoes from that dominant literary tradition in other well-known kinds of literature, such as folktales.

In the secret-agent story there seem to be six situations which, in the hero's perspective, mean radical change, and which are, furthermore, in agreement with romance: *assignment - departure - ordeals - conclusive ordeal - return - clarification.*[3] This is the normal succession of formula-plot phases, but some of the phases show less stability in the sequence than others. The lack of stability seems to be in the nature of the formula plot and not attributable to changes made by the individual author for the purposes of this specific variation plot, and the temporal/causal logic of the formula plot is not disturbed by such changes. Whereas the departure appears regularly after the assignment, the return phase may appear before or after the conclusive ordeal or after the clarification. The return phase does not necessarily manifest itself in concrete terms as a journey home; it may sometimes exist only as an indication of the re-establishment of a connection to home. The difference between the natures of 'ordeals' and 'conclusive ordeal' is a matter of non-finality versus finality: in the plot situation of ordeals the hero is subjected to a number of 'tests' in which he may be successful or not, but in the conclusive ordeal the hero's side, but not always the hero himself, excels over the adversary. The clarification phase, if present, usually follows the hero's conclusive ordeal, but may coincide with it.

The six formula-plot phases form the matrix pattern from which individual variation plots can be generated. In its abstraction the formula plot is a known entity, but in the tension between the reader's knowledge of it and the application of this

knowledge in the process of reading a story suspense may be created in different ways.

### *The Creation of Suspense*

Suspense is, of course, not limited to thrillers. It is a structural device employable in all kinds of text - also in 'texts' such a those provided by the visual media - which depend on temporal/causal progression. However, suspense plays a far more prominent role in thrillers than in most novels, and it is even possible to categorize thriller genres according to typical suspense patterns.

*Suspend* means to hang up or to put out of action for while, and this is the way suspense works in narrative fiction. In his development of V. Propp's analysis of the Russian folk tale into a cognitive system, A. J. Greimas has defined the principle of suspense structurally as 'l'écartement des fonctions, c'est-à-dire par l'éloignement, dans l'enchainement des fonctions que constitue le récit, des contenus sémiques appartenant a la même structure de la signification' ('the separation of functions by distance in semic patterns which belong to the same structure of significance'). By sticking to the idea but discarding the Structuralist phrasing, the principle of suspense may be defined as the *prevention of immediate satisfaction of curiosity about plot issues through structural obstruction of the logic of temporal progression.*

In a recent treatise on the nature of narrative suspense Eric S. Rabkin has proposed a definition which I believe should be modified in accordance with the general observations I have made above on the difference between novel plot and formula plot. Rabkin's view is that:

> *As readers, we concern ourselves with what has come before and what* will be *read, waiting to see how the next bit of text will compare with that which has preceded it. When the bit of text is a bit of plot, and when we are conscious of the waiting, we call the force that draws us through a narrative* suspense (1973 : preface).

My point is that when we read formula fiction we look as much forward as we look backward, perhaps even more. In a *Bildungs-*

*roman*, for instance, which, like the secret-agent story, bears resemblance to romance in its structure, we have only the vaguest sense of its ending. In the secret-agent story, however, we may be quite sure that the hero's side is going to win. With the exception of the fundamental definition of suspense as the raising of curiosity, the elements in the novel which create suspense are unique in each individual work. In formula fiction there are genre-determined 'rules' for the creation of suspense; we are able to say that within such and such limits, which exist on an analytical level less general than mere curiosity but still more general than the individual work, it is possible to anticipate how suspense will work.

Various thriller critics have expressed the opinion that empathy is a necessary premise of suspense, among them H. Brean who suggests that suspense:

> ... arises ... from the vicarious doubt shared by the reader with the fictional actor as the outcome of the fictional intention. This sharing of doubt arises through emotional identification of the reader with the fictional actor (1956 : 107-8).

But not all thriller genres seem to require the same degree of empathy as a condition of suspense. The formal detective story is a good example of missing empathy not in the least preventing suspense to work. The reader's dominant interest is to learn about the identity of the culprit, and that curiosity exists despite the probability that the reader will not be able to identify with the hero, as there are many elements in this figure that create distance rather than identification. And it is not necessary for the reader to identify, as the attractive element is the puzzle, not any one of the characters. But in the secret-agent story there is a certain need for empathy, because even if the puzzle element is present, it is not nearly so dominant as in the detective story. The central point of the reader's interest in the secret-agent story must be assumed to be in his curiosity to learn about the *ways* that the hero manages to get out of his various predicaments, which implies a temporary acceptance of the hero's perspective as his own. Hence the necessity of empathy in that genre.

The nature of suspense in the secret-agent story is, then, composed of three elements. There is the reader's awareness of

the formula. There is the invitation to empathy in order to accept the microcosm for the duration of reading a specific story. And there is the structural obstruction which is the result of the author's licence to arrange his discourse as he wishes. All three elements are present in the suspense complex the result of which is the reader's inability to put down the book.

Structural obstruction may be created in a number of ways, but in reality they may all be considered variations of two basic arrangements of the individual story: *concealment* and *protraction*.

The puzzle element characteristic of the detective story is a result of concealment and protraction in interaction. The identity of the culprit is hidden until the end, and the accumulation of red herrings has the effect of protracting his identification. Whereas concealment is the author's deliberate withholding of information, protraction is matter of stretching an issue and its result as much as may be tolerated.

Most often concealment and protraction interact, as in the formal detective story, but sometimes they occur in isolation. The adventure story, as I have loosely called the genre which includes writers like Alistair Maclean and Desmond Bagley, frequently relies on protraction only. Most adventure stories rely on a simple 'counting-down' progression of the plot: at the beginning of the story the reader is told that a bomb is to explode or a plane will crash in a specific span of time. Suspense is created by accounting for events with an eye on the clock, with progressive parallelism between actual time and time of narration, sometimes even with time of narration slower than actual time. Pure concealment is characteristic of much horror fiction, as the reader is impatient to learn about the nature of whatever dreadful thing threatens the hero.

Fleming relies more on protraction than le Carré and Deighton. Perhaps the best-known example is the golf duel between Bond and Goldfinger in *G*, but other stories, too, display this characteristic feature: the game of bridge in *M*, the roulette in *CR* and Bond's 'obstacle race' in *DrN*. But concealment is not absent from Fleming's stories, although it is rarely used.

It is possible to subdivide protraction into *prolongation* and *shift*. A typical example of prolongation is found in the 'counting-down' device, whereas shifts occur when the discourse is broken abruptly, by sudden flash-back or change of setting, for instance,

and then resumed later. Fleming prefers the prolongation technique; his stories, with few exceptions, progress fluently and logically in time and space. Deighton's discourse is characterized by sudden temporal and spatial changes, probably modelled on film technique, and the suspense effect comes from the reader's anxious wish to reconnect the logic of the variation plot with the formula plot. Without the almost epic pace of Fleming's stories, and without the abruptness of Deighton's, le Carré uses prolongation and shift to build up special effects, but on the whole he favours concealment. An example of prolongation may be found in the last part of *CFD*, in which narration follows actual time when Smiley closes in on his prey, Dieter Frey. Also in the episode in *SWCIFC* when Leamas explains to Liz about the conspiracy planned by his superiors just before rushing to the Berlin Wall prolongation plays an effective role. Le Carré has used shifts more in his later stories than in his earlier. In both *HS* and *SP* there are numerous *lacunae* between incidents, separated in time as well as in space, and the flash-back is likewise a narrative device he often resorts to. Le Carré's concealment technique may be illustrated by this passage from *CFD*:

> As he stood gazing at the little shepherdess, poised eternally between her two admirers, he realized dispassionately that there was another quite different solution to the case of Samuel Fennan, a solution which matched every detail of circumstance, reconciled the nagging inconsistencies apparent in Fennan's character. The realization began as an academic exercise without reference to personalities; Smiley manæuvred the characters like pieces in a puzzle, twisting them this way and that to fit the complex framework of established facts -and then, in a moment, the pattern had suddenly re-formed with such assurance that it was a game no more.
>
> His heart beat faster, as with growing astonishment Smiley retold to himself the whole story, reconstructed scenes and incidents in the light of his discovery. Now he knew why Mundt had left England that day, why Fennan chose so little that was of value to Dieter, had asked for the 8.30 call, and why his wife had escaped the systematic savagery of Mundt. Now at last he knew who had written the anonymous letter. He saw how he had been the fool of his own sentiment, had played false with the power of his mind.

> He went to the telephone and dialled Mendel's number. As soon as he had finished speaking to him he rang Peter Guillam. Then he put on his hat and coat and walked round the corner to Sloane Square. At a small newsagent's beside Peter Jones he bought a picture postcard of Westminster Abbey. He made his way to the underground station and travelled north to Highgate, where he got out. At the main post office he bought a stamp and addressed the postcard in stiff, continental capitals to Elsa Fennan. In the panel for correspondence he wrote in spiky longhand: 'Wish you were here'. He posted the card and noted the time, after which he returned to Sloane Square. There was nothing more he could do (121-2).

Le Carré's use of the concealment technique here depends on the versatility of the third person in narrative. The 'he' of the first two passages is quite close to the use of the third person in free indirect speech, in which there is virtually no difference between a 'he' and an 'I'. But imperceptibly this kind of 'he' gives way to a more objective third person, a figure whom we are only allowed to watch from the outside; a behaviouristic approach, as it were. Unless the reader has made a brilliant guess, he is now in an ambiguous situation: at the same time as he has established a relationship of empathy with the hero he is left in the dark about the actual working of Smiley's mind. With impatience the reader awaits the materialization of the hero's ideas.

Whereas it is relatively easy to change the status of the third person for the purpose of concealment, there is an almost paradoxical situation in the combination of concealment and the first-person perspective. As I observed above, either the hero must be presented convincingly as not completely informed, or the author must be able suppress the logic that the hero by necessity knows all he is doing, the 'Roger-Ackroyd effect' (cf. Agatha Christie's detective story). Deighton employs both variations, but most frequently the first one, as in *SS* in which it is part of the variation plot that the hero is used *because* of his ignorance (and similarly in *IF*). The other variation appears in the following passage from *IF*:

> I nodded, but for the first time I began to suspect that something odd was going on; from now on I was keeping my head down.

> The next morning I completed a little private task that took an hour of my time about once every two months. I collected a heavy manilla envelope from an address near Leicester Square, inspected the contents and mailed it back to the address from which I'd got it (91).

The technique is, in principle, like le Carré's in the passage quoted above: a move from an inside (mental) to an outside (action) perspective, a shift from motivation to report of behaviour. In this particular story Deighton is justified in his manipulation of the I-perspective, because the whole story is presented as the I's account of events to his minister. However, the reader hardly remembers this, and it must be assumed that the reader's reaction to the shift is one of wondering at the hero's mysterious doings rather than wondering at the logic of presentation. And it is not until some fifty pages later (154) that the reader learns that the envelope contains the papers and money necessary for a personal emergency.

Deighton is very fond of a technique of style as well as of plot which I shall call the 'puncture technique'. It is an effect which depends on *surprise*, not suspense. His technique is to present a line of events as if the hero were in good faith and then suddenly to puncture it by revealing that the hero knew about the duplicity all along. Again the paradoxical nature of the 'Roger-Ackroyd effect' is probably suppressed by the reader's surprise. A passage from *FIB* may be used as an example. A girl nick-named Sam has been taken out by the hero, and after a late-night supper they both go to Sam's flat. On letting themselves in, they discover that the place has been broken into:

> It wasn't hard to recognize the signs. Burglars open chests beginning with the bottom drawer, so that they don't have to waste time shutting each to get at the next. Sam stood looking at the mess - clothes everywhere and wine spilled across the rug. She trapped her lower lip under her teeth and flung it forward in a heartfelt monosyllabic obscenity.
> 'Shall I phone the police?' I asked.
> 'The police,' said Sam scornfully. 'You mean that your police in England won't trample around the place like idiots, ask a million questions and end up doing nothing?'

> 'They will,' I said. 'But they are very nicely spoken'. Sam said she would like to be alone.
> 'Whatever you wish,' I said, for I knew how she felt.
> When I got back to my flat I phoned Sam. She didn't seem nervous or too distressed.
> 'She seems O.K.,' I said to Austin Butterworth, after replacing the receiver.
> 'Good,' he said. Austin was sitting well back in my most comfortable armchair sipping my favorite whisky and being as modest as hell. 'Run-of-the-mill job,' he was saying. 'French window with slide bolts - child's play. People are so silly. You should see my place, that's really well protected against burglars' (71).

Although the surprise which is the effect of the puncture technique is not suspense, it may contribute to the creation of suspense by concealment, because it adds to the reader's sense of being fooled by appearances.

The difference between suspense by protraction and suspense by concealment has often been seen as a difference of literary quality. However, the quality of a given story hardly depends on the kind of suspense means employed, but on the way that all the elements of a story, suspense included, work together to form a whole.

### *Assignment*

There are stories which are secret-agent stories in all other respects, but which do not have a scene in which an assignment is given by a superior to the agent. This is often the kind of story in which the hero *accidentally* becomes involved in matters of international importance (cf. Buchan and Ambler). However, in such stories there is a point at which the hero decides on or just realizes his involvement, and this point is the counterpart of the assignment proper which we find in the stories under consideration.

When the hero receives his assignment, this means a radical change of his own situation, and this is where the plot has its logical beginning. The variation plot, however, may be arranged in such a way that more or less important events precede the assignment.

When not putting the assignment phase at the immediate beginning of their individual variation plots, the three writers tend to use the same variation: the *medias-res* opening. There may be, however, two kinds of *medias res*: the one in which we find ourselves in the middle of the events that follow the hero's assignment and are thus part of the ordeals phase (as in Fleming's *CR*), and the one in which the events logically precede the intervention of the secret service but furnish the background of the hero's assignment. In the former the narrative technique is to make use of the flash-back to the assignment situation to re-establish the formula-plot pattern, but in the latter the information provided in the introductory 'loose ends' may be brought to bear on formula-plot situations until the very end of the story. With regard to the creation of suspense the loose-end technique allows the author to make a long-range suspense pattern, that is, a long distance between the 'semic patterns which belong to the same structure of significance', in contrast to the short-range suspense pattern of the flash-back variation. Le Carré's *SP* and Deightons's *SS* are typical examples of the loose-end variation. Smiley's assignment to investigate the mysterious death of an *émigré* in London has no evident connection with the events preceding it: the history of a Russian woman exiled in Paris, and a handover of something in a boat on the Elbe near Hamburg in northern Germany. Only the facts that the people appearing here and the murdered man are all *émigrés* from the Soviet Union, and that the teleological nature of literature makes the reader anticipate an order behind it all, connect the events with the assignment of Smiley. And the situation is quite the same in *SS*. The reader - and the hero - does not know anything about the connections between the role played by the submarine at the very start of the story, the subsequent identity riddle experienced by the hero, and the hero's final assignment by his new American master, Schlegel, to assist him with the planning of war games. As it turns out, of course, all these disparate events are integrated elements of a highly sophisticated variation plot.

The reason why the logic of the formula plot - the presentation of the hero followed by his assignment - is only rarely practised, even by the fundamentalist Fleming, must be seen as the wish to create suspense from the very beginning. If the simple model is used, suspense takes effect from the moment that the reader learns about the nature of the hero's assignment, and this is a

highly dangerous procedure. The reader's interest must be aroused at once or he will put down the book. The assignment introduction must thus be cut very short, and the reader must be taken quickly to a point where he will long to know how the hero is to reach his goal. The assignment introduction relies on the creation of suspense by protraction, but a more efficent way to create suspense immediately is to employ either of the *medias-res* openings, as they add the element of concealment at once.

While Fleming uses alle three opening possibilities, both le Carré and Deighton prefer the loose-end variation of the *medias-res* variation arrangement. But whereas the flash-back variation satisfies the reader's initial curiosity when the pieces fall into place with the hero's assignment, the loose-end technique does not necessarily give a similar satisfaction. With the flash-back the reader feels that a frame within which the action can take place has been established. The assignment phase in the loose-end opening means a point of orientation, but only in so far as the reader can say to himself that according to his formula expectations the plot has now started.

### *Departure and Return*

A distinction must be made between the geographical move made by the hero on receiving his assignment and any subsequent moves, except the return move. The hero's immediate post-assignment move and his final return move are formula-plot phases, and as such they are stable features. Any other geographical movements which may appear in a secret-agent story have their origins in variation considerations. I disagree with Bruce Merry's notion of 'global simultaneity' as a formula-plot element characteristic of the 'spy thriller'. He suggests that:

> At various different points on the map, events precipitate down a narrowing funnel to the plot's climax: this is the most important feature common to all spy narratives. Thus the structure of the thriller is seen to depend on sub-division and acceleration through well-sign-posted narrative co-ordinates in five continents (1977 : 2).

Merry is right in so far as such shifts are frequently encountered

in the genre, but that a global simultaneity is a regular occurrence is doubtful. However, this is only a minor objection. My main objection is that Merry does not here point to a genre characteristic, but to a characteristic of narrative fiction in general. Shifts in setting are among the most popular 'tools' with novelists as a means to create suspense by protraction: a development may be cut off, a character left in difficulties, etc. The reader longs to have the thread taken up again and is curious about the continuation. This simple explanation also makes it obvious why shifts in setting, often on a global scale, are so often resorted to by writers of secret-agent fiction.

Shifts in setting are, then, of structural as well as of thematic importance. If the shifts are made between England and various parts of the world, the thematic significance of the departure-and-return pattern is underlined. As I suggested in Chapter 3, a main characteristic of the secret-agent story is its distinction between the familiar and the unfamiliar. All quest literature, medieval romance and *Bildungsroman* alike, shows us a hero who has to leave home in order to go through his ordeals in order to regain control of the situation.

In the secret-agent story the contrast between the known, which is what the hero leaves, and the unknown, which is where the hero has to fight his ordeals, is expressed as a geographical shift, but the geographical shift symbolizes a move into a world whose main characteristic is a blend of fear and forbidden appeal, a world whose origins may be the more or less realized emotional potentialities in our minds.

The geographical shift in the secret-agent story is, frequently, a departure for a foreign country. With few exceptions, this is so in Fleming's and Deighton's stories, but le Carré makes a variation out of this feature. It must be remembered that the formula-plot situation is departure as such, irrespective of its concrete manifestation. The significance of the departure must be looked for in the changed conditions of life (fear, etc.) to which the hero must subject himself. Thus the departure for a foreign country is also really a variation, but the most usual one, because it offers a convenient opportunity of changing the hero's familiar conditions.

Le Carré's variation occurs in *CFD* and *TTSS*. In both stories Smiley stays on in London to carry out what he has been asked to do. It may be argued that there is no departure phase in these

stories. However, this phase is present as Smiley has to give up his Chelsea address to move in with Mendel, his helper, in *CFD*, and, in *TTSS*, to confine himself to a modest hotel room with the files on which he bases his investigation. Despite the familiarity of London in both stories, the hero has become an alien to it, because it is no longer home to him, but suddenly menacing and insecure. Whereas the reader accepts the location in a foreign country as naturally alien, the idea of using London for this purpose is especially refined because it draws on the disfiguration of the familiar which we all know from, for instance, a nightmare.

The cases in which Fleming's and Deighton's heroes remain in Britain (Fleming's *M*) or return to it intermittently during an assignment (Deighton's *IF, HUW, FIB, BDB, SS,* and *YS*) give the same impression of alienation as le Carré's London-based stories. Good examples are the pursuit scene in *M* where Bond races after Hugo Drax at break-neck speed through the southern suburbs of London, and the nightmarish prison in *IF* which is supposed to be situated somewhere behind the Iron Curtain, but is really in London.

For the cycle to be completed, the departure must, eventually, be followed by a return. As to position, the return is not as stable as the departure, and as to realization, it may not occur as an actual journey home. The reason for this instability in comparison with the departure is probably that there is no need to emphasize the return to the well-known, because it is well-known, whereas the goal for which the hero leaves is intrinsically interesting. There is also the circumstance that whereas the assignment requires instant realization, the first part of which is the hero's hunting down his prey, the conclusion centres on conclusive ordeal and/or clarification. The return may be seen as a natural consequence of these and does not, therefore, require any emphasis. In Fleming's *YOLT*, Bond returns to a Japanese island in a condition of amnesia after his successful operation on Blofeld's island. He has returned to the normality of quasi-marital life, which signals clearly that a recognizable everyday world has been reestablished. It is enough that the reader knows that contact has been established (e.g. Bond's phone call home in *CR*) so that home, i.e. control of the situation, is dominant once more.

*Ordeals*

Assignment and departure are formula-plot phases that occupy only brief passages in comparison with the plot phase of ordeals, a series of functionally identical events, which form the bulk of the secret-agent story. The difference between these ordeals and what I have called the conclusive ordeal is one of position as well as of intensity. As the term implies, the conclusive ordeal marks the termination of the hero's action, but the conclusive ordeal is also qualitatively different from the 'ordinary' ordeals.

The 'body' of the secret-agent story is the series of ordeals to which the hero must subject himself. This phase of the plot corresponds to the detective's gathering of evidence in the formal detective story. As in the detective story there is no limit to the number of functionally identical moves which a specific discourse may use.[4] However, as the ordeals contribute to suspense by protraction, a succession of too many would mar the suspense effect rather than further it.

It is in the nature of longer narrative fiction to present a detailed and often panoramic picture of a number of interrelated events. In contrast to the compressed nature of lyrical poetry, narrative fiction is characterized by inclusiveness and breadth. This characteristic goes some way to explaining why the ordeals form the body of the secret-agent story, in that this is the phase in which all the details and digressions are contained.

The word ordeal denotes a kind of activity to be seen as test of character and endurance. It may be difficult to realize that the *detective's* gathering of evidence is a test of his character and his endurance, as it can be objected that correct evidence is needed to convict. On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that the detective story is an artefact, not a realistic account of police work, and effects must be judged on literary premises. What appears as the fictional detective's conscientious work towards his goal, is, in the literary perspective, a building-up of an aspect of the hero's character which is best described by the word 'genius'. The reader admires the fictional detective for his incredible abilities of ratiocination, because as the series hero that the detective is, he repeats the testing of his genius by the series of ordeals in each new story.[5]

In the secret-agent story the aim, on the level of its thematic significance, is not to confirm the hero's outstanding intellectual

capacities, but to present the hero as generally capable (v. ch. 6). The fictional secret agent is a man who must be able not only to use his brains, like the detective, but also to manage all kinds of physical obstacles which may appear on his way. If the ordeals that the detective goes through are a test of intellect, the secret agent's ordeals are a test of brains as well as physical stamina, in other words, the whole man.

Whereas the activities of the fictional detective are directed towards a very definite goal, and the means employed to reach it, his power of ratiocination, never change, the fictional secret agent contributes to the - for himself - much vaguer goal of securing international status quo. And the means which must be employed are determined by the nature of the specific difficulties he is up against. His test of character and endurance must show him to be capable of overcoming a wide range of difficulties which require the general capabilities of the hero.

The literary predecessor of the fictional secret agent is the knight of romance, and the medieval knight is a figure especially suited for adventures whose nature cannot be foreseen: knighthood is not a profession, but a state of general preparedness.

In Fleming's stories there is a rather fixed progression pattern in the ordeal phase of the plot. After receiving his assignment Bond regularly leaves London and shortly after meets his future adversary. This first meeting is in no way physically violent, but it anticipates the conclusive ordeal in a symbolic way, for instance in the form of a game: roulette in *CR*, bridge in *M*, golf in *G*. After these games there follow a number of episodes bearing on Bond's antagonistic relationship with his adversary, but not involving any actual confrontation. These episodes as well as the games prove Bond as a man of character and endurance. Only seldom does his success require cunning alone, but a combination of intellectual and physical force as in *FRWL* in which he *pretends* to have been shot by Grant, the adversary's helper, in order to kill him eventually. More often Bond's success requires physical stamina rather than cunning, as in the bizarre obstacle race arranged by Dr No. It is characteristic of the ordeal pattern in Fleming's stories that Bond's last ordeal before the conclusive one is frequently a defeat: the torture scene in *CR*, the bathroom-prison scene in *M*, etc. This has a suspense effect, in that a concealment situation is created: not until late does the reader know how Bond is going to escape (Fleming's solution is

frequently a *deux ex machina*, like the SMERSH agent in *CR*). But his failure also adds to our impression of Bond as not invariably successful and thus an average human being, which is important for retention of empathy. Furthermore the failure provides a background against which Bond's eventual success becomes more emphatic.

The pattern of ordeals in Deighton's stories resembles Fleming's to a considerable extent. The reason why this does not *appear* to be so is due to Deighton's characteristic manner of presentation with its many abrupt shifts in time and setting. In *YS*, for instance, there is the initial encounter with the future adversary, Stephen Champion, then a series of episodes originating in the antagonism between the two, but not involving any violent confrontations, and then the hero's preconclusive-ordeal episode in which he is led into an impossible situation by his adversary.

The ordeals phase in le Carré's stories cannot so easily be reduced to a formula as it can in Fleming's and Deighton's. There is too much variation. It is characteristic, however, that the ordeals phase, with one or two exceptions, is non-violent, but nonetheless requires a certain non-intellectual energy. This does not affect the structural and thematic significance of the ordeals. They still emphasize the hero's general capability and contribute to suspense by protraction.

Apart from the comparative lack of violence in le Carré's versions of this phase of the plot, there is the additional characteristic that the meeting with the adversary at an early point common in Fleming's and Deighton's stories is absent in le Carré's stories. In them the ordeals form a series of events which in many ways is similar to the detective's gathering of evidence in the formal detective story. The hero shows his capability first and foremost by his intellectual superiority, except in *SWCIFC* in which Leamas's ordeals consist of a passive subjection to rough treatment. But it must be remembered that Leamas tolerates his own suffering under the delusion that the plan of which he is a part operates on the assumption that the opposition may be defeated by purely intellectual manipulation. That Leamas himself is also defeated in the end does not change this double nature of his ordeals.

The ordeals through which the hero must pass before the conclusive ordeal are, as I have suggested above, significant in themselves as assuring the reader of the capability of the hero and

as intensifying the suspense effect. But they are also part of a climactic pattern which reaches its apex in the conclusive ordeal, the moment of truth.

### *Conclusive Ordeal*

It is significant of this phase of the plot that the thematic content is the re-establishment of the international political *status quo*. For the purpose of this re-establishment the heroes' actions are vital, but the heroes as individuals are dispensable. As I see it, this is the essential thematic formula significance of the conclusive ordeal, because in this perspective it is possible to bring all the stories under consideration on a common denominator irrespective of happy or unhappy endings.[6]

That the conclusive ordeal means the success of the national cause rather than the success of the individual secret agent is obvious not only in le Carré and Deighton, but also in Fleming.

It is typical of Fleming's conclusions that Bond is presented as a convalescent recovering from his struggle with his adversary. This trait is interesting because the vulnerability of the hero means a confirmation of his *human* status and thus re-connects him with home. But there are cases in Fleming's stories where Bond appears to be lost. This is so in *FRWL* and *YOLT*. In the former story the reader is confused as he does not know anything about the outcome of Bond's having been poisoned by Rosa Klebb, his adversary. And in the latter story Bond is left in a state of amnesia, which may be read as a symbolic death. In both, however, there is no doubt that Bond has served his end: the action against him by Rosa Klebb is a simple one of revenge, and his amnesia is the result of the enormous impact of the explosion which means Blofeld's death. From both, however, he returns to action once more.

Le Carré stories have been much praised because they show the secret agent in a much more realistic light than usual in the genre. The unhappy ending provided by the sacrifice of Leamas in *SWCIFC* has been considered a good example of le Carré's realism. The realism, however, is due to tone and atmosphere rather than plot, which a comparison with Fleming will make clear.

The stories in which le Carré shows the defeat of the individual

in the process of securing *status quo, SWCIFC, LGW, STIG* and *HS*, are stories which resemble Fleming's *FRWL* and *YOLT* in this phase of the plot. And as in Fleming's stories the national cause is successfully defended in all four. The reason why the reader feels more emotionally involved with a Leamas or a Westerby has to do with the author's presentation of these figures. We are, quite simply, much more interested because le Carré has made them into rounded characters whereas James Bond is unambiguously flat. The degree of sympathy felt for a character should not be mistaken for a more realistic plot, as this phase of the plot is similar in the two authors' stories.

The convalescence scene following the conclusive ordeal in many of Fleming's stories also has a parallel in some of le Carré's stories. The parallel, however, is in the function, that is, in the human status of the hero, rather than in the means by which it is presented. I am thinking of the *tristesse* which follows on all Smiley's successes. The pessimistic note on which le Carré's stories end is not in itself expressive of criticism of the secret agent's lot, and the realism which it may be taken to express is on a very general level, not restricted to the world of secret agents. It indicates the anti-climactic feeling known to most people on the completion of some task.

Unlike the ordeals leading up to the conclusive ordeal, the final ordeal in le Carré's stories often has an element of violence. In *CFD, SWCIFC, STIG, HS* and *LDG* there is bloodshed, whereas in *LGW, TTSS* and *SP* there are tensions in the show-down on the brink of breaking into something physical.

Deighton is much concerned with the dispensability of the hero as an individual in some of his stories, notably *SS* and *TTLS*, and in all his stories the instrumental significance of the hero outweighs his significance as a human being. The hero's own realization of his dispensability may account to a great extent for his egotistical and ironic attitude to his surroundings: he knows that in order to re-establish *status quo* and survive he must combine national and selfish interests, and the isolation resulting from his realization creates a certain distance.

All the conclusive ordeals that Deighton's hero goes through are marked by violence, and in this they resemble Bond's conclusive ordeals. But they differ from Fleming's variation patterns in that they stick to the kind of violence which the reader finds 'familiar', most frequently various kinds of gunfight. Fleming's

preference for the fantastic and bizarre in this phase of the plot is well-known.

Whereas in the formal detective story the conclusive ordeal is identical with the clarification - the detective explaining the case to the assembled suspects - the secret-agent stories with a puzzle structure contain a plot phase in which the hero actually secures status quo and a plot phase in which the mysteries of the variation plot are explained to him/the reader.

### *Clarification*

Julian Symons has suggested that:

> Spy stories, and thrillers in general, do stand apart from books that pose a puzzle to the reader. The latter kind of book asks questions about Who or Why or How, sometimes about all three put together, where the thriller or spy story frequently just tells us How (1972/1974 : 12).

This is, of course, only a rough distinction, but nevertheless it seems to do some fundamental injustice to the secret-agent story. I have proposed a pattern of formula-plot phases, of which I have placed 'clarification' as the last one. I have included this phase in the formula plot, because the greater part of the stories that I deal with here display some sort of puzzle which needs solution at the end. Admittedly, the puzzle does not play the part it does in the formal detective story, and often the puzzle is very simple. It may consequently be argued whether its presence in the genre is not a variation of the formula rather than a regular formula phase.

A clarification phase may, at a superficial glance, appear as the product of mixing different modern genres in order to obtain maximum suspense potential. That this is not so appears from an examination of a related genre like medieval heroic romance. It will be remembered that in *Sir Gawain* the hero escapes the axe of the Green Knight, and afterwards it is explained to him that everyone concerned has been under a witch's spell. If my hypothesis about the general thematic significance of the secret-agent story and related genres is correct (v. ch. 3), the ordeal structure, which is a series of How (cf. Symons above), and the puzzle struc-

ture, the Who and the Why, can be seen to supplement each other. Whereas the ordeal structure shows the reader a hero who is generally capable, the puzzle element offers to the reader an alien land existing on another, and abstract, level. When the hero has gone through his ordeals and secured the international political *status quo*, he has assimilated whatever threatened the balance according to his own assignment background, the national cause. With the clarification of the puzzle, the familiarization has also been manifested intellectually. The result is a maximum emphasis on the hero's familiarization of the unknown.

For the purpose of the familiarization theme, which is central to the secret-agent story as well as to romance, it does not matter whether the solution of the puzzle is made by the hero or someone else. In both cases the result is the same: the hero concludes his assignment in a state of complete enlightenment. In the formal detective story, however, it is necessary that the detective himself solves the puzzle, as the solution is completely dependent on his particular abilities. The re-establishment of the international *status quo* in the secret-agent story is not dependent on the hero's information level, but on the thematic perspective in which we see the hero's ordeals as a process of familiarization; it is the solution of the puzzle which is important, not the figure behind the solution.

Fleming, le Carré and Deighton do not rely on the puzzle element to the same extent, and Fleming's puzzle structures are simple compared with those employed by le Carré and Deighton. One puzzle, however, is always present in Fleming's stories: the Why of the adversary's motive. All Bond's adversaries are monomaniac in their pursuit of power. The puzzle based on the adversary's motive is also present in le Carré and Deighton, but not with the same prominence as in Fleming; it tends to be overshadowed by other puzzle structures.

A puzzle which is employed by all three authors may be termed the *identity puzzle*. In principle, this is *the* puzzle of the detective story. The detective works towards the identification of the real culprit among a number of potential culprits. In the secret-agent story it is the general rule that the identity of the adversary is known at an early stage, and the hero's efforts are directed at his destruction. But an identity puzzle may be introduced as a variation of the hero's ordeals.

Fleming makes use of the identity puzzle in *CR*, his first story.

As it turns out, Vesper Lynd, his helper during the greater part of the story, is a double agent, and this explains many of Bond's troubles. But the Vesper-Lynd puzzle is not really the kind of puzzle which is known from the detective story. In that genre it is made clear from the start that the search for the culprit forms the backbone of a story. In *CR* - and in *Sir Gawain* as well - the clarification comes as a surprise at the end. This technique is close to the *deus-ex-machina* solution. Le Carré, however, has used the puzzle in a manner which reminds the reader of formal detective stories. The best example is *TTSS*, in which Smiley's assignment is to find a mole operating on top level in the English secret service. There are four possibilities, and like a detective proper Smiley gathers evidence so that eventually he is able to arrange a trap for the most likely suspect.

In le Carré's stories the hero is always the one who sees through to the truth, that is, the hero himself arranges for the clarification. This, of course, underlines his intellectual acumen at the same time as it places him firmly in the centre of events and emphasizes his individualism. Le Carré is consistent when he leaves it to the hero alone to sort out the threads of the puzzle, because in the ethical universe in which his heroes move, the individual is essentially responsible. Even Leamas in *SWCIFC* assumes personal responsibility when he accepts his own fate as a necessary risk when so much is at stake. Deighton's hero, however, does not assume responsibility in the same way. He is aware of his own position in the hierarchy, and many of his efforts are directed to measures which, in le Carré's universe, would be purely egoistical. The hero's realization that he has to defend himself first of all is based on his experience that the use of him is sometimes merely instrumental, and his function has to be explained to him after his conclusive ordeal. This is the case in *SS* and *TTLS*. In Deighton's other stories the hero is able himself to see through puzzles which in *IF* and *FIB* are identity puzzles built on the mole theme, and, in the remaining, variation on the motive puzzle: the minister's secret in *HUW*, Harvey Newbegin's allegiances in *BDB*, Monsieurs Datt's mysterious activities in *EPD* and Steven Champion's changed allegiance in *YS*.

Although the puzzle element is central to the plot pattern of the secret-agent story, it seems that there is a limit to its use. The limit is determined by the reader's formula expectations: the reader will expect an ordeal structure which is recognizable as a

series of ordeals, and that is only possible if the variations are clearly ordeals which test the hero as the generally capable man. When the limit is overstepped, as may be our impression of, for instance, *TTSS*, the hero is 'reduced' to personified intellect, a characteristic of the fictional detective, not of the fictional secret agent. When that happens, the reader is confused in his formula expectations, which makes him a distracted reader. On the other hand, too simple puzzles, in the manner of Fleming's *deus-ex-machina* in *CR*, are likewise distracting, because they disturb the reader by underrating his intelligence. A balance is reached, in my opinion, in a story like le Carré's *CFD*.

The formula plot, like all formula elements, is an abstraction, but it is an abstraction which is significant, I believe, for the reader's experience of a given story. Unlike the experience of non-formula fiction, the reading of fiction built on certain formulas is not retrospective gathering of threads, but an ordering of textual elements according to an anticipation of what follows. This is why suspense by protraction can be used with so much success in formula genres. The distance between formula and actual discourse - the individual story - is a tension which gives rise to infinite variations, but all of them, if not excessively simple or excessively elaborate, to be responded to with the enjoyment that we get from meeting the familiar in the unfamiliar.

# 6 Roles and Characters

*The Secret Agent: an Anonymous Hero*

In contrast to the modern novel formula fiction retains an idea of the protagonist as a truly heroic figure. In the fictional universes of the detective story, the secret-agent story, the adventure story, the western, etc. individual action which requires substantial personal resources always results in the hero's successful contribution to control of the situation. A fictional detective who is not able to pin down the culprit is a contradiction in terms, and so is a fictional secret agent whose action does not secure a state of international political status quo.

It has become a critical commonplace to assert the antiheroism of le Carré's and Deighton's heroes. The assertion, however, needs modification, since it is possible to distinguish between formula elements and variations also on the level of *dramatis personae*. I suggest that in the perspective of the formula all characters, Fleming's as well as le Carré's and Deighton's, may be seen to perform roles according to the simple distributional pattern outlined in the previous chapter: the hero and his adversary, their superiors and their helpers. This role distribution comes into being on purely functional premises, and the protagonist's essentially heroic status derives from his role in the romance-plot structure. Whereas the attributes of James Bond are quite in agreement with his heroism, there is in the protagonists of le Carré and Deighton an interesting tension between the character traits which are clearly responses to formula requirements and the character facets - their anti-heroism - which have come into existence by the recognition of the individual's situation in the complex life conditions of the twentieth century. The fictional secret agent's heroism, then, can be seen partly in his functional capabilities - he is able to carry out his assignment successfully - partly in the attributes which indicate his heroic status. The heroism of the secret agent is the kind of

heroism that Frye calls 'high mimetic'. The hero possesses 'authority, passions, and powers of expression far greater than ours, but what he does is subject both to social criticism and to the order of nature' (1957/1971 : 34). In other words, the secret agent's heroism is to be found in his 'quantitative' extension of average human capabilities. In the secret-agent story this is manifested in the combination of the hero's professional skills, his comprehensive knowledge of other matters and his special knowledge in some bizarre, luxurious or technical field. The role features of the secret-agent hero are determined partly by his function in the plot, partly from conventions derived from the hero of romance and such as have been added in the general development of the various thriller genres since the beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century. The distinctive role features of the fictional secret agent must be looked for in the figure's general capability, his anonymity, his solitude, and his castelessness, plus, of course, the nature of his profession.

Jens Peter Becker has suggested that there is a qualitative difference between the fictional secret agent as this figure appeared before the Second World War and after:

> Dem Leser moderner englischer Spionageromane von Fleming, Le Carré und Deighton erscheint es selbstverständlich, dass der Held ein Professional ist. Nicht so im frühen Spionageroman. Der Held is hier entweder ein prononcierter Gentleman oder ein Durchschnittsengländer und (upper-) middle-class-Angehöriger. Diese Entwicklung lässt sich von Childers über Buchan, 'Sapper', Greene bis zu Eric Ambler verfolgen (1973:145).
>
> (It seems obvious to the reader of the modern English espionage novels by Fleming, le Carré and Deighton that the hero is a professional. This was not the case in the early espionage novels. In them the hero is either a pronounced gentleman or an average Englishman belonging to the (Upper) Middle Classes. This development can be traced from Childers via Buchan, 'Sapper', Greene to Eric Ambler.)

But this is a difference which is the result of a shift of topical emphasis. Just as it is impossible to move the nineteenth-century-novel hero into the increasingly complex world of the

twentieth century, it would have been impossible to have a non-professional dabbling in an electronic and nuclear age. It is simply a question of congruity. However, the Second World War did not mean any difference in the hero's role features that I suggested above. But the conspicuous professionalism of the modern hero should be looked on as an emphasis on features latent in the generally competent figure whose realization is demanded by a world thoroughly changed, technologically and politically, since the last war.

The traditional British *gentleman* figure comes close to the ideal of the generally capable or the whole man. Although the heroes of Fleming, le Carré and Deighton are all employees, it is obvious that they show a relationship with the gentleman figure, but sometimes a problematical relationship. A gentleman is not hampered by economic ties, but is able to cultivate his body and spirit with a view only to his own well-being. This will often mean a wide range of interests some of which may absorb him more than others. He is frequently an expert in some peculiar field. However, it is significant that there is a definitely voluntary element in his attitude to his interests. He is an amateur.

The secret-agent hero shows an attitude to money which is, on the whole, the gentleman's lack of concern. Bond has a moderate private income, Smiley has married money and Deighton's hero is, most frequently, a conveniently high-placed civil servant.[1] The problematical relationship with the gentleman figure comes out, however, when the heroes must succumb to the reality of their employee status. It does not happen often, but when it does, for instance when Smiley has to sell something at the beginning of *TTSS*, because his wife has drawn the 'lion's share' from their joint account (22), this is felt to be somewhat out of character.

The expertise implied by professionalism acquires a status similar to the gentleman's voluntary absorption in a chosen and often limited field of interest. Bond is a better-than-average golfer, Smiley is deeply interested in seventeenth-century German literature, Deighton's hero shows a command of electronic engineering, and all of them know quite a lot about cooking. The fictional secret agent is a gentleman in so far as his independence, his wide range of interests and capabilities and his expertise in some chosen field are concerned.

The expertise aspect of the fictional secret agent contributes to what Bergonzi calls the 'affective superstructure' (v. ch. 3) of the

genre, and many critics have seen a snob appeal in the hero's adoption of this trait from the traditional idea of the gentleman. Among these is Bruce Merry, who suggests that 'the reader sees the secret agent with ancillary skills as a flattering analogue of himself' (1977 : 177). Of course the hero's capabilities in some field requiring specialist knowledge or technique aid the reader in the process of admiring identification, but the appeal which there is in the 'ancillary skills' cannot be separated from the fictional secret agent as the sum of this role features. The hero appeals by his essential heroism, his 'high mimetic' quality. As I suggested in Chapter 1, formula genres seem to compensate for the lack of the heroic in modern times, and in the figure of the hero the reader sees a man who is first and foremost a free individual forming a probably wished-for contrast to the reader's own entanglement in the textures of mass society. And not only the positive element of the gentleman, but also the otherwise negative associations to the pariah figure can be seen to contribute to the compensation.

As always, Fleming's stories form standard examples of formula features. Also in the way that James Bond represents the generally capable man. Bond's background can be read out of his dossier which is studied by the Soviet officers in *FRWL* (40-7; for a full biography v. Snelling 1964 and Amis 1965). Bond went to a public school and then studied languages in Switzerland where he also became an expert skier. Then the war came, and he entered the Navy and reached the rank of commander. This has remained his rank in the British secret service which he seems to have entered sometimes during the war. It reads like a stock description of a British gentleman's education, and from an aristocratic point of view it is a perfectly normal background. Bond's life in the secret service is characterized by brief but exacting assignments. During the inter-assignment periods of his life he does routine work, but in a manner which leaves no doubt about his freedom. In his leisure time he plays cards or golf and now and then he has a affair with a woman. When on a mission he shows great command of some specialized skill like skin diving or skiing. But it must be noted that this skill is always the amateur's skill: he is good, but has renounced voluntarily any monomaniac pursuit to become one of the best. Likewise in his food preferences, which have been the object of so much contempt and ridicule by critics, he never exceeds the limits of the amateur: he likes good food when he has a chance, but

gastronomic interests may often yield to the convenience of a fast, simple meal. It must also be noted that although the screen versions of Fleming's stories show Bond as a real superman, his status in the stories is much less than that. It is characteristic that he must always be helped out of some predicament at the end of an adventure, either by intervention by helpers or by circumstance. And it is also characteristic that much of his specialized knowledge is the result of his having been briefed by specialists, the reader having learned something as well. Bond is a gentleman with a liberal education, a varied, but not profound knowledge, a set of skills which often come in handy, but which as often as not are insufficent to get him out of a problematical situation. He does not differ in kind from his readers, only in degree: he is a little better than them in his skills because he has had the time for training, and his job has given him access to much strange information which ordinary jobs will not offer. A critic has suggested that he is '*mens sana in corpore sano*' (Raven 1966 : 554). From the point of view of his equals, other gentlemen civil servants, he is perfectly normal. Bond simply reflects the British middle-and-upper-class custom of educating young men towards broad and 'useless' knowledge, so that they are flexible enough to perform a wide range of duties. They are brought up to be generally capable men, not specialists.

In the heroes created by all three writers there is a tension between the professionalism without which they would be implausible in a modern setting, and an endeavour to appear as the gentlemen to whom professionalism is a necessary but not always desirable burden. Bond is able to reconcile the two traits because the kind of professionalism which he represents requires the use of his natural capabilities, not any specialized knowledge of, for instance, espionage networks or technology.

The tension between the amateur and all-round attitude of the gentleman and the specialist attitude of the professional is stronger in le Carré's and Deighton's heroes than in Fleming's Bond.

Two of le Carré's heroes, Leamas and Turner, seem to be exceptions to the rule that the hero expresses a tension between the gentleman and the professional. There is no doubt that they, in contrast to Smiley and Westerby, consider themselves rank-and-file agents whose sole concern is the success of their assignments. They are professionals, but generally they are brought to

realize the true nature of their situations as pawns in a game which does not recognize the individual in his own right but merely in his functional capacity. I suggest that le Carré's concept of the gentleman is not simply, as in the case of Bond, a comprehensive collection of attributes, but closely linked with the sense of the ethics that pervades his stories. The callousness of the professional is brought into contrast with the humanistic commitment expressed most clearly by Smiley. In le Carré's stories the aspect of the hero as the whole man is expressed as an emphasis on the individualistic reactions of his heroes. When Smiley is the hero, the reader is constantly aware of him as a professional *and* a critical individual. But in the stories in which the hero is a professional without any doubts, the relationship between the two forces is presented as a *development*. Leamas as well as Turner begin their assignments in a mood which is disinterested and also a bit bored. The routine aspect is underlined. As they become more and more involved, they respond with emotional reactions which signify that they begin to care. When we leave them, Leamas dying on the Berlin Wall and Turner helplessly watching the death of Leo Harting, the two men are not only presented as deeply disillusioned, but also as men who have arrived at a point where the routine of their professionalism has been superseded by a response which requires more than mere qualifications for a job.

The tension between the professional and the whole man/gentleman is expressed as a gradual broadening of the heroes' responses in *SWCIFC* and *STIG*, until they are responses of men, not of machines. The development of Jerry Westerby in *HS* is largely identical with that of Leamas and Turner, but seen in the perspective of the whole man, he resembles Smiley more, because there is a constant tension in this figure from his first appearance to his death. As in the case of Smiley, the whole-man aspect is both a matter of commitment as an individual and a matter of external - gentleman - attributes. Westerby in *HS* is a nobleman by birth, and a writer by inclination: two features which in themselves are enough to suggest the range of this figure beyond professionalism. But as in the figures of Smiley and Leamas, the symbol of his essential humanity, his true human nature, is his growing capacity for love.

Despite his inconspicuous and slightly neglected appearance, Smiley's whole-man/gentleman character is obvious. Not only in his profound ethical commitment, but in his external character

traits as well he forms a contrast to mere professionalism: he has been able to win the love of a very popular debutante and marry into the nobility (which in the event proves to be a liability rather than an asset); he is a natural leader of men; he is quite capable of physical action: he has a romantic background as a field-man in wartime Germany; and last, but not least, his brain power is formidable. And the bizarre expertise which is a typical feature of the external characteristics of the gentleman is also found in Smiley's interest in the literature of seventeenth-century Germany. But in le Carré's fictional universe no single element is without some significance for the whole. Smiley' scholarly interest in the Baroque with its neatness, symmetry and order is a suitable reflection of his sense of values.

That Smiley is a professional, and a very good one, goes without saying. His background alone proves it. But his professional range is on 'management' rather than 'floor' level. When it comes to the 'gadgetry' so often associated with the secret-agent story, he is out of his depth. Toby Esterhase, one of Smiley's former helpers, describes Smiley's kind of professionalism very well when he explains the falsification of a photograph to him:

> That's very easy done, George. I want to put a head on another guy's shoulder, I got the equipment, it takes me maybe two minutes. You're not a technical guy, George, you don't understand these matters (*SP*: 154).

At a first glance the role distribution on the hero's side in *LDG* may not seem in accordance with the conventional pattern. Between Misha Gavron, the leader of the Israeli secret service, and a number of characters with obvious helper status we find three characters who all act in the role of the hero: Kurtz, Becker and Charlie. Le Carré's variation of the formula here is really an extension of the technique used in *HS*. Functionally, Kurtz, Becker and Charlie share the hero's role in a triple-layer structure that has its counterpart in a triple-layer plot. In relation to each other it is possible to see an 'internal' superior-hero pattern, as Kurtz directs Becker in the larger aspects of his plan, and Becker runs Charlie, feeding her in turn all the necessary details. However, this internal distribution within the role does not in any way modify the three characters' collective functional significance.

The particular variation of the role pattern in *LDG* does not

prevent the hero's role features from manifestation. Both Kurtz, Becker and Charlie are emphatically independent people and at the same time professionals - the two Israelis as intelligence officers, Charlie as the actress performing to perfection in her role of decoy. Considered individually, however, the three characters do not display these facets in quite similar ways. The traits associated with the gentleman figure come out most obviously in Becker whose lack of ties, economic and otherwise, gives him freedom to follow personal interests and inclinations. In Kurtz and Charlie priority is given to their professionalism, with Kurtz representing intellectual acumen and Charlie practical effort. In other words, in this respect there is a certain similarity between Becker and Smiley, whereas the reader may think of Leamas or Turner as parallels to Kurtz and Charlie.

With Deightons's hero, we are on the floor level once again. Although he occasionally enjoys the privileges of a leader (*IF* and *HUW*), his abilities are not management but working abilities.

Deighton's hero is a representative of the post-war meritocracy which found it extremely difficult to obtain society's recognition.[2] The New Men of the meritocracy were well-educated and needed for the rapid developments everywhere, but their 'fault' was that they were not born with any kind of privilege. They felt strangers in a nation which required their qualifications, but which expected them in men already by birth part of the 'system'. Deighton's hero reacts in a manner well-known from much English literature of the 1950s: by detached irony and disrespect, as in this passage from *IF*:

> 'You are loving it here, of course?' Dalby asked. 'I have a clean mind and pure heart. I get eight hours' sleep every night. I am a loyal, diligent employee and will attempt every day to be worthy of the trust my paternal employer puts in me.' 'I'll make the jokes,' said Dalby.
> Dalby tightened a shoelace. 'Think you can handle a tricky little special assignment?' 'If it doesn't demand a classical education, I might be able to grope around it' (14).

It may be wrong to assume that the heros of Deighton's stories are actually different manifestations of the same man, but for the purpose of isolating characteristic role features the problem is irrelevant. Deighton is not very exact on his hero's past, but it

seems that his background can be pieced together as provicial grammar school, military service with war-time experience, and a red-brick-university degree (maths and economics).[3] This is the kind of background which grew into much British literature in the fifties, cf. e.g. Amis's *Lucky Jim* or Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*.

The position of Deighton's hero rests on skills which are, in contrast to Bond's and Smiley's, of a highly pragmatic nature: 'But you've got your Master's and all those other qualifications: maths and economics; potent mixture' (*SS*: 42). But a potent degree does not mean instant integration in Establishment circles. A James Bond with an economics degree would soon have found this way to the City in some capacity, because he was born into the Establishment, and a humanist like Smiley would have felt at home in an Oxford library. For Deighton's hero, however, the problem is to reconcile a background essentially non-Establishment with the laboriously acquired abilities to wield power. Instead of the Herculean task of building up a completely new consciousness of identity, such a man may easily either join with the professional social rebels, or he may conform with the Establishment and hope for eventual integration. Deighton's hero is obviously in a predicament like that, for instance in *YS* where he must listen to an old friend accusing him playfully of compromising with the ideals of his youth:

> He stared at me. 'Ooo, they've changed you, Charlie! Those little men who've promised you help with your mortgage, and full pension rights at sixty. Who would have thought they could have done that to the kid who fought the war with a copy of *Wage Labour and Capital* in his back procket? To say nothing of that boring lecture you gave everyone about Mozart's revolutionary symbolism in *The Marriage of Figaro*.'
> He smiled, but I didn't (48).

Deighton's hero has chosen a position of distance, from which he may watch rebels and conformists alike with detached irony, a position which becomes very convenient with his 'exiled' situation in the later stories. But the hero's behaviour is a constant reminder that he may be able to join the society of anachronistic gentlemen if he chooses to. Compare these examples of offhand learning:

> I came up to the surface very, very slowly: from the dark deeps I floated freely towards the dimblue rippling surface of undrugged life.
> I hurt, therefore I am (*IF*: 141).

> When I was a kid I'd wanted to be an artist. Sometimes I thought Ferdy Foxwell only tolerated me was because I could pronounce Pallaiuolo, and tell a Giotto from a Francesca (*SS*: 130-1).

> 'Ha ha,' said Ralph. 'Arma virumque cano.' He turned to me and said, 'Of arms and the man I sing. Virgil.' I said, 'Adeo in teneris consuescere multum est. As the twig is bent the tree inclines. Also Virgil'
> There was a silence (*BDB*: 49-50).

The aspect of the whole-man figure which is so easily associated with the gentleman obviously causes Deighton considerable trouble, because the idea of the conventional gentleman must be anathema to the meritocrat. But Deighton's hero does not discourage associations to the gentleman. By his constant, if wryful, awareness of traditional ideals, he suggests an emotional attachment to virtues which to his purely intellectual judgment must appear outdated.

In the secret agent of fiction we encounter a man who is apparently insignificant, but who nevertheless is able to control major political developments to an incredible extent. The fictional secret agent 'demonstrates' to the reader that it is possible for an individual of the grey mass to exert influence. This effect is inextricably linked with the reader's reaction to the hero as a confirmation of the view well-known to us all that it is only in a statistical perspective that there is a Mr Average; in reality we are all unique. But there are other effects as well of the hero's anonymity.

One effect is something I shall call the envy effect. Besides being a confirmation of the possibility that an anonymous man, that is, the hero/reader, may exert considerable influence, anonymity also confirms the reader's readiness to believe that the grapes which may be eaten by those raised out of the anonymous mass are probably sour.

It is really a repetition of the traditional concept of *hubris*, which has been turned to special use in the genre. When in

*MWGG* Bond reflects on the consequences of accepting a knighthood, the reader probably feels a certain satisfaction, because Bond's excuses emphasize the negative aspects of celebrity. In the same passage another effect is also obvious. Bond refuses to become a public figure, but at the same time he repeats to himself his rank, which is fairly high, and his membership of a secret fraternity. Anonymity, the hero's and, by empathy, the reader's, may cover attributes and activities of an impressive nature:

> He had never been a public figure and he did not wish to become one. He had no prejudice against letters after one's name, or before it. But there was one thing above all he treasured. His privacy. His anonymity. To become a public person, a person, in the snobbish world of England, of any country, who would be called upon to open things, lay foundation stones, make after-dinner speeches, brought the sweat to his armpits. 'James Bond'! No middle name. No hyphen. A quiet, dull, anonymous name. Certainly he was a commander in the Special Branch of the RNVR, but he rarely used the rank. His CMG likewise. He wore it perhaps once a year, together with his two rows of 'lettuce', because there was a dinner for the 'Old Boys' - the fraternity of ex-Secret Service men that went under the name of 'The Twin Snakes Club' (187).

That the hero is anonymous does not necessarily imply that he is also lonely. But whereas the hero's anonymity is a formula feature of the secret-agent story, the hero's solitude is a characteristic shared by many formula genres. In the formal detective story the detective is lonely because he is intellectually superior to other men. If he keeps company, it is not the company of an equal, but a Dr Watson. In the more violent American variation of the detective in the manner of Hammett, MacDonald and Chandler, the hero is lonely partly by his own decision, partly by some (Byronic) guilt complex, and he represents, along with the hero in the western, the aspect of the American Dream which is a belief in the redeeming power of individualism. It is characteristic of these genres that, despite their differences, the heroes have great responsibility for the health of their societies. They are not revolutionaries; on the contrary, they are pillars of their society.

The hero's solitude before his assignment forms a contrast to the fact that at this stage he is among friends and colleagues; he is at home. This corresponds to a similar contrast in the ordeals phase, in which the hero is alone by necessity, but obviously in his right element. Bond's feeling of isolation before he is given his assignment stems from his natural aversion to routine work. He is a man of action, and thus fits badly into a world of reports and typewriters. His boredom results in irritation, and this state of mind creates a distance to his surroundings.

The unease felt by Bond before an assignment has its parallels in le Carré's and Deighton's stories. In *SWCIFC* le Carré makes Leamas reflect on the general situation of the secret agent. The hero's isolation is due to necessary deception:

> In itself, the practice of deception is not particularly exacting; it is a matter of experience, of professional expertise, it is a facility most of us can acquire. But while a confidence trickster, a play-actor or a gambler can return from his performance to the ranks of his admirers, the secret agent enjoys no such relief. For him, deception is first a matter of self-defence. He must protect himself not only from without but from within, and against the most natural of impulses; though he earn a fortune, his role may forbid him the purchase of a raxor, though he be erudite, it can befall him to mumble nothing but banalities; though he be an affectionate husband and father, he must under all circumstances withhold himself from those in whom he should naturally confide (140).

This is the obvious explanation of the hero's solitude in the perspective of his security, but to le Carré the hero's solitude is not only a matter of security. It develops into a symbol of the general human situation as well, as in this passage from *CFD*, in which Smiley reflects on Elsa Fennan's person:

> There was no aggression in her, no will but the will to preserve. But who could tell? What did Hesse write? 'Strange to wander in the mist, each is alone. No tree knows his neighbour. Each is alone.' We know nothing of one another, nothing, Smiley mused. However closely we live together, at whatever time of day or night we sound the deepest thoughts in one another, we know nothing (39).

Although Smiley realizes the necessity of solitude for secret-agent activities, and practises the cloak-and-dagger game himself perfectly, le Carré makes the breach of the isolation something laudable on the personal level. It is characteristic that in the two cases in which the heroes lose, Leamas in *SWCIFC* and Westerby in *HS*, they have both fallen in love. This is, from a security point of view, highly risky, as expressed by Leamas in the passage quoted above, but it saves the two men as honest human beings, in the same way as Smiley is saved by his 'last illusion' from becoming a human automaton in the service of cold calculation.

I have suggested above that Deighton's hero may be seen as a symptom of the change in social stratification which is a consequence of the rise of the meritocracy. This adds to the isolation resulting from the secretive nature of his work. Perhaps Deighton's nameless (!) hero is the one who feels his isolation most acutely. He is in many respects a transition figure: he has a lower-class background which fits ill with the upper-class tradition of the British secret service; at the same time he feels a love-and-hate relationship with the circles which his intellect tells him to despise, because the people in them cling to a way of life no longer possible. Bond and Smiley are firmly attached to traditional values, Leamas and Turner are professionals whose social status remains unproblematic. Deighton's hero, however, is constantly conscious of his own social predicament, the recognition of which is perhaps the explanation why Dawlish in *IF* makes a palpable hit when he replies to the hero's 'Now I know why I love you' that 'You don't love anyone. Not even yourself' (39).

Anonymity and loneliness are qualities needed by the secret agent for the performance of his duties. But, as I have suggested above, the two qualities may be seen to be more profoundly significant, especially on social and ethical levels. The last major characteristic which I consider a role feature of the secret-agent hero is also of this double nature.

The fictional secret agent has a function quite similar to that of the public executioner: he does the dirty work so that society can maintain its harmony. The motives of the secret agent or the hangman are not important as long as the work is done. Whether they do it for money or for idealistic reasons is immaterial, although intrinsically interesting (cf. ch. 4). But from the realization that punishment or secret-agent activities are sometimes

needed for society to continue its existence, it does not follow that hangmen or secret agents are generally admired persons. On the contrary, most people shy away from them because they have blood on their hands.

The fictional secret agent is an unclean person: his resort to violence, legalized violence at that,[4] separates him from his fellows. On the other hand, there is the aura of sacrificial priest about him, too: he acts for the common good when he imposes death, and therefore he is approached with a sense of revulsion but also wonder and awe. He is a person who represents society's double standard of morality: the end is honourable but the means are not. The end must be attained, but the provider of the means, the secret agent, pays for society's guilty conscience by being kept out in the cold.

In Fleming's stories the pariah nature of the hero is presented positively, as it were. Bond lives as a contented bachelor, and the hero frequently emphasises the free choice of the way he wishes to live his life. But there are also symbolic indications that even if he wishes to become totally integrated, this is impossible for him. The symbolic significance of his bachelor life as his free choice of a life independent of permanent relationships with other people is underlined when his marriage to Tracy in *OHMSS* proves to be short-lived. And even if he wanted to be an ordinary Englishman, it would be impossible: 'Bond knew that there was something alien and un-English about himself. He knew that he was a difficult man to cover up. Particularly in England' (*M* : 28).

The pariah nature of le Carré's and Deighton's heroes is also presented symbolically, but not with the positive varnish of Bond's 'enviable' bachelor life. Both le Carré and Deighton concentrate on the social relationships entered into by their heroes, and it is typical of both that the outsider status of their heroes is manifested as social inferiority, sometimes openly confessed by the hero, sometimes just stated with objective aloofness. That Smiley is a social misfit is indicated already in *CFD*:

> Was he rich or poor, peasant or priest? Where had she got him from? The incongruity of the match was emphasized by Lady Ann's undoubted beauty, its mystery stimulated by the disproportion between the man and his bride. . . . And so Smiley, without school, parents, regiment or trade, without wealth or

> poverty, travelled without labels in the guard's van of the social express, and soon became lost luggage, destined, when the divorce had come and gone, to remain unclaimed on the dusty shelf of yesterday's news (7).

Smiley is at home only among his books and journals about seventeenth-century German poetry, a symbol of Smiley's individualist as well as outsider existence.

The social difference by which the hero's casteless position is emphasized comes out clearly in *SWCIFC*. Like Turner from *STIG*, Leamas gives himself away at once:

> He had an attractive face, muscular, and a stubborn line to his thin mouth. His eyes were brown and small; Irish some said. it was hard to place Leamas. If he were to walk into a London club the porter would certainly not mistake him for a member; in a Berlin night club they usually gave him the best table. He looked like a man who could make trouble, a man who looked after his money, a man who was not quite a gentleman (15).

Of the three characters sharing the hero's role in *LDG* the distance between the individual and society is felt most keenly in Becker and Charlie, circumstance that makes the concluding words in the book particularly apt: 'Locked together, they set off awkwardly along the pavement, though the town was strange to them' (430). Even before the story begins Becker is adrift, apparently searching for a new existence after a brilliant career in the Israeli army. He is a wandering jew, attempting to re-establish his identity on a new basis. In contrast to Becker, Charlie's situation undergoes development from we see her for the first time among colleagues spending a bohemian holiday on a Greek island. A major consequence of her acceptance of the Israeli assignment is her increasing sense of alienation that reaches its culmination with her emotional fixation on the - to her fictitious - person of Michel, a PLO agent, and her knowledge of her duplicity. Whereas Becker's estrangement seems to be a kind of atonement for an only partly realized sense of guilt, Charlie's development into the pariah is a process engineered in cold blood, ironically adding to the weight on Becker's conscience.

In Deighton's fictional universe the hero expresses an almost

aggressive attitude to the rungs of the Establishment ladder which provide the traditional setting of the secret-agent story. Whereas Bond's isolated position is presented as an asset, and whereas Smiley is presented as a natural hermit, Deighton's hero reacts, often vehemently, to his role as an outcast. As the meritocrat that he is, his anger and sarcasm is directed at those who have been *given* what he feels that he has *earned*. In *IF* the hero has an assistant, Chico, who belongs to the world that the hero despises, but to which he is nonetheless attracted:

> Chico always looked glad to see me; it made my day. It was his training, I suppose. He'd been to one of those very good schools where you meet kids with influential uncles. I imagine that's how he got into the Horse Guards and now into W.O.O.C. (P) too; it must have been like being at school again. His profusion of long lank yellow hair hung heavily across his head like a Shrove Tuesday mishap. He stood 5 feet 11 inches in his Argyll socks and had an irritating physical stance, in which his thumbs rested high behind his red braces while he rocked on his hand-lasted oxfords. He had the advantage of both a good brain and a family rich enough to have him using it (12).

But Deighton's hero is equally critical towards those who take over the life style of inherited wealth. He is opposed most of all to the hypocrisy of those who pretend to critize the traditional organization of society, but use their power to support it secretly, as in his rejoinder to Dawlish, his superior, in this passage from *BDB*:

> 'What are the socialists going to do about the public schools?' he asked. I was one of the few grammar-school boys that Dawlish ever came in contact with.
> He considered me an authority on all aspects of left-wing politics . . .
> 'Send their sons to them,' I said (188).

The casteless situation of Deighton's meritocratic hero is a result of his love-and-hate attitude to the Establishment and his disgust for the double standards which he often sees in those whom he might reasonably expect to be his political spokesmen. Deighton's shift from a British to an American setting in *SS* may make the

hero a pariah as regards nationality, but there is not doubt that the hero's alienation in Deighton's 'American' stories is much less due to social considerations than in his 'English' ones. With the direct and ofte coarse Americans, Schlegel in *SS* and *YS*, Mann in *TTLS*, he feels much more at home than with the invisible social barriers of his fellow countrymen. From being a pariah on a social basis mainly, Deighton's hero by his exile has managed to leave the social distinctions behind him.

A generally capable man with an obvious affinity to the traditional gentleman figure; anonymous, lonely and casteless: these are the central traits which form the role of the fictional secret agent. To a superficial glance, Fleming's, le Carré's and Deighton's heroes seem miles apart. But no matter how superficially different, they grow out of this complex of basic characteristics, because they owe their existence to a formula that requires such characteristics in its heroes to make the other elements of the formula work.

### *The Hero's Superior*

The role of the superior represents the official aspects of the values defended in action by the hero. Belonging half in the secret agent's own clandestine world, half in Whitehall's corridors of power, the superior is in a difficult position. On the one hand the superior is the object of the hero's distrust, because, as a high-ranking civil servant, he must naturally be assumed to know much more than he will reveal to his subordinate, the secret agent. On the other hand, the hero must necessarily rely on the information given him by his superior, because this is in the nature of intelligence work. The result is an ambivalent attitude on the part of the hero to his superior.

To the reader, the superior appears as the well-informed person. The superior interprets the Government's interpretation of international politics, and he sees to it that his interpretation is acted upon by the hero. Although the reader, like the hero, has no alternative but to believe in the superior's interpretation of the political situation, his general attitude to government and central administration is probably similar to the hero's attitude: a mixture of suspicion, fear and unwilling respect.

The double loyalty of the superior, to his government and to

his agent, creates a tension between superior and hero. The superior's role characteristic are features which originate in that tension. The *father-son* analogy is obvious and has been emphasised by numerous critics, especially in connection with the Bond stories. But there are other manifestations of the tension which present themselves with equal force. The *God-man* analogy may be considered an extension of the father-son analogy, but exists in its own right as well. Various kinds of *social barrier* between the character manifestation of the two roles appear frequently in the genre, and here there is scope for the writer's individual emphases while he retains the basic tension of suspicious distance. In Fleming's stories M. forces associations on the reader which may best be described as evocative of the country squire of literary tradition: a gruff, narrow-minded and intolerant man, feudal in his attitude to his surroundings, but with a deep sense of responsibility to his dependants.[5] In agreement with his favourite theme, le Carré frequently presents his superiors as pretentious and false figures, tied up with a bureaucratic system which functions through guile. Deighton usually employs the role of the superior to present values which seem insufficient for current needs.

Whereas Fleming's social-barrier distinction of the country squire versus the urbane man has been a frequent *motif* in literature, le Carré's and Deighton's variations imply highly critical attitudes to the social values of modern society.

Bond's world overlaps with M.'s in that theirs is definitely a men's world. They are both naval officers, M. an admiral, Bond a commander. They both live bachelor lives, and they are both totally dependent on their jobs for making life worthwhile. As I suggested above, the distinction between M. and Bond is made clear in terms of the father/God-son/man analogy and the opposition of country to large city. The social barrier between the two men receives only little attention, but is signalled as a matter of course in the differences in privilege of their respective ranks.

When M. is introduced for the first time in *CR*, the reader at once gets the impression of a man averse to the cosmopolitan sophistication of the metropolis. M.'s reaction to his second-in-command's use of the French word 'proxémitisme' reveals a man used to commanding other men and to cutting through to essentials. But it also shows the reader a man perhaps too eager to

allow a detail like this to disturb him. His outburst may actually cover a feeling of inferiority:

> 'What the hell does this word mean?' He spelt it out.
> 'Pimping, sir.'
> 'This is not the Berlitz School of languages, Head of S. If you want to show off your knowledge of foreign jawbreakers, be good enough to provide a crib. Better still, write in English' (12).

This passage gives an early indication of M.'s similarity with the country squire of literature. A few pages further on another dimension of the hero - superior tension is added. Generally, the Bond stories may be seen to exemplify Freud's ideas about the Oedipus complex to such a degree that the reader may suspect that Fleming incorporated them consciously.[6] Perhaps critics have overplayed this dimension of the tension between Bond and M. To me, the analogy to the relations between God and man takes precedence. M. as watched by Bond below, is a figure very much resembling God as Jehovah:

> Bond was stopped by the cold eyes. M. knew all this already, knew the odds at baccarat as well as Bond. That was his job - knowing the odds at everything, and knowing men, his own and the opposition's. Bond wished he had kept quiet about this misgivings (21).

But the Jehovah who presides over the British secret service is a shrewd as well as an omniscient God, possessing the crafty mind traditionally associated with the country squire, and the result is a curious mixture of omnipotence and cunning. These are, I suggest, the features which are at the core of Fleming's conception of the superior; features which are elaborated in all the following stories.

It is quite in line with M.'s Jehovah-like appearance that whenever Fleming makes Bond approach his superior in his own sanctuary, the hero enters with the respect and caution of one who is about to worship his God. The church-like atmosphere of M.'s room is striking:

> Bond went through the door and closed it softly behind him.

> The room was cool, or perhaps it was the venetian blinds that gave an impression of coolness. They threw bars of light and shadow across the dark green carpet up to the edge of the big central desk. There the sunshine stopped so that the quiet figure behind the desk sat in a pool of suffused greenish shade (*FRWL*: 84).

And the transition to the country squire from Jehovah is imperceptibly made in the subsequent paragraphs which describe first Bond's attitude to M. - an attitude of man to God, or son to father - then imply the geniality of the squire evoked by pipe-smoking in contrast to Bond's well-known consumption of cigarettes:

> M. gestured to the chair opposite him across the red leather desk. Bond sat down and looked into the tranquil, lined sailor's face that he loved, honoured and obeyed.
> M. picked his pipe out of the big copper ashtray and began to fill it, thoughtfully watching his fingers at work with the tobacco (*FRWL*: 84-5).

According to the medieval world picture the relations between man and God are reflected in the mundane order of social relations. M. resembles the feudal lord in his behaviour not only to Bond, but also to other inferiors. In *DrN* there is a brief scene describing M. dismissing his driver, who pays for the protection of his lord by his services:

> 'Won't be needing the car again today, Smith. Take it away and go home. I'll use the tube this evening. No weather for driving a car. Worse than one of those PQ convoys.'
> Ex-Leading Stoker Smith grinned gratefully. 'Aye-aye, sir. And thanks.' He watched the elderly erect figure walk round the bonnet of the Rolls and across the pavement and into the building. Just like the old boy. He'd always see the men right first (13).

It is in keeping with the country-squire type which M. resembles that he revals the limited tolerance and the prejudice which is so often associated with the type. Talking over an assignment with Bond, he bursts out: 'I don't need a lecture on the qualities of the

Swiss, thank you, 007. At least they keep their trains clean and cope with the beatnik problem' (*OHMSS*: 73).

Only once does Bond react negatively to M.'s treatment of him (not counting the brainwashed Bond of *MWGG*). After a period of desk work Bond has grown impatient. His exclamation is analogical to a violation of the Third Commandment (Exodus: 20,7): 'Anyway, who's afraid of the Big Bad M.' (*YOLT*: 27). Bond's punishment is his embarrassment when he learns that M. has plans for him. Again the overtones of a deity are clearly felt in Bond's emphasis on the providential nature of his superior:

> James Bond felt a quick warmth of affection for this man who had ordered his destiny for so long, but whom he knew so little. His instinct told him that there were things hidden behind this assignment, motives which he didn't understand (32).

The kind of tension which exists between Bond and his superior is always produced by Bond's knowledge that M. is omniscient and omnipotent, and he himself a being with limited horizon and power. M. is the teacher, Bond the disciple.

The halo implied by Fleming's description of M. is absent from le Carré's and Deighton's stories. The reader may now and then catch a glimpse of respect, but never of worship.

Le Carré's favourite theme of sincerity versus pretense is expressed frequently as the difference which puts a distance between hero and superior, as in this passage from *CFD*:

> Maston's room contained not a single piece of government property. He had once bought a collection of nineteenth-century water colours, and some of these were hanging on the walls. The rest was off the peg, Smiley decided. Maston was off the peg too, for that matter. His suit was just too light for respectability; the string of his monocle cut across the invariable cream shirt, He wore a light grey wollen tie. A German would call him *flott* thought Smiley; chic, that's what he is - a barmaid's dream of a real gentleman (18-19).

Hardly any description of Bond's superior in his own office lacks mention of the 'red, leather-topped desk', and the desk is present in parallel situations in le Carré's and Deighton's stories as well.

The desk stands as a symbol of official power, and it is the concrete means of separating the superior from the hero. On the superior's side the official domain ends, and on the hero's side the clandestine world begins. To le Carré in *CFD* the desk implies superficiality of values and domination by trivia: 'Maston was standing at his big flat desk, toying with the businessman's cutlery - paper knife, cigarette box, lighter - the whole chemistry set of official hospitality' (21). And a few pages later, when Smiley has learned that he is to be taken off the case and that the whole investigation is to be called off, because it may cause unpleasant reactions in government circles, he expresses his profound distaste for the man:

> Smiley had to give him credit - it was a good *performance* and he was no match for Maston when it came to this. Abruptly he felt inside himself the rising panic of frustration beyond endurance. With panic came an uncontrollable fury with this *posturing* sycophant, this obscene cissy with this greying hair and his reasonable smile. Panic and fury welled up in a sudden tide, flooding his breast, suffusing his whole body. His face felt hot and red, his spectacles blurred, and tears sprang to his eyes, adding to his humiliation (42-3; my italics).

Although in *TTSS* Smiley expresses feelings for Control which are interested and affectionate, this successor to Maston's office is observed with suspicion by Leamas, the hero of *SWCIFC*. There is not much to choose between Maston and Control as described in this passage:

> He was shorter than Leamas remembered him; otherwise, just the same. The same donnish *conceits*; the same horror of draughts; courteous according to a formula miles removed from Leamas' experience. The same milk-and-water smile, the same *elaborate* diffidence, the same apologetic adherence to a code of behavior which he *pretended* to find ridiculous. The same *banality* (18; my italics).

In *TTSS* the reader learns that Control died of a weak heart during his laborious and lonely work on the mole case. The retired Smiley is asked to continue Control's efforts by Lacon, a senior civil servant, who acts as the *liaison* between the Ministry

and the Circus. Lacon is not a proper superior, but to all practical effects he functions as one. In the two stories previous to *TTSS* the character manifestations of the superior retain the basic characteristic of distance to the heroes, but otherwise they differ from the pattern in ways which make the roles expressive of a critical attitude to what they represent.

Leclerc, the superior of *LGW*, obviously suffers from an inferiority complex stemming from the diminished status of his once important intelligence unit. His pursuit of former status is essentially a pursuit of quite trivial marks of distinction: number of personnel, access to official cars, etc. But in comparison with his predecessors in the role, Leclerc is only felt as particularly ridiculous because he epitomizes the values which are targets of le Carré's irony in the story as a whole. Whereas le Carré in his two first stories and the Karla trilogy makes a clear distinction between the spuriousness of the superior and the genuineness of the hero, all the characters in *LGW* (except Smiley) live by false values. The relationship between the superior and the hero Avery (there are three heroes and three plot lines in the story) is in accordance with the formula requirements, even to the point of the father-son metaphor: 'Avery could hate him for his transparent manipulation, detest his drinking gestures as a child detests the affectations of a parent' (37). Only, of course, in this 'upside-down' story, the emphasis is on the negative features of the relationship.

*STIG* is the only one of le Carré's stories in which pretense is not the main characteristic of the superior. Nevertheless, the distance between superior and hero is strongly felt. To begin with, the reader has the impression that Turner is a laudable idealist in pursuit of truth, an impression which is first created in the assignment phase. Turner receives his orders from Lumley, a person whose career as a diplomat has foundered and who now awaits pension age with a large fund of bitterness. When he tells Turner that 'a bit of failure is what you need' (50), the reader is convinced of his envy of the hero. In my interpretation of this story as expressive of a deeply felt hate of absolutism and totalitarianism (v. ch. 4), Lumley is a positive figure despite his bitterness. And as Turner turns out to be a loser, a 'cynic in search of God' (50) in Lumley's words, the fundamental opposition between hero and superior is intact.

In *SP*, the third story of the trilogy, Maston from *CFD*

reappears in the shape of Saul Enderby. Like Maston Enderby is only interesting in so far as he acts as a contrast to the hero's integrity. But le Carré's handling of the role of superior in the Karla trilogy as a whole is illustrative of the requirements of the formula.

One of the main characteristics of le Carré's work is the tension between the formula and the limits to which he keeps trying to push it. An obvious instance is the way his characters begin as rather flat role players and end as independent characters. Lacon, the superior in *TTSS*, is such a character.

The Lacon of *TTSS* is obviously tied to his role. Smiley at once notes the conventionality of the civil servant's home (34), and the reader's attention is immediately directed to the *distance* between them: 'He was a string bean of a man, graceless and boyish: Occasionally the smarter Sundays wrote about him, calling him 'new-style' because he was young' (34). Soon after this the distance manifests itself in terms of social intercourse. Smiley is out of his depth with the conversational ease of Lacon. To Smiley, who never utters a sentence without having confronted it with his deepest self, the younger man must seem superficial:

> 'Oh I think I manage very well really, thank you,' said Smiley politely. And to draw it out: 'Yes, I'm sure I do. And you? All goes well with you?'
> 'No big changes, no. All very smooth. Charlotte got her scholarship to Roedean, which was nice.'
> 'Oh good.'
> 'And your wife, she's in the pink and so on?'
> His expressions were also boyish.
> 'Very bonny, thank you,' said Smiley, trying gallantly to respond in kind (34).

When Smiley is given his assignment by Lacon, the hero's thoughts about him imply a difference comparable to the difference Smiley felt when he returned from active service in *CFD*, a difference between involvement and abstraction. Lacon belongs in an unreal world: 'With numbers, with facts of all sorts, Lacon never faltered. They were the gold he worked with, wrested from the grey bureaucratic earth' (68). His contact with the fieldmen is channelled through accounts: 'So far as I can make out from the financial returns, almost all of them are presently active' (68).

But in *SP* he suddenly develops into a figure who has begun to doubt the values of which he is supposed to be the incarnation. His fate becomes parallel to Smiley's, divorce and all, and the reader's impression of the crumbling Establishment is thus reinforced.

In *HS* the tension between formula requirement and independent character is even more obvious. In this story Smiley is superior and hero at the same time. Although Jerry Westerby may appear to be the formal hero of the story, he is actually more of a helper in Smiley's search for the leaks that may lead him to his Soviet adversary. And Smiley plays his two roles according to the formula. Whenever he is the questing hero, we glimpse the honest man in him, with all his usual insistence on sincerity and fair play. Whenever he is the superior, he tends to assume a pose which is interpreted as mere word-play by Westerby, despite all his undoubtedly good intentions. The formal hero is the man of action, and sees life in terms of concrete choice. To him the planner must seem safely removed from risk, and the superior's show of sincerity will appear as hypocrisy. Jerry's reaction to Smiley is comparable to Leamas's to Control in *SWCIFC*:

> Jerry's face clamped tight shut. He always forgot this part of Smiley when he was away from him, and remembered it too late when he was with him. There was a bit of the failed priest in old George, and the older he grew, the more prominent it became. He seemed to assume that the whole blasted western world shared his worries and had to be talked round to a proper way of thinking (116).

Although the superior's loyalty in *LDG*, as required by the change in setting, is to the Israeli government, not to Whitehall, there is no essential difference between Saul Enderby of *SP* and Misha Gavron of the Israeli secret service. Like his predecessors in the role Gavron must justify the often irregular activities of his agents to the government, and - just as delicate - relay the diplomatic and bureaucratic considerations to his men of action. Gavron's often bullying attitude towards Kurtz is a formula feature, and so is Kurtz's lack of stability in his behaviour towards his superior, alternating between a devil-may-care manner and subservience as the situation requires.

Both le Carré and Deighton use their superiors in identity

puzzles (v. ch. 5), whereas this role is stable in Fleming's stories. However, the plot manipulations, when they occur, have no influence on the basic distance which exists between hero and superior. It is more important for the superior to retain the characteristic of his role when he proves to be a double agent than when he guarantees stability of values, as M. does. The chummy tone between superior and hero in Deighton's stories should not be mistaken for identity of attitudes. Deighton's superiors play tricks on the hero, and the hero's attitude to them is always suspicion mingled with a wish to assert himself, as if he is aware of a social and/or cultural distance separating them. This has to do, of course, with the hero's background as a meritocrat socially inferior to his posh colleagues.

There are two kinds of superior in Deighton's stories: those who appear before *SS*, and those after. The distance between hero and superior is equally present in the stories of both periods, but brought about by different means.

Roughly speaking, the relations between hero and superior in the earlier stories are marked by the hero's obvious lack of respect. The distance between the two is the product of the hero's sense of this own social standing. Bond and M. differ in naval rank, but are of the same kind, socially. Smiley and Maston differ in their attitude to the Establishment; the hero criticizes it, the superior uses it, but Smiley's values are, essentially, identical with those which Maston misuses. Deighton's hero, however, differs markedly from his superiors in the pre-'American' stories.

The ironic light in which the superior appears in Deighton's first stories is retained in his later ones, but the hero's almost aggressive attitude to the representative of the Establishment gives way to an attitude of respect for the American counterpart.

In *SS* the hero is transferred to service under the American Colonel Schlegel, who is in charge of some joint-operation unit in Britain. This change of the superior's nationality establishes for the hero a sense of identity which he does not show in the previous stories. Being attached to Schlegel means a kind of exile from which he is able to consider English values and the people representing them with a detachment that makes himself more aware of the positive sides of Englishness. Like the English superiors of the early stories, the new American master (or masters, as Mann takes over from Schlegel in *TTLS*) is made slightly ridiculous by the hero's ironic attitude to the characteristics

commonly associated with his nationality. With the introduction of American superiors, the props of Deighton's stage become larger and more fantastic, almost Fleming-like. But with this 'Americanization' of an originally le Carré kind of setting follows a way of life much more congenial to the hero's meritocratic background, based on skill and efficiency most of all. When in *SS* the hero meets Schlegel for the first time, New-World efficiency as well as New-World grandiosity come out clearly:

> Bright red export model XKE - well, why didn't I guess. He came out of it like an Olympics hurdler and grasped my hand firmly and held my elbow, too, so that I couldn't shake myself free. 'It must have got in early,' he said resentfully. He consulted a large multifaced wristwatch of the sort that can time high-speed races under water. He was wearing charcoal trousers, handmade brogues, a bright-red wollen shirt that exactly matched his car, and a shiny green flying jacket, with lots of Mickey Mouse on sleeves and chest (36).

Having recovered from the shock of meeting Schlegel in *SS*, the hero in *YS* is able to use the superior to see his own background and values in perspective. It is significant that the result of the comparison of the two characters is a hero who puts increasing emphasis on human relations, whereas the superior thinks solely in terms of the power balance. Forced to recognize the necessity of Schlegel's drive and sense of reality, partly because of the changed international relations, partly because there is something of a Schlegel in himself, the hero nonetheless in this story feels himself a stranger to that necessity. Schlegel is the spy of tomorrow, the hero the spy of yesterday.

Along with the hero's development in the direction of Smiley's sense of values, the superior in *TTLS* is in agreement with the Fleming-like setting. Major Mickey Mann, 'U.S. Army Signal Corps, Retired, a C.I.A. expert on Russian Electronics' (8), takes us back to M. when he gives his opinion on a well-intentioned Senate committee:

> 'I must be getting senile or something,' said Mann. 'Why didn't I think about those bastards on that Scientific Cooperation Committee - commie bastards the lot of them if you ask me' (37).

Although the shift away from near-caricatures of Establishment superiors to American role manifestations who demand the hero's respect, the distance between the two roles in Deighton's fictional universe is always employed to underline the hero's feeling of social alienation. The superior represents the values which, to the author, appear to be the values relied on for the regulation of a nations's life. Deighton's superiors symbolise ways of life strange to many people in England brought up and educated since the Second World War. His hero is lost between an incongruous past and an equally incongruous, Americanized future.

The three writers' attitudes to national values appear from the way the relationship between hero and superior is described. Fleming's longing for the order and strength of former times is unambiguously demonstrated in the values represented by M. Le Carré's belief in the inclination of institutions to develop inertia, manifested as unwillingness to revise attitudes and as cultivation of mere appearance, is especially prominent in the interplay of the two roles. To Deighton's hero, the character manifestations of the superior represent alternative ways of life, symbolized by Britain and the USA. His divided loyalty is, perhaps, not an uncommon situation for today's Englishman.

### *The Hero's Helper(s)*

The hero is placed in a middle state between his superior and his helpers. This is a position which is thematically significant, because it emphasizes the status of the hero as a pariah in his society. The function of the hero's superior is to send the hero off on some assignment, and the superior represents the link with the central administration and political power in the hero's own country. The function of the hero's helpers is, of course, to help the hero whenever help is required, but the helpers, like the superior, represent a link with society, but on a lower social level than the superior.

In the detective story, the helper of the Dr Watson type has grown into a stock character. The detective needs a helper to run his trivial errands, and the author needs a confidant to relate the detective's observations to the reader. In the secret-agent story the helpers share these functions, but whereas the relationship between the fictional *detective* and his helper is one of genius in

contrast to normality, often a slightly stupid version of normality at that, the fictional *secret agent's* helpers are characters who differ from the hero in degree more than in kind.

Like the hero, the helper combines general capability with professionalism, but the helper's general capability is restricted to a capability to act in accordance with the hero's suggestions or orders. As a rule he lacks the initiative which the hero needs when on his own. The women who appear in the role of helper share the features of general capability and professionalism with the men. Contrary to many critics's opinion they are not just sex symbols. They are actually able to assist the hero in his numerous predicaments, and this is their main plot function. Of course, they are *also* erotic prizes for the hero, and the gallery of women in Fleming's, le Carré's and Deighton's novels give a good impression of men's traditional ways of looking upon women. Fleming usually emphasizes the external beauty of the women encountered by Bond. It is typical that the main concern of Solitaire in *LLD* is her disfigured nose. But Fleming also stresses the innocence of his female characters. Not their sexual innocence, which appears to be immaterial, but their lack of education according to Bond's sense of values. They help Bond, and in return he teaches them about life. Deighton's women helpers are also beautiful, but they impress the reader by their independence (not expected from women!) rather than by their looks. They are not innocent as regards general life experience, and their level of professionalism is high (for women!). Le Carré's female helpers are of two kinds. The Connie Sachs type of *TTSS, HS* and *SP* is a career woman who has given all her life to her work, and, as a consequence, has become a human wreck. Her contrast is Liz of *SWCIFC* and Elizabeth Worthington of *HS*, who are, like many of Fleming's women, innocent about life in general. Also they are 'saved' by the heroes.

I suggested above that the hero's helpers represent a link with society, but on a lower level than the superior. This does not mean that they are not also pariah figures. They are, but their pariah status to a large extent depends on their temparary involvement with the hero. The closer they get to the hero, the more they feel cut off from their surroundings. But whereas the hero is an isolated figure constantly, the helper's isolation is temporary. It is interesting, however, that the role of outsider is latent in many helpers. It is as if they have been prepared for their tempor-

ary castelessness in their attributes. Bond's helpers, Mathis, Leiter, etc. are foreigners, and this is a feature appearing in almost all helpers in the three authors' stories: Peter Guillam, Smiley's constant helper, is half French; another of Smiley's helpers, Toby Esterhase, is Hungarian; Mendel of *CFD* and *TTSS* is English, but a Jew on his father's side; Barney in Deighton's *IF* is a black American, and, with only few exceptions, the helpers appearing in all Deighton's subsequent stories are American. Seen in the hero's perspective - and the reader's - this places them as outsiders, but outsiders of a kind who cannot help it, as it were. This involuntary status makes it rather easy to emphasize their castelessness when required, but also to see the difference in nationality as something natural, and consequently to forget about caste when that is required.

Sometimes the reader is able to catch a glimpse of a helper's life 'behind' his function as the supporter of the hero. Such glimpses reveal the helper as part of society in some capacity which has to do with his status as an individual citizen, not as a mere function needed by the hero.[7] The helper's private life gives an added emphasis to the solitude of the hero at the same time as it has a significance for the dichotomy structure, with effects on the levels of empathy, theme, etc. (cf. ch. 3).

Whereas the superior's connection with society is characterised by its official nature and a consequent ambiguity of attitude on the part of the superior to hero - and to reader - the link represented by the helper suggests a high degree of belonging and safety. It is characteristic of all three authors that the helpers appear against a background of either a large organization or a family. Both backgrounds suggest kinds of normality with which the reader is familiar and which form striking contrasts to the hero's solitude and castelessness.

It is characteristic of Fleming's and Deighton's stories that the helpers belong to foreign intelligence services: The French Deuxième Bureau and the American CIA, in contrast to the hero's own organization. These foreign services are presented as large firms, and the helpers have a status which is easily associated with an ordinary employee's. The appeal of the helper's employee status agrees with the appeal of the family as the link with society. Le Carré's helpers, although foreigners, belong in the hero's own organization, the Circus or the Foreign Office. But again it is characteristic what whenever a Connie

Sachs or a Peter Guillam appears, their employee status in contrast to the hero's individualism and solitude tends to be emphasized. Whereas Fleming only occasionally uses the family link, for instance in *YOLT* where Bond lives in common-law marriage with Suzuki, le Carré makes especially frequent use of it. Mendel's household is characterized by a neatness which is associated with the division of labour in a traditional marriage (*CFD*); Leamas's relationship with Liz soon assumes a quasi-married status (*SWCIFC*); Avery is played against the common-sense views of his wife (*LGW*); de Lisle performs his work against the background of the too idyllic replica of British suburban life he finds in Bonn (*STIG*); Guillam in *TTSS* represents normality by having pangs of jealousy to distract him in his job; Westerby is reminded of his broken marriage by his guilty conscience about his daughter (*HS*); Guillam in *SP* lives a quiet family life in a Paris suburb.

In a fictional universe the relations between characters must be seen not least as functional: an emphasis on a certain characteristic in one figure has specific effect on the reader's impression of another. This is obviously the case of the interplay between the hero and his helper in the secret-agent story.

### *The Adversary*

The adversary is characterized by his representation of values, political and/or ideological, which it is an English, and Western, duty to oppose. Although both are individualizations of national values, the adversary more than the hero *is* these values. Two factors may account for this difference between them. On the 'good' side, the hero and his superior are distinct figures, and it is a role function of superior to symbolize official values, which leaves the hero as an 'irresponsible' craftsman. Also the hero is supposed, for various reasons, to have the reader's sympathy. The hero must appear as a human being to get that sympathy. He cannot, like many of his adversaries, be a human embodiment of some party programme. In other words, the adversary is usually a flatter figure than the hero.

It may seem tautological to state that the adversary is opposed to the hero by representing another set of values. But the tautology exists only on the political and/or ideological level. On

the level of the human relations between hero and adversary, they seem to be complementary to one another. Together, they form a potentially whole human being, the hero being the 'light', the adversary the 'dark' side of him. The complementary nature of the hero and his adversary only appears on analysis. Superficially, the adversary makes an impression on the reader by his exaggerated dimensions, physical and mental. This exaggeration is psychologically explainable as a normal human way to project fear, hate, uncertainty, etc. The status of the adversary as the projected exaggeration of repressed emotions has its parallels in nightmare as well as myth. Both may be considered phenomena serving as outlets for such repressions.

Fleming's adversaries do not differ much from each other.[8] They are all megalomaniacs in their thirst for power. To begin with, Fleming explicitly relates them to the Soviet Union, but with the prospect of a thaw in the Cold War, they become independent operators not even able to justify their endeavours as political objectives. Fleming employs several mythical traits in his adversaries. Most striking, perhaps, are his stock references to size whenever an adversary is described:

> Blofeld was a big man, perhaps six foot three, and powerfully built. . . . Looking up at him from across the room, Bond had to admit that there was something larger than life in the looming, imperious figure, in the hypnotically direct stare of the eyes, in the tall white brow, in the cruel downward twist of the thin lips. The square-cut, heavily draped kimono, designed to give the illusion of bulk to a race of smallish men, made something huge out of the towering figure . . . (*YOLT*: 172).

But the impression of bulk, physical as well as mental is likewise suggested by le Carré, here in a passage where Smiley is watching Dieter in *CFD*:

> He had not changed. He was the same improbable romantic with the magic of a charlatan; the same unforgettable figure which had struggled over the ruins of Germany implacable of purpose, satanic in fulfilment, dark and swift like the Gods of the North. Smiley had lied to them that night in his club; Dieter *was* out of proportion, his cunning, his conceit, his struggle and his dream - all were larger than life, un-

> diminished by the moderating influence of experience. He was a man who thought and acted in absolute terms, without patience or compromise (131).

Deighton does not employ the actual phrase 'larger than life', but size is certainly one of the characteristics of Monsieur Datt in *EPD*:

> If you were buying old men, then Datt would have come in a box marked White, Large and Bald. Behind his tinted spectacles his eyes were moist, and his lips soft and dark like a girl's, or perhaps they only seemed dark against the clear white skin of his face. His head was a shiny dome and his white hair soft and wispy like mist around a mountain top (23).

Normal versus large size is only one of the distictions between hero and adversary, but it constitutes a simple and basic expression of the exaggeration which is the adversary's formula characteristic above all. Examples are numerous: Bond has a scar on his left cheek, Dr No has an iron hand; Deighton's hero likes well-made food, and when the adversary is finally rounded up in *IF*, he is in the process of preparing a meal which is obviously beyond the hero's financial means: Smiley, in both *CFD* and *SP*, is surpassed in this capacity to love when Dieter and Karla, respectively, allow him to make use of their capacity for love.

I suggested above that it is only on the superficial level that the difference between hero and adversary appears as an opposition. Bond differs from Dr No as their sense of values are irreconcilable, and the distinction is underlined by Bond's 'normal' cheek scar in contradistinction to Dr No's false limb, which is something extraordinary. But the distinction produced in that way may, alternatively, be seen as a distinction of degree, not of kind: the adversary as a blown-up version of some potentiality in the hero; what he may become if his normality is perverted by exaggeration.

Dr No's false limb is only one example among many. It is interesting to note that the foreignness characterizing all Fleming's adversaries has its parallel in the impression that Bond makes: 'Bond knew that there was something alien and un-English about himself. He knew he was a difficult man to cover up. Particularly in England' (*M* : 28). Bond loyally cheats at cards for honour of his country in *M*, but in *G* he punishes Goldfinger

for the similar offence without first probing into his possible motives.

On the basis of my observations above I suggest that the complementary nature of the relationship between hero and adversary is manifested as the exaggeration of visible or latent features in the heroes rather than in any absolute contrast between the two. In Fleming's stories the exaggeration most frequently assumes a physical shape, quite in accordance with the sensational characteristic of his fictional universe.

In le Carré's stories the distinction between hero and adversary is tied up with the ethical dilemma. The adversary violates the ideals of which Smiley is the mouthpiece. Smiley's wish for living his life in accordance with his sense of human proportions, in terms of individualism and love, is countered by the adversary's exaggeration of those limited proportions into a totalitarian set of values. This explains why there is so often a very close relationship between le Carré's hero and adversary. The point of their separation comes when the adversary oversteps the human limit. Smiley's qualms of conscience in *CFD* after having killed Dieter Frey, once one of his closest friends, constitute a merely emotional reaction to the horror of his own deed. But Dieter has opted for a political system willing to sacrifice the individual for the mass, and by doing so he has outgrown his human 'size'.

The twists in the progression of plot in *SWCIFC* is an effect of the author's keeping the identity of the real adversary concealed until the last moment. Leamas believes that the plan is to destroy Mundt, but realizes, too late, that Fiedler is his real, but unknown, target. In this way the reader is kept in doubt as to the proper distribution of roles, just as it happens in a formal detective story. But it is significant that Fiedler, who for so long has the apparent status of the adversary's helper, is given ample opportunity to defend himself and the system he works for, and that Mundt only appears from the shadows once or twice. The reason is that Fiedler, despite the mystery about his role, fulfils the role of adversary to all practical purposes in his conversations with Leamas.

The acceptance of the legitimacy of Leclerc's mission against an undefined East German adversary in *LGW* is, of course, unsatisfactory. Only when Smiley is seen as the real hero, and Leclerc as his adversary, does a thematic pattern emerge which makes sense in comparison with le Carré's other stories. In this

perspective, the complicated variation plot of *LGW* presents a structure of ordeals for Smiley to disestablish Leclerc's forgotten department. Leclerc fits into the role of the adversary very well, because he is the perversion or exaggeration of Smiley's fondness for the past, to the effect that he clings to a wrong conception of what a sense of the past should be like. Smiley had been tempted to follow Leclerc's path, but resisted it: When in *CFD* he returned from field work, he reflected:

> This was a new world for Smiley; the brilliantly lit corridors, the smart young men. He felt pedestrian and oldfashioned, homesick for the dilapidated terrace house in Knightsbridge where it had all begun (13).

In consequence of my interpretation of le Carre's attitude to the ethical delemma proposed by the formula, I have argued that in *STIG* there are two adversaries, Turner, who is the hero in purely functional terms, and his eventual adversary, Karfeld, the leader of the Movement. If we see Smiley as the absent hero of this story, his substitute is Turner's prey, Leo Harting, who has given himself the assignment of breaking a hole in Karfeld's apparently honourable facade. The two adversaries of this novel are clearly parallels to Leclerc of *LGW* in that all three suggest Smiley's potential developments, had he not been able to balance on his thin ethical tightrope.

In *TTSS*, the first story of the trilogy, Smiley recalls his first meeting with Karla, then called Gerstmann. The scene in which he attempts to persuade his future adversary into defection, anticipates the conclusion of *SP*, as both scenes show us a Smiley very close to ethical surrender. In the significant flash-back in *TTSS*, Smiley's admission of exhaustion and weakness, which underlines his truly human proportions, emphasizes the exaggerated 'size' of Karla/Gerstmann. Smiley is somewhat ashamed of himself for his 'line of kinship' (185) attempts at persuasion, but against the stone wall of his adversary, Smiley comes out apparently the weaker of the two, but consequently, in le Carré's ethical universe, the better man:

> 'I wanted him desperately not to go back.' He glanced up with an expression of self-irony. 'What I am saying is, Peter: it was

> Smiley, not Gerstmann who was stepping out of the conflict that night' (184).
>
> He would rather die that give me what I wanted; he would rather die than disown the political system to which he was committed' (186).

Smiley's obsession with Karla keeps him going through *HS* and *SP* until he finally registers his victory with an ambiguous response:

> 'George, you won,' said Guillam as thy walked slowly towards the car.
> 'Did I?' said Smiley. 'Yes. Yes, well I suppose I did' (*SP*: 327).

Smiley's hesitation must be seen in the light of what has passed between the hero and his adversary some paragraphs before: 'They exchanged one more glance and perhaps each for that second did see in the other something of himself' (326). This is the continuation of Smiley's identification with the Gerstmann of *TTSS*, and this time Smiley actually succeeds in making his adversary fail the political system to which he was committed. I suggested in Chapter 4 that the situation in which Smiley finds himself is somewhat paradoxical. The victory seems to be Karla's, not Smiley's, as Karla sacrifices everything he believes in for the love of his child, which makes Smiley's behaviour appear as a contradiction of his own ethical norms. But it is also possible to interpret the conclusion as the confirmation of Smiley's values. Karla's defection is proof that totalitarianism in ideas cannot resist the bonds of human affection. Karla and Smiley may both be losers in the political game, but the coalescence of their appearances, personalities and motives at the end of *SP* is the end of the different but complementary nature of hero and adversary in the trilogy. Karla's defection marks the conclusion of the adversary's characteristically exaggerated stature. Now he is 'One little man hatless, with a satchel . . . his face, aged and weary and travelled' (326). Smiley's nightmare is over, for the time being, but the costs were great, personal as well as public, which explains Smiley's lack of enthusiasm when his victory is declared.

In *LDG* we find a combination of the formula feature that the other side is a well-known entity in opposition to the hero's

national interests and the formula variation of the concealed identity of the adversary. Khalil, the PLO mastermind who is Kurtz's target, is known by his technique only to the Israelis until eventually Charlie is able to lure him out into the open. Khalil is a thoroughly conventional secret-agent-fiction adversary: he is a larger-than-life figure, an effect mainly achieved through his little brother's admiration as relayed by Becker in his briefing of Charlie, he is cunning and cynical, seems to thrive on his power and, most important, he lacks moderation. His weakness, a variation of Karla's love for his schizophrenic daughter, is his need for human contact and self-affirmation through love. His downfall is yet another confirmation of the ethical values represented by le Carré heroes.

Like le Carré, Deighton frequently employs the technique of concealing the adversary's identity until very late, or rather the identity of one adversary, as he has split the role into two. He makes use of a real, as well as of a formal adversary, but his technique is not like le Carré's in *SWCIFC*, in which Mundt is a red herring to the reader as he is to Leamas. The formal adversary is the hero's professional adversary, as it were, and his most obvious character manifestation is Colonel Stok of the Soviet counter-intelligence organization. Stok appears in *FIB*, *BDB* and *SS*, but there are variations: Jay in *IF*, da Cunha in *HUW*, whereas figures like Loiseau in *EPD* and Claude in *YS* serve primarily as red herrings to confuse the reader in his wish to pinpoint the adversary.

The difference between a real and a formal adversary in Deighton's fictional universe is a function of loyalty difference. The formal adversary openly confesses his beliefs as opposite to the hero's, whereas the real adversary pretends to be something else than he is. Both, however, are characterized by exaggeration of features in the hero. The formal adversary is even more cynical and pragmatic than the nameless hero, and the real adversary becomes the symbol of what may happen if the hero's relativistic attitude is pushed to the extreme of either opportunism or disgust with the relativistic attitude in favour of a more absolute.

There is an apprentice - master relationship in the contrast between Deighton's hero and his formal adversary. Colonel Stok, for instance, is a veteran of the Russian Revolution, and by virtue of his experience which is the result of a lifetime's activities, he is able to give the hero advice. And the hero must often give in to

Stok's experience and will, as, for instance, in *BDB* when he must witness the arrest by Stok's people of his own prey. The presence of such a relationship may appear as a violation of the role requirements, but it is in accord with Deighton's emphasis on craft throughout. The hero and Stok are professionals, and this bond between them establishes a mutual understanding. They are realists and know the exact extent of their power and influence. As craftsmen or professionals they are removed from the ideologies they defend and concerned with reality, cf. Stok's observation: 'Our job is to take the stupid and impossible fantasies of our politicians and try to make them work in terms of flesh and blood' (*BDB*: 112). Still, of course, the reality has a Western as well as an Eastern side, and still, Stok has outgrown the hero with regard to cynical detachment.

Not all of Deighton's stories present a well-defined character manifestation of the adversary. In two stories, *SS* and *TTLS*, it is not possible to discern a real adversary at all. In strictly functional terms, the hero's superiors are the real adversaries, as the hero is being used to provoke into action a complex of factors for which he is only important as a lever. There are, however, formal adversaries in both stories. Stok in *SS* and Hart plus Mrs Bekuv in *TTLS*. Deighton's real adversaries may be divided into two groups: the idealists and the opportunists. Both kinds of adversary are, as I suggested above, characterized by their breach of loyalty in some way. As the hero is characterized by his loyalty, the breach of it in the adversaries may be seen as the complementary side of the hero.

The idealist adversaires present two extremes of possible political developments on a world scale. General Midwinter's disloyalty manifests itself as the perversion of the American tradition of liberalism into the *imposition* of it on others, which is, of course, a totalitarian activity (*BDB*). Deighton creates a monster whose ideas about politics are the limited ones of a Senator McCarthy in the fifties, but with an enormous technological and financial power at his disposal. This adversary figure comes very close to Fleming's Dr No, etc., but unlike Fleming, Deighton uses his adversary to symbolize the inherent threats in a liberal society like the American. The starting point for M. Datt in *EPD* is different from Midwinter's, as he is an active Maoist, but whereas Midwinter makes the mistake of ignoring the fact that the imposition of liberalism is its own negation, M. Datt is

fully aware of the means by which a totalitarian community is created. This is the perverse justification of his experiments with human beings. He is disloyal to the value of human life.

Deighton's opportunists are drawn more realistically than his idealists. Dalby in *IF*, Smith in *HUW*, Hallam in *FIB* and Champion in *YS* are disloyal in the traditional way of betraying their country, although their motives differ. The opportunist adversaries betray their supposed loyalties for money, but to Smith of *HUW* and Champion of *YS* there are additional motives. Smith has a skeleton in the cupboard in the form of attempted wartime collaboration with the Germans, and Champion calculates quite coolly that the economic future is with the Arab world. Since he is wholly committed to financial considerations, opportunism in the choice of national allegiance is natural to him.

Whereas the hero's side is always distinctly manifested in the roles of superior, hero and helper(s), the symmetrical configuration around the adversary seems rather unstable. As regards the role of the adversary's superior there are evident structural as well as thematic reasons why this is so. For one thing, a puzzle structure based on the adversary's identity (v. ch. 5) makes a clear distinction impossible. Also the nature of the formula plot, with its starting point in the assignment phase and, by implication, the presence of a superior, does not necessitate a parallel enemy-side adversary's assignment phase, although it is sometimes present, e.g. in the introductory 'conspiracy' scene in Fleming's *FRWL*. In the thematic perspective the adversary is much more the symbol of the 'other side' than the hero of his. There is, consequently, no need to distinguish between the two aspects of 'hostile cause' and its instrument, the adversary. When we catch a glimpse of the adversary's superior, it is often in the form of some controlling *group*, as in *FRWL*. But most frequently the adversary's superior is implied rather than stated.

As regards the role of the adversary's helper(s), it is characteristic that whereas the hero has one or two rather individualized helpers, the adversary is either surrounded by a number of featureless men with a status between servant and slave (Fleming) or he is on his own (le Carré and Deighton). Also in his solitude and isolation the adversary seems like an exaggerated complement to the hero.

The main characteristic of the hero - superior relationship

is an uneasy vacillation between trust/affection and anger/suspicion. I see the relationship as a fictional expression of the reader's attitude to authorities, especially government on various levels. In Fleming's fictional universe the relationship is described in terms which invite associations to other relationships which are characterized by stability, trust and respect. Bond's world is an uncomplicated world, and may be seen to express Fleming's wish for a society based on firm social stratification and values. Bond's dependence on M. is, as Bond himself realizes, something positive. It is a firm frame of reference. Not so in the fictional universes of le Carré and Deighton. To them the relationship appears as suspicious distance of which Dalby's treason in *IF* is the ultimate instance. The stability of social relations obviously wished for by Fleming, appears to be in a state of dissolution by le Carré and Deighton.

The difference between Fleming and le Carré/Deighton in their renderings of the hero - adversary relationship is in accordance with the difference in the hero - superior relationship.

The adversary is a complementary counterpart of the hero, manifested as the exaggeration or perversion of some potential in the hero. The wish for stability of which Fleming's presentation of the hero-superior relationship is a symptom, is also found in the hero - adversary opposition. Bond's adversaries are the malevolent giants of myth and folktale, and if we agree with Boyd (1965 and 1966) that they represent various deadly sins, it is interesting to note that such sins are regarded as permanent and stable threats to the purity of the human being. Le Carré and Deighton, reflecting the increasing feeling of flux in modern society, have shaped their adversaries accordingly. To le Carré the adversaries represent the temptation of totalitarian ideologies, and to Deighton the adversaries seem to be different shades of egotism.

The formula levels of plot and role structure present unmistaken links with the quest myth of romance (v. ch. 3). The role configuration with the hero and his adversary at the centre and their dynamic interaction realised as plot signifies a simple artistic articulation which has been repeated and varied again and again through the ages. Despite the simplicity of the plot and role structures the huge number of secret-agent stories published every year bears witness to the ever-fresh challenge of the combination possibilities present. The quality of the 'storiness' in

a secret-agent story depends on economic and ingenious exploitation of plot and roles. However, it is not only the expectation of a well-polished story that attracts readers to this particular formula. Careful handling of the structural and thematic possibilities on the levels of plot and role structure makes the genre into a powerful weapon for comment on matters of topical interest.

# Formula and Variation (III): a World Divided

# 7 Cold War, *Détente* and Secret-Agent Fiction

## *Formula and Reality*

As a version of romance and quest myth (v. ch. 3) the formula of the secret-agent story makes a characteristic distinction between the hero's world of familiarity and the alien land of the adversary. For the dichotomy structure the English post-war position as a free-world nation opposed to the communist bloc was obviously a welcome simplification of the sometimes very complicated international relations of the inter-war period. One only has to compare Ambler's stories from the thirties with Fleming's from the fifties to appreciate the difference.

Seen in a formula perspective, the three authors' attitudes to England's situation in general after the Second World War and to her relations with other countries in the West, especially the USA, show considerable variations. There are, however, certain common emphases which make it possible to establish them as formula elements: the criticism of political, social and cultural results of England's adjustment from empire builder to welfare state and the defence of English traditions and ways of life as superior also in the new power geography of the West. There are also considerable variations of the dichotomy structure in its manifestations as conflicts between England and hostile powers, but the nature of the dichotomy as a purely literary convention is reflected in the limited number of formula elements through which the conflict is presented.

It is in agreement with both the characteristics of fictional universes and our craving for simplicity and order in real life that a conflict involving the fates of millions is represented metonymically by two individuals. It is interesting, however, to see that the individualization of the hero and his adversary seems to follow

strict rules. The conflict, in accordance with the dichotomy structure, assumes the shape of the well-known manifested in the hero against the strange with all its facets of mystery, forbidden appeal, etc. manifested in the adversary. Especially interesting is the way that the adversary is always made into a suspicious figure on grounds other than his national and ideological background. Fleming has created adversaries whose political functions are almost nil, but whose relentless struggle for universal power is in basic contrast to the hero's normality. Le Carré's favourite adversary figure is the ideological monomaniac, the puritan who sacrifices everything for an absolutist philosophy or movement, and all Deighton's adversary figures are men obsessed by various ideas that suggest megalomaniac tendencies. To put it briefly, the 'other side', metonymically represented in the adversary, is described in a way which suggests some kind of morbid and/or criminal inclination in addition to its ideological 'mistake'.

Another interesting transformation of reality appears in the way that the genre, by its series nature, presents international conflicts like pearls on a string: one complete and concluded event succeeds another with the hero, and frequently the adversary too, as the connecting string. In each new story the motivation for the hero's assignment is to be found on two levels: one that has its roots in a situation of crisis attributable to the tension between East and West, and one which is purely literary, as it is only justified in the hero's personal commitment, often manifested as his wish for revenge for some frustration experienced in earlier assignments. Of course the reality of international tensions is a multi-layered continuum, and completeness and personal motivation of the kind found in the genre are literary conventions.

International conflicts as presented in the secret-agent story are constructs of analogy which owe their nature partly to basic developments in international politics, partly to the requirements of the formula. The main characteristic of the political reality in the genre is simplification in terms of individualization of adverse interests, deflection of political/ideological issues towards personal issues and the establishment of fictional political situations which are internally logical and which, after the termination of the hero's assignment, leave no other loose ends than the hero's status as a series figure.

Whereas the universe of the formal detective story is a restricted locale in which relations to the surrounding world are irrelevant, the secret-agent story unfolds its action in a fictional universe of much larger dimensions. The activities of the fictional secret agent require action if not always on a world scale, then, at least, involving the hero's own nation and foreign - in Fleming's later stories, personal - interests hostile to it.

The fictional detective secures *status quo* in general human relations irrespective of time and place. The fictional secret agent relies on the political climate of a specific time and place as a frame or reference without which the genre would lose its meaning.

For the hero's action to be convincing, the author must provide a minimum of background information about international political relations. It is characteristic of the nature of this background information that it is offered partly explicitly (most frequently by the superior), partly implicitly by reference to the contemporary situation in international politics. In other words, the reader is supposed to complete the picture with his own knowledge. The secret-agent story is always set in such recent times that its allusions to international politics are invariably of topical interest.

There is, however, a significant difference between the reader's own impression of what goes on in the world at the moment and the picture offered in the secret-agent story. Both realities are, necessarily, interpretations of given political situations. Necessarily, because the information available has been subject to interpretation and editing in the channels of the news media. It is true that some writers of secret-agent fiction have been active in intelligence themselves - among them Fleming[1] - and that readers like to believe that the writers have 'inside information'. But if they do have some information, it is probably of a purely technical kind which may, at best, render some *colour* to their stories.[2] For the purpose of outlining a convincing background of international politics, the writer must rely on the same sources of information as his readers. The consequence is that the reader, despite the pretense of the genre, finds himself at a further remove from the information available when reading a secret-agent story than when reading his daily newspaper. The individual story, then, offers an interpretation of an interpretation of events as they must be supposed to have happened.

*Loss of Empire and Search for a Role*

England's changed role in international relations after World War II necessitated the realization that future defence alliances were useless without the nuclear umbrella of the USA.[3] But the reorientation from war-time supremacy to post-war equality in the NATO alliance was slow to assert itself among the British victors.[4] Churchill's notion of England's position in the three overlapping circles - Europe, the Commonwealth, the USA - ceased to agree with reality in the course of the first ten years that followed the war (v. Northedge 1974 : 173; 328).

In matters of defence the 'special relationship' between Britain and the USA gave way to an Atlantic alliance pledged to common solidarity in case of attack on one of its members. But the NATO alliance is an organization with one very strong member and a number of comparatively weak members, among them England. By the beginning of the fifties Western Europe had become a buffer against the communist bloc, which was the price the Old World had to pay for the promise of American intervention in a situation of crisis. Despite the possession of a nuclear deterrent (the atomic bomb from 1952 and the hydrogen bomb from 1957), England was increasingly dependent on the USA for delivery systems, as well as for the general support of the country's economy, which was needed to keep such an ambitious defence project going (v. Northedge 1974 : 287). The degree of English dependence on the USA was manifested in the abortive Suez intervention in 1956, when English military potential was shown to be only a link in a chain of factors totally dominated by the trans-Atlantic partner (v. Northedge 1974 : 287 and Cross 1968 : 97).

The dissolution of the British Empire, which in effect had started long before the Second World War, continued, but at an increased speed, after it. Instead of being an association of nations with common interests, the Commonwealth turned into a loose and disparate association of countries only linked by the past, a past of often bitter antagonism, at that. Rather than being an asset for England's foreign policies, the Commonwealth began to show signs of international disagreement. The English leaders had to realize that ruling the colonial Empire had been replaced by a moral responsibility to establish independence in the former colonies with as little bloodshed as possible. The strain on British

diplomacy was great, and not all calculations were equally wise, as the Suez incident showed (v. Cross 1968 : 97).

Although England preferred to see herself as a world power in her relationship with the rest of Western Europe, the first ten years after the war meant a realization that a break with her former isolationist policy was called for. This was due, above all, to economic necessity. But the English unwillingness to admit to second-rank status prevented any radical breaks with pre-war policies. Having refrained from any involvement on an equal basis with other West-European nations, particularly France, Germany and the Benelux, England had to watch passively the quick economic recovery of the countries which had signed the Rome Convention. It was not until 1972 that England, together with Denmark and Ireland, joined the EEC.

Internationally, the seventies were characterized by an effort towards *détente*; an effort which was largely a matter between the USA and the Soviet Union. England's main foreign occupation was the establishment of successful relations with the EEC. Internally, England had more than enough to do with increasing economic problems and not least the political problems presented by Northern Ireland and the increasing terrorism of the IRA. Also the immigrant problem and various manifestions of social unrest contributed to the special character of the decade in which le Carré's trilogy and Deighton's 'American' stories were published.

# 8 Ian Fleming: Anachronism and Adventure

*The Case for Anachronism*

When Fleming published *CR* in 1953 nuclear power politics had already changed international relations radically from those of the war period. The Iron Curtain had divided the world into two camps, a fact heavily underlined by the Berlin crises at the end of the forties and the Korean war at the beginning of the fifties. The tensions of the Cold War dominated political decisions everywhere. To England the new distribution of international power meant that whenever English leaders were invited to express an opinion on world issues, it was hard to conceal that this was often merely a courtesy gesture.[1] The fifties in England can be looked upon as a decade of reluctant re-orientation, first realized by the nation's leadership, later by the general public. The effect was a manifestation of an ambiguous attitude to England's place in international affairs: a forced sobriety mingled with an inclination to continued nationalistic inebriation. Churchill, Eden and Macmillan all seemed to believe that some power and prestige could be saved by shifting what remained of economic and military weight into diplomatic channels: England would be redefined as the international arbiter.[2]

It may be assumed, however, that the Second World War as the definite conclusion of a periode of power and influence is more manifest in retrospect than at the time at which it took place.[3] The people who voted Labour into power in July 1945 with an overwhelming majority probably did not do so because they considered Churchill's general political views on English influence already anachronistic, but simply because they were tired of the war effort symbolized by the Conservative leader:

The postwar pattern of British foreign policy was slow in taking

> shape and even slower in being accepted by the British people. After all, she had emerged from the war a victor - one of the Big Three. There was reluctance to face the hard fact that the war itself demonstrated that Britain no longer possessed the military potential for primacy in world affairs (Havighurst 1979 : 389).

No wonder that the average English reader was not likely in the decade following the war to follow the rapid changes in international power constellations. It would not be wrong, I believe, to assume that to Fleming and his readers the end of the war meant a definite victory confirming England's leading role. Not until the end of the fifties did reality become too insistent to be ignored.

It is characteristic that in his first two stories, *CR*, and *LLD*, Fleming shows an awareness of the changes in international politics, but only to the extent that the Soviet Union is accepted as the new enemy. In Fleming's fictional universe, the post-war dominance of the USA in the West is implicitly modified into the lesser position of an equal, as England is shown to have a free hand when it comes to opposing the schemes of the Soviet Union:

> . . . the only alternative would be to place our information and our recommendations in the hands of the Deuxième Bureau or of our American colleagues of the Combined Intelligence Agency in Washington. Both of these organizations would doubtless be delighted to take over the scheme (*CR* : 15).

There is no question of combining the efforts, nor are there any qualms about England's right to interfere with the affairs of a citizen of another country without notifying the proper foreign authorities. Although the legal basis of Bond's assignment is more convincing in *LLD*, which is set in the USA and Jamaica (published in 1954, at a time when Jamaican independence was in the making; it came in 1962), the reader of today may feel that M. has taken upon him something the Americans would have had much better opportunities to handle.

It is obvious that in *CR* and *LLD* Fleming expresses the general inability to assess the new political geography correctly, and, in consequence, creates an anachronistic fictional reality. With *M* (1955) Fleming changed his reliance on such a widespread attitude into something more aggressive, based, no doubt, on the

rising English confidence in the development of an independent nuclear deterrent.[4]

In *M* a note of trust and optimism dominates the action. There is symbolical significance in the setting of this story. The coast of Kent where Hugo Drax' rocket site has been built is a part of England which evokes strongly nationalistic associations because of its closeness to the Continent and the ensuring danger of invasion:

> It was a wonderful afternoon of blue and green and gold. When they left the concrete apron through the guardgate near the empty firing-point, now connected by a thick cable with the launching site, they stopped for a moment on the edge of the great chalk cliff and stood gazing over the whole corner of England where Caesar had first landed two thousand years before (110).

The passage is characteristic of Fleming's attitude in the story as a whole, and there can be no doubt that M.'s reflections on the importance of the rocket mirrors a widely shared British wish in the mid-fifties:

> 'The way things are in the world at the moment it was decided that the sooner the Moonraker could give us an independent say in world affairs the better for us and,' M shrugged his shoulder, 'quite possibly for the world' (68).

Reality, however, soon showed that independence in the area of nuclear warfare must remain a wish, both because of the enourmous costs and consequent economic dependence on the USA, and because nationalistic efforts had become obsolete in a world held in a balance of terror by two super powers.

After the suggestion of nostalgia in *CR* and *LLD*, and a degree of aggressive nationalism in *M*, there is a new note in the stories that followed. It is as if Fleming, in the latter half of the fifties, began to realize that he could no longer depend on bewilderment, nostalgia, and lack of willingness to face the truth about his nation's situation. Given the reality of rapid political and economic decline and a heroic character symbolizing political potency, Fleming's solution was to make Bond the defender of the values of the Establishment which had been disrupted, as he saw

it, by the introduction of too much tolerance and too much slackness in the rising generation.

Fleming's stories from *FRWL* and onwards may be read as an account for the English failure to re-establish the traditional status not as the result of changes in foreign relations outside any English influence, but as the result of a decrease of discipline in the English people. Fleming's new recipe is to enumerate virtues associated with the glory of the past or to present brief attacks on the new times, and to demonstrate, by Bond's active interference, that the old spirit is not dead yet and that its application may still be successful.

Fleming's response to the unpleasant, but more realistic assessment of the situation of England in his stories since 1957 is to hold up his hero as the personification of the virtues which went to build the Empire, and which, in his opinion, have degenerated in the post-war generation.[5] In *FRWL* the message is quite evident when Bond voices his opinion on the present state of affairs: 'As for England, the trouble today is that carrots for all are the fashion. At home and abroad. We don't show teeth any more - only gums' (142). And this response is repeated several times in later stories until a kind of summary is made by Tiger Tanaka, the director of the Japanese secret service, in *YOLT*.

In *YOLT* Bond is being constantly teased by his Japanese colleague on account of the dwindling influence of the English in the Pacific. Tiger Tanaka shows him an intercepted telegram from the Soviet leaders from which it appears that the communists regard England as of no more importance than Belgium or Italy (51). Naturally Bond is shocked by this estimate, as he is by Tiger Tanaka's self-assurance:

> 'Bondo-san, I will now be blunt with you, and you will not be offended, because we are friends. Yes? Now it is a sad fact that I, and many of us in positions of authority in Japan, have formed an unsatisfactory opinion about the British people since the war. You have not only lost a great Empire, you have seemed almost anxious to throw it away with both hands. All right,' he held up a hand, 'we will not go deeply into the reasons for this policy, but when you apparently sought to arrest this slide of impotence at Suez, you succeeded only in stage-managing one of the most pitiful bungles in the history of the world, if not the worst. Further, your governments have

> shown themselves successively incapable of ruling and have handed over effective control of the country to the trade unions, who appear to be dedicated to the principle of doing less and less work for more money. This feather-bedding, this shirking of an honest day's work, is sapping at ever-increasing speed the moral fibre of the British, a quality the world once so much admired. In its place we now see a vacuous, aimless horde of seekers-after-pleasure gambling at the pools and bingo, whining at the weather and the declining fortunes of the country, and wallowing nostalgically in gossip about the doings of the Royal family and of your so-called aristocracy in the pages of the most debased newspapers in the world' (76–7).

Although Bond attempts a feeble defence of his country by maintaining that 'we still climb Everest and beat plenty of the world at plenty of sports and win Nobel Prizes' (77), this hardly counts against Tiger Tanaka's accusations. To which, it must be noted, Bond, in principle, pleads guilty ('He was still smarting under Tiger's onslaught, and the half-truths which he knew lay behind his words' (78).

The cure is a return to the spirit which was evoked during the war, as it is also suggested by Blofeld in the same story (173). What is needed is the 'community effort' (173) in which the British turn out at their best: 'All had contributed, and with tremendous speed and efficiency' (*OHMSS*: 228).

It is characteristic of Fleming's accusation against England that it is an accusation against a manner of behaviour rather than against changed political objectives. A community effort is only desirable as long as there is some sense of direction. The reasons behind the English political decline were, of course, numerous and complicated, but the justifications for Empire were increasingly lost sight of, because the power structure of the whole world changed significantly with the beginning of the twentieth century. Fleming's wish was for a return to a role which disappeared with Queen Victoria.

### *An Air of Superiority*

It is characteristic of the secret-agent stories of Fleming, le Carré and Deighton that the Western World is divided into two distinct parts: the USA and the rest. In the fictional universes of the

three authors the development of the 'special relationship' has obviously caused problems which have their cause in the creation of plausibility: how is it possible to retain a fictional picture of England as a powerful nation, when reality shows the absolute superiority of the USA? All three authors offer responses which are interesting because they demonstrate attitudes which are probably welcomed by a British reading public looking for new points of orientation.

Bond's missions take him to Continental Europe as well as to the USA, the Caribbean, and the Near and Far East. Unlike le Carré's and Deighton's heroes, he never enters enemy territory, but always travels in friendly or neutral countries.[6] Fleming's nostalgic attitude is visible as an unwillingness to revaluate foreign relations, and Bond is frequently made the mouthpiece of traditional nationalist prejudice.

The attitude to the Western World in Fleming's stories can be summed up as admiration for the parts of the world where there is material progress, the USA and Japan, and a more than slightly contemptuous and patronizing attitude to the rest.

The admiration for the USA and, to a certain extent, for Japan (in *YOLT*) can be interpreted as Fleming's wish to compensate for his knowledge that England's prestige has undergone a serious change. It is quite obvious that in these two nations he sees qualities which seem to have been destroyed in his native country. The USA becomes the symbol of the energy and drive which characterized the Victorian age in Britain, and Japan has, in addition to its industrial boom, a seriousness of intention which forms a contrast to the slackness that Fleming diagnoses at home. But the admiration expressed in the Bond stories does not mean a recognition of the absolute superiority of the two countries over England. At the same time as Fleming projects his nostalgic wishes into the USA and Japan, he demonstrates that England has still some strength left, and this strength is symbolized by the cunning of M. and the resourcefulness of Bond.

Competition with the CIA is a current theme in Fleming's stories, and it is characteristic of Fleming's ambivalent attitude to the USA that whenever the American ally is involved, it is in the personified shape of helper (Leiter). In *CR* the subordination of the helper is made clear at an early point:

Leiter shook a Chesterfield out of his pack. 'I'm glad to be

> working with you on this job,' he said, looking into his drink, 'so I'm particularly glad you didn't get blown to glory. Our people are definitely interested. They think it's just as important as your friends do and they don't think there's anything crazy about it at all. In fact, Washington's pretty sick we're not running the show, but you know what the big brass is like. I expect your fellows are much the same in London'.
> Bond nodded. 'Apt to be a bit jealous of their scoops', he admitted.
> 'Anyway, I'm under your orders and I'm to give you any help you ask for. With Mathis and his boys here, there may not be much that isn't taken care of already. But, anyway, here I am'.
> 'I'm delighted you are', said Bond (43).

It may be read as an admission to the demands of plausibility that Leiter is made to retire from the CIA and join a private investigation in *DAF* (1956). This makes it more acceptable to retain him in the role of helper and thus to keep up the pretense of English superiority at a time when CIA domination would agree with the reader's expectations. It is not until *YOLT* (1964) that Fleming openly admits to the superiority of the CIA. In that story M. has to admit that the Pacific is out-of-bounds to English influence. But the way the admission is made is interesting. Bond remarks to M. that:

> 'I thought we were hand in glove with CIA all along the line'.
> 'Not in the Pacific. They regard that as their private preserve. When Allan Dulles was in charge, we used at least to get digests of any stuff that concerned us, but this new man McCone has cracked down on all that. He's a good man, all right, and we get along well personally, but he's told me candidly that he's acting under orders - National Defence Council. They're worried about our security. Can't blame them. I'm equally worried about theirs. Two of their top cryptographers defected a couple of years ago and they must have blown a lot of the stuff we give the Americans' (30-1).

M. manages to put the blame for the lack of liasion on the Americans by faulting them in the first place. On top of that he implies that the new situation is due to bureaucratic intervention on government level. On the level of personal relationships, there

ought to be mutual confidence, that is, acceptance of mutual influence.

M. is not the only one to tell Bond about English inferiority in *YOLT*. Blofeld takes particular delight in iluminating the hero on the status of his country:

> 'If my presence here was officially known, a small army of policemen would have been sent to arrest me. And they would have been accompanied by a senior member of the CIA on whose WANTED list I certainly feature. This is an American sphere of influence. You might have been allowed to interview me subsequent to my arrest, but an Englishman would not have featured in the initial police action' (169).

The repeated emphasis on English impotence makes Bond's eventual success even more spectacular.

It is also in *YOLT* that Fleming voices his admiration for Japan and the Japanese way of life. There can be no doubt that Tanaka's long speech on the degradation of England (v. above) is an expression of Fleming's own opinions. The conservatism which Bond experiences in that country combined with his approval of its material progress reflects his dreams about England. In Tanaka's view, Japan has something to offer which is an alternative to the increasing Americanization of Western life:

> The Oriental way of life is particularly attractive to the American who wishes to escape from a culture which, I am sure you will agree, has become, to say the least of it, more and more unattractive except to the lower grades of the human species to whom bad but plentiful food, shiny toys such as the automobile and the television, and the 'quick buck', often dishonestly earned, or earned in exchange to minimal labour or skills, are the *summum bonum*, if you will allow the sentimental echo from my Oxford education (59).

The eagerness with which Fleming asserts the potential strength of England against the USA is absent in his interpretation of the English attitude to other Western countries. It is striking that Germany passes almost unnoticed in the Bond stories, except for the personal background of Hugo Drax in *M* and the frequent

German roots of adversaries' names. The central position of the two Germanies in post-war politics which is thematized in stories by both le Carré and Deighton is ignored in Fleming's fictional universe.[7] In Fleming's nostalgic perspective, the European Continent is viewed as an association of nations equally strange and inferior to the English way of life. Fleming's often prejudiced attitude appears clearly in passages where he comments, either directly as narrator or through his characters, on what to him seems characteristic of Continental countries.

The position which the reader would have expected of Germany in Fleming's stories has, on the whole, been given to France instead. This is quite consistent with Fleming's anachronistic rendering of world affairs, because France, rather than Germany, has been the traditional enemy of Britain. The closest that Fleming ever comes to stating something positive about the neighbour across the Channel is when in *FRWL* he has a Soviet officer comment that: 'France is looking after herself' (38). Otherwise he is quite hard on the NATO ally, who, after having joined in with the new 'Wirtschaftswunder' Western Germany, had begun an impressive economic progress only a short time after the war. Implicitly Fleming expresses his attitude by making France the hunting ground of the English secret service, even to the extent that Bond's connection with colleagues there takes the form of a hero - helper relationship (cf. *CR*).[8] As regards Fleming's explicit comments there are some notable passages which, by the implication of contrast, emphasize the virtue and purity of the English. The assumption of traditional English respect for justice is brought out in a comment on French police-investigation procedures uttered by Vesper Lynd in *CR*. The conversation is about a Bulgarian *agent provocateur*, and the undertones are rather obvious: 'Then they took him down to Rouen and extracted the story - in the usual French fashion, I suppose' (52). Not only does Fleming hint at the existence of a barbaric judicial system in France, but he also voices the traditional, but probably now somewhat dated British dislike of 'popery':

> Bond had never cared for Orleans. It was a priest and myth ridden town without charm or gaiety. It was content to live off Joan of Arc and give the visitor a hard, holy glare while it took his money (*G*: 119).

The most blatant example of Fleming's nationalistic prejudice may be found in *T*. Here he describes a quarter of Paris well-known for financial transactions, and by the collocation of a prejudice for persons of Slavic or German/Jewish origin and Paris he aims at extending the associations of this prejudice to France:

> The Boulevard Haussmann, in the VIIIth and IXth Arrondissements, stretches from the the Rue du Faubourg St Honoré to the Opera. It is very long and very dull, but it is perhaps the solidest street in the whole of Paris. Not the richest - the Avenue d'Iéna has that distinction - but rich people are not necessarily solid people and too many of the landlords and tenants in the Avenue d'Iéna have names ending in 'escu', 'ovitch', 'ski', and 'stein', and these are sometimes not the endings of respectable names (44).

Whereas Fleming's attitude to France is expressed in ways which are loaded with overtones and associations that are likely to be caught by the reader, the author uses the direct attack in, for instance, the case of Turkey. Although the Turks supported Germany in World War One, they were neutral in the Second, and they joined NATO, with Greece, in 1952:

> So these dark, ugly, neat little officials were the modern Turks. He listened to their voices, full of broad vowels and quiet sibilants and modified u-sounds, and he watched the dark eyes that belied the soft, polite voices. They were bright, angry, cruel eyes that had only lately come down from the mountains. Bond thought he knew the history of those eyes. They were eyes that had been trained for centuries to watch over sheep and decipher small movements on far horizons. They were eyes that kept the knife-hand in sight without seeming to, that counted the grains of meal and the small fractions of coin and noted the flicker of the merchant's fingers. They were hard, untrusting, jealous eyes. Bond didn't take to them (*FRWL*: 97).

And the message is even clearer a few pages later on:

> Darko Kerim had a wonderfully warm dry handclasp. It was a strong Western handful of operative fingers - not the banana

> skin handshake of the East that makes you want to wipe your fingers on your coat-tails' (*FRWL*: 100).

Fleming's rendering of the relationship between England and the West is, as I have demonstrated, characterized by a nostalgic and anachronistic endeavour to retain a picture of his own country as still among the powerful. Fleming's attitude to the USA is, however, ambiguously divided between admiration and jealousy. This is visible in the state of friendly but jealous competition between the two countries which his stories suggest. But often he manages to make the USA seem the weaker, as on several occasions Bond is called in to help with problems with which the ally cannot cope. Towards European allies Fleming's tone is marked by a kind of prejudice which is not felt to be very pleasant, and it certainly expresses a misconception of the real nature of post-war European power structures.

### *From SMERSH to SPECTRE*

Fleming started his writing career at a time when the fear of the Soviet Union and communism in general was felt acutely in the USA and Western Europe. Of course communism was anathema to a born and bred Tory like Fleming, and the beginning of the fifties provided him with a resonance among readers by means of which he could paint an unfaceted and wholly negative picture of the Soviet Union confident that it would be positively received.[9] However, as the Cold War began to show signs of a thaw towards the end of the decade, Fleming could no longer take for granted a fairly unanimous public attitude to the Soviet Union and communism. He was confronted with a choice: either he could add the facets now obviously needed, or he could abandon a realistic approach. He chose the latter possibility, and the altered course is visible form *T* (1961). Fleming is reported to have made this comment:

> I have always liked the Russians as a people, and I enjoyed myself when I worked in Moscow, . . . I could not see any point in going on digging at them, especially when the co-existence thing seemed to be bearing some fruit. So I closed down

SMERSH and thought up SPECTRE instead (from 1961; Gant, 1966 : 148).

It is characteristic of all Fleming's stories, before and after 1961, that Bond never actually opposes a real Russian in the role of adversary. All bond's adversaries in the stories up to *T* are men who have the support of the Soviet Union either for their private criminal enterprises or for the cultivation of some mental aberration. The Soviet Union in Fleming's stories is shown to use such figures for subversive activities against the West. Fleming's use of this kind of adversary, the communist sympathiser with criminal and/or morbid inclinations, is a figure against whom the reader can be supposed to direct his fear and hate as well as his common prejudices. Fleming's choice to abandon realism after 1960 was facilitated by his use of this doubly committed adversary. The closing down of SMERSH and thinking up of SPECTRE meant a redefinition of Bond's adversary which quite simply was a toning down of the adversary's political attachment and a strengthening of his criminal and/or morbid pursuits.

In *CR* Bond is sent to a French seaside casino town to render an indirect blow against the Soviet intelligence apparatus. At a very early stage, however, it becomes obvious to the reader that the drive behind Bond's activities are increasingly due to the hero's wish for personal revenge, and reasons of state recede into the background. Bond is to expose Le Chiffre, a Soviet intelligence pay-master in Frence, as a simple cheat who swindles both his Soviet masters and his cover, a French trades union. The exposure is going to take place at the gambling table. When Bond meets Le Chiffre over the table, his attitude towards the man has by then been conditioned by a series of attempts on his life, so that the reader quite understands Bond's thirst for vengeance. Bond's official assignment, the demoralization of the Soviet Union, has subtly been fictionalized into a private feud between the two men, and the pattern for Bond's future motivation has been set. This story, which is characterized by the 'promotion' of a sub-plot (the Vesper Lynd counter-espionage element) to a main plot in the last third of the novel, is the only one of Fleming's stories in which a Soviet agent is actually introduced. It is worth noting that the SMERSH agent who appears in the last minute to punish Le Chiffre and save Bond, and who is closer than any of Bond's other adversaries to the Kremlin, is completely

depersonalized. He is simply an instrument whose literary function is to perform the duty of a *deus ex machina*. Bond's real adversary, Le Chiffre, is the combination of fellow-traveller and criminal that recurs in subsequent Bond stories.

By creating the figure of Le Chiffre as a man apparently only attached to communism on a financial basis and running a trades union in the manner of certain notorious US union bosses, Fleming manages to present the Soviet Union in an aura of grand-scale crime. This impression is reinforced in the figure of the SMERSH agent who executes Le Chiffre: the killer's mission bears a probably not unintended resemblance to the activities of, for instance, Mafia goons as we know them from film and literature. At the same time as the intentions of the Soviet Union are reduced, by association, to grand-scale crime, the justification of Bond's assignment is raised from a purely political objective to a hardly convincing ethical crusade (v. ch. 4).

There is a strong similarity between *CR* and *LLD* (1954) in the portrayal of the opposition. Just like Le Chiffre Mr. Big is the criminal operator more than the political adversary. The story is linked to Fleming's first by the revenge theme, as it appears from Bond's reflections on his way to M. for his assignment:

> What was happening to the brilliant organization of which the man with the knife had been an agent, the Soviet organ of vengeance, SMERSH, short for *Smyert Spionam* - Death to Spies? Was it still as powerful, still as efficient? Who controlled it now that Beria was gone? After the great gambling case in which he had been involved at Royale-les-Eaux, Bond had sworn to get back at them. He had told M as much at that last interview. Was this appointment with M to start him on his trail of revenge (13-14)?

After having briefed Bond on the historical background, which concerns a hidden treasure in Jamaica, M establishes the connection between this background and Bond's assignment:

> 'In short.' continued M, 'we suspect that this Jamaican treasure is being used to finance the Soviet espionage system, or an important part of it, in America. And our suspicion becomes a certainty when I tell you who this Mr. Big is' . . . 'He is . . . the head of the Black Widow Voodoo cult . . . He is also a Soviet

agent. And finally he is, and this will particularly interest you, a known member of SMERSH' (17).

As it turns out, Mr. Big's connection with the Soviet Union is a mere facade to justify Bond's interference. To all practical effects, the story is an adventure story built on the genre formula. Also in this story Fleming counts on the reader's willingness to see the complex issues of the Cold War transformed into a question of criminal justice.[10]

The figures of Le Chiffre and Mr. Big are not only criminals with certain political affiliations. They are also foreigners. As I suggested in Chapter 3, this contributes to the characteristic dichotomy structure of the genre. Whereas Fleming in the depiction of Mr. Big gets close to racistic attitudes, Hugo Drax of *M* (1955), like Le Chiffre, is the expression of a 'merely' xenophobic attitude. The story is set at the height of the Cold War, and Fleming manages to combine what seems only a very diffuse understanding of what was really going on in international affairs with the probably then still acute hatred of the Germans.

Our first impression of Hugo Drax is of a rich man with a bizarre habit. By cheating at cards he trespasses on the written laws of society and, more important from M's point of view, on the unwritten laws of gentlemanly behaviour. This should be sufficient information to warn Bond and the reader alike that Drax is the real adversary, but Bond insists on the conventional view: until very late he suspects the Russians of attempting sabotage of Drax' nuclear gift to Britain. Surveying the surroundings of the rocket site, Bond reflects on the survival chances of a sea-borne raiding group: 'Sitting targets from the top of the cliff. But that shouldn't worry a Russian suicide squad' (115). Only when placed in a situation where he needs a miracle to survive does Bond learn about the cooperation between Drax and the Soviet Union: 'We built a jetty into your English Channel. For supplies! for supplies from my good friends the Russians that came in dead on time last Monday night' (162).

In *M* Fleming introduced the conspiracy theme. Whereas in *CR* and *LLD* he presents adversaries who are links in an established intelligence network, Hugo Drax is an active participator in a plot to weaken Western morale. This is a theme which is continued in all Fleming's subsequent stories, also the ones in which SPECTRE replaces SMERSH. The introduction of the

conspiracy theme means a change from a position of aggressive initiative to defensive necessity. The change reinforces the reader's negative impression of the opposition at the same time as it contributes considerably to Bond's ethical/aesthetic claim for self-defence (v. ch. 4). In addition to the introduction of the conspiracy theme there is also the anticipation of the shift to SPECTRE in M.'s summing up of the results of Bond's success. After having enumerated the spoils, new knowledge about Soviet sub-marine technology, disturbance of Soviet leadership, and renewed distrust of German rearmament, M. announces his chief anxiety: 'These politicians can't see that the atomic age has created the most deadly saboteur in the history of the world - the little man with the heavy suitcase' (184).

*DAF* from 1956 does not contain references to the contemporary political situation in so far as it does not deal with a conflict based on the East-West tension. However, as I suggested above, Bond's assignment to uncover a diamond-smuggling gang presents England in a crucial financial role. In *FRWL* Fleming returns to the frame of international politics.

The long introduction to *FRWL* in which we overhear the preparations for a Russian conspiracy to break Western morale gives Fleming a good opportunity to influence the reader's attitude in a subtle way. Fleming's technique is to make his description of the Russians as cool and neutral as possible, and his prejudice consequently tends to go unnoticed. Another aspect of his technique is to appeal to the reader's willingness to accept a maximum of unpleasant 'facts', no matter their lack of interrelationship. In the quotation below Fleming links his introductory comments on the 'national character' of the Russians with the inescapable figures of Stalin's purges:

> A great deal of killing has to be done in the USSR, not because the average Russian is a cruel man, although some of their races are among the cruellest peoples in the world, but as an instrument of policy. People who act against the State are enemies of the State, and the State has no room for enemies. There is too much to do for precious time to be allotted to them, and, if they are a persistent nuisance, they get killed. In a country with a population of 200,000,000, you can kill many thousands a year without missing them. If, as has happened in the two biggest purges, a million people have to be killed in one

> year, that is also not a grave loss. The serious problem is the shortage of executioners (23).

The fact of Stalin's purges has no connection with hygienic habits. Nonetheless the reader's general attitude is also determined by comments such as this:

> It was the smell of the Metro on a hot evening - cheap scent concealing animal odeurs. People in Russia soak themselves in scent, whether they have a bath or not, but mostly when they have not, and healthy, clean girls like Tatiana always walk home from the office, unless the rain or the snow is too bad, so as to avoid the stench in the trains and the Metro (63-4).

When the perspective is Grant's (the Russian executioner), Fleming needs no charades to mask his attitude. Grant reflects about his employers: 'He liked all he heard about the Russians, their brutality, their carelessness of human life, and their guile, and he decided to go over to them' (18).

There are three kinds of adversary in Fleming's stories. Le Chiffre and Mr. Big are ambitious criminals, but in the figures of Hugo Drax, Doctor No and Goldfinger criminality becomes a necessary means for the completion of their neurotic obsessions. Still, all five of them have in common a relationship with the Soviet Union. This is deleted in the figure of Blofeld, the adversary of *T, OHMSS* and *YOLT*, and there remains an uncanny figure to whom it makes no sense to distinguish between criminality as an end and as a means. The morbidity of Blofeld is in his general nihilism and destructive urge.

Whereas Hugo Drax' motivation for his plans to destroy London may be explained as a wish for revenge that has reached neurotic dimensions, the motivation of Doctor No and Goldfinger must be sought on a more abstract level. They are both conspiring with the support of the Soviet Union to disturb the international power balance, Doctor No by interference with US missile trials, Goldfinger by an attempt to upset world finances for good. But their political motivation is not enough to explain their activities, nor is the fact that they profit extremely well from their enterprises. Both men satisfy urges which assume the forms of general vices. Goldfinger cannot get enough gold, he is beset by the vice of gluttony, and Doctor No aims at absolute power. In other

words, on the concrete level Bond punishes his two adversaries for their political commitments and for their criminal pursuit of them, but on the abstract level he is Nemesis responding to their *hubris*.[11]

*G* presents a transition from Fleming's first phase to his second. On the one hand Goldfinger seems a likely SMERSH agent, a possibility which arouses Bond's interest, as M knows very well:

> 'D'you know, 007, I wouldn't be at all surprised if Goldfinger doesn't turn out to be the foreign banker, the treasurer so to speak, of SMERSH' (61).

On the other hand it turns out that Goldfinger's stature is larger than any of Bond's earlier adversaries'. Fleming presents the fight between Bond and Goldfinger as virtue crusading against the deadly vice of gluttony:

> As it was, Bond only wanted to destroy Goldfinger, seize his gold, get him behind bars. Goldfinger's gold-lust was too strong, to ruthless, too dangerous to be allowed the run of the world (136).

The more Bond's stories deviate from a realistic basis, the more distinctly human his effort, because his adversaries grow into allegorical figures acting out traditional vices. In this story there is also a change in Fleming's explanation of the nature of evil. In the preceding stories the adversaries were evil because they belonged to the wrong side combined with an inclination toward criminal behaviour. In the case of Goldfinger, however, a psychological theory if offered which is based upon the simplest Freudian repression hypothesis:

> Bond always mistrusted short men. They grew up from childhood with an inferiority complex. All their lives they would strive to be big - bigger than the others who had teased them as a child. Napoleon had been short, and Hitler. It was the short men that caused all the trouble in the world. And what about a misshapen short man with red hair and a bizarre face? That might add up to a really formidable misfit (28).

With *G* the road is paved for the introduction of the international crime organization with the appalling name of SPECTRE and appropriately headed by Blofeld who is allowed to continue his evil course in two subsequent stories.

Under the impression of the thaw in international relations, Fleming must have expected his readers' interest in political problems to have lost the attention which is fed by the tense atmosphere of unrelentlessness. Now Bond is made to fight a private organization which is put together of all known forces beset on crime and destruction. Apart from two scientists and Blofeld himself, this is SPECTRE:

> The other eighteen men consisted of cells of three (Blofeld accepted the Communist triangle system for security reasons) from six national groups and, within these groups, from six of the world's great criminal and subversive organizations. There were three Sicilians from the top echelon of the Unione Siciliano, the Mafia; three Corsican Frenchmen from the Union Corse, the secret society, contemporary with and similar to the Mafia, that runs nearly all organized crime in France; three former members of SMERSH, the Soviet organization for the execution of traitors and enemies of the State that had been disbanded on the orders of Khruschev in 1958, and replaced by the Special Executive Department of the MWD; three of the top surviving members of the former Sonderdienst of the Gestapo; three tough Yugoslav operatives who had resigned from Marshal Tito's Secret Police, and three highland Turks (the Turks of the plains are no good), former members of Blofeld's RAHIR and subsequently responsible for KRYSTAL, the important Middle East heroin pipeline whose outlet is Beirut. These eighteen men, all experts in conspiracy, in the highest ranges of secret communication and action and, above all, of silence, also shared one supreme virtue - every man had a solid cover. Every man possessed a valid passport with up-to-date visas for the principal countries in the world, and an entirely clean sheet with Interpol, and with their respective national police forces. That factor alone, the factor of each man's cleanness after lifetime in big crime, was his highest qualification for members of SPECTRE - The Special Executive for Counterintelligence, Terrorism, Revenge, and Extortion (52).

By withdrawing from international tension to private-enterprise crime Fleming not only diverts attention from the diminished political role of England, but he introduces the atmosphere of bewilderment and insecurity also expressed by le Carré and Deighton.

The sixties seem, in retrospect, a period of ever-increasing material prosperity, but also a period in which the possibility of a nuclear conflict became a fact of life not to be removed. Fleming makes use of this fear in *T* in a very concrete way. By making SPECTRE symbolize evil as such, Fleming responded to the general mood of restlessness, insecurity and loss of clear political issues. Bond's opposition seen in terms of an all-pervasive general fear instead of a regular hostile nation continues in *OHMSS*. In this story Bond allies himself with the Mafia to be able to fight Blofeld, who is planning bacteriological warfare on the Western world. Whereas the values in Fleming's earlier stories were distributed into England versus political opposition and crime combined, in *T* they have developed into the struggle of order against chaos. The solitary hero must accept the cooperation of a criminal organization to fight another criminal organization. But there is a difference between the two. The Mafia is representative of conventional crime, whereas SPECTRE stands for absolute criminal anarchy. Bond fights on behalf of order against chaos, and although the Mafia pursues illegal goals, the point is that its activities are subject to a view of the world that accepts the concepts of legality and illegality. SPECTRE is beyond such concepts.

The destruction theme introduced in *OHMSS* is continued in *YOLT*. Blofeld, who escaped Bond in the previous story, has settled down as a merchant of death in Japan. Bond's unconvincing assignment is to obtain knowledge of a cipher machine belonging to the Soviet Union, and a deal is made with the head of Japanese intelligence that Bond will get it in exchange for his destruction of Blofeld's establishment which is harmful to the Japanese image. Bond receives his assignment under the impression of an acute crisis like those over Berlin and Cuba:

> The test of the 200-megaton bomb had duly taken place and had been greeted by the public uproar anticipated by Moscow. But counter-action by the West had been swift. On the excuse of protecting Soviet personnel in England from demonstrations

> of public animosity, they had been confined within a radius of twenty miles of their homes, and 'for their protection' police were thick round the Soviet Embassy, the consulates and their various trading offices. There had, of course, been reprisals on British diplomats and journalists in Russia, but these were to have been expected. Then President Kennedy had come out with the strongest speech of his career, and had committed total reprisals from the United States in the event of a single nuclear device being exploded by the Soviet Union in any country in the world outside Soviet territory. This thundering pronouncement, which had produced a growl of dismay from the American man-in-the-street, was greeted from Moscow by the feeble riposte that they would take similar action in answer to any Western nuclear device exploded on the territory of the USSR or her allies (55-56).

However, the political importance of Bond's mission soon cedes in favour of Bond's pursuit of Blofeld. This is the one of Fleming's stories that comes closest to the conventions of myth and fairy-tale, which is only proper, because in this story Bond faces nothing less than the personification of the death-urge. No wonder that the hero emerges from his decisive fight affected by Blofeld's enormous power of death in a state of symbolic death; amnesia.

In the stories up to and including *YOLT* Fleming moved away from uneasy realism towards pure romance. The 'regressive' step made by Fleming in his *MWGG*, proved a failure, I believe, partly because the simplicity of Bond's predicament was no longer plausible, partly because the style is downright bad. The genre of the secret-agent story depends on a clear distinction between 'them' and 'us', and its fictional universe is the manifestation of an analogy of tension which remains simple in comparison with our impression of reality.[12] Fleming was fortunate enough to begin his writing career at a time when the tension between the East and the West had not yet developed into the subtle and intricate patterns of *détente*. His change to thinly disguised myth or adventure may be seen as an effort to maintain simplicity in controversies by exploitation to the utmost of the romance potential of the genre. Fleming's work has been an enormous success, but his later stories retain international tension only as a varnish to cover what is essentially a literary convention.

# 9 John le Carré: the Enemy Within

*In Search of* Civitas

Fleming wrote his stories against the background of the Cold War. Le Carré and Deighton began writing at a time when there were definite signs of a thaw in international relations. The Berlin crisis of 1961 and the Cuba crisis of 1962 seemed to scare the two super powers so much that they decided on a new course of *détente*, begun by the nuclear test ban agreements of 1963.

Although England had played a (token?) role during the Cuba crisis, and had agreed, with the USA and the Soviet Union, to the nuclear test ban, the fact that her international influence had become very restricted had to be generally recognized. Kennedy's successor, President Johnson, favoured a return to his nation's traditional isolationist policies, and Britain had, for economic reasons, to look to Continental Europe and the budding EEC.

Le Carré and Deighton wrote their first stories in this atmosphere of incipient political sobriety. They could reasonably expect their readers to have realized that by now England's problems were those of a second-rank power fighting desperately to save her own economy. No wonder that the general mood of pessimism expressed by le Carré and Deighton's ironic and pragmatic attitude found a positive response in the reading public of the sixties and seventies.

To le Carré the secret-agent story seems to be not least a vehicle for exploring the reasons why things went wrong after the war. But unlike Fleming, le Carré is not interested in leading the country back to her former glory and power. His interest is in the analysis of the premises which prevented England from immediate recognition of the changes in international relations and from adapting herself to them.

Fleming recommended a return to a nationalistic existence for

which there was no longer any possibility. Le Carré diagnoses the present illness as stemming from convictions like the ones nourished by Fleming's general attitude. Le Carré indicts the Establishment for not being flexible enough to adjust to the rapidly changing reality, and he explains the Philby affair as a logical consequence of the special nature of the English Establishment:

> Within its owns walls, its clubs and country houses, in whispered luncheons with its secular contacts, it would enshrine the mystical entity of a vanishing England. Here at least, whatever went on in the big world outside, England's flower would be cherished. *'The Empire may be crumbling; but within our secret élite, the clean-limbed tradition of English power would survive. We believe in nothing but ourselves.'* . . . Behind the sealed doors, puzzled men could take refuge from the swiftly changing world, here defend the absolutism of British policy (Page *et al.* 1968: 18).

These observations were published in 1968, and in 1974 a fictionalized version of the Philby affair appeared as *TTSS*. But already before *TTSS* le Carré had been critical in his views of the English ruling classes for their inertia.

Of le Carré's four secret-agent stories from the sixties, only *LGW* and *STIG* are immediately concerned with the political decline of Britain. But although the decline is not thematized in *CFD* and *SWCIFC*, as it is in the two later stories, they express a highly critical attitude to Establishment, afficialdom, etc. This is especially prominent in the relations between hero and superior in both stories. In *CFD* Maston represents the 'efficiency, bureaucracy, and intrigue of a large Government department-' (12). He is a man willing to hush up the circumstances about a strange death because the consequences may prove harmful to the established order to things. And in SWCIFC Leamas dies as a consequence of his department's wish for selfprotection. It is as if these two stories reflect a need for re-orientation, of which the first step is an effort to place the responsibility for the national decline.

At the same time, le Carré wishes to hold on to the positive quality of life handed on from the past. As I suggested in Chapter 4, Smiley's constant stimulus is his belief in individualism and humanism as the cherished values of his youth: 'He fed hungrily

on memories of Oxford; its beauty, its rational ease, and the mature slowness of its judgments' (*CFD*: 10). Le Carré, through Smiley, does not seem critical of institutions as such. Rather, his criticism aims at the misuse of institutions: the Establishment has failed because it has become a state within the state and its momentum is chiefly directed at self-preservation. Institutions are wrong when they solidify into a mass of bureaucratic obstacles, but useful and right when they help the individual in the definition of his own existence.

*LGW* from 1965 is an attempt to give aim to the criticism which was at a stage of exploration in *CFD* and *SWCIFC*. Leclerc's isolated intelligence department may be interpreted as a symbol of the way self-obsession may go wrong when the link with reality becomes too tenuous. It is characteristic of le Carré's attitude that in the introductory part of the story he sees the house of Leclerc's department in its negative as well as positive aspects. The building symbolizes an institution, which, if used well, may further human activities - note the fertility symbolism - but if used wrongly, has a blinding and dangerous effect:

> The building had that unmistakable air of controlled dilapidation which characterizes government buildings all over the world. For those who worked in it, its mystery was like the mystery of motherhood, its survival like the mystery of England. It shrouded and contained them, cradled them and, with sweet anachronism, gave them the illusion of nourishment (24).

*LGW* may be read as an allegory of Britain's unwillingness to face reality and adapt accordingly. *STIG*, from 1968, is very much a document about the missing sense of direction in Britain in the mid-sixties. The story is set in Germany in the near future - seen from 1968 - with obvious parallels to the Germany of the twenties and thirties. But there can be no doubt that the story is also a comment on the English bewilderment and flux at a time when the USA had definitely declared the special relationship a thing of the past, and Europe, represented by the chauvinistic de Gaulle, showed very little interest in tying Britain any closer to the Continent.

In the mid-sixties it was clear that not only had the EEC become a success (and Western Germany had played no small

part in it), but the approaches towards *détente* in Europe were due primarily to German initiative. And whereas the presence of US occupational troops in Western Germany had gradually achieved a new significance in the perspective of the balance of terror, the presence of British soldiers was increasingly felt to be superfluous, besides representing a great strain on the British economy. On the level of the political significance of Anglo-German relations, *STIG* is about the British bewilderment resulting from the re-shaping of international connections. The English attitude, as represented by the embassy personnel, is characterized by a lack of understanding - or unwillingness to face - the new Germany, bitterness about the key position of the new Germany in the EEC, confusion stemming from lack of experience as a second-rank nation, and illusions about the political significance of England. But on another level the Germany of *STIG* symbolizes a development which is also potentially the English development. On that level the story is strongly didactic in its endeavour to use Germany as the menacing prospect of the generation of fascism.

*STIG* may be read as a warning against the temptations of fascism as a response to a sense of political bewilderment. In the story the Germans are shown once again to have allowed themselves to be misled by the delusion of a *Herrenvolk* destiny. Against the firm hand of Karfeld, the populist leader who is clearly supported by Siebkron, the head of the police, the English can only offer the feeble and undramatic arguments of common sense. Under the fictitious circumstances, England will have to join the EEC under German superiority. The situation is described by Bradfield, an official of the Bonn embassy, as one in which all the assets are on the German side:

> We are playing a poker game here. With open cards and nothing in our hand. Our credit is exhausted, our resources are nil. Yet in return for no more than a smile, our partners bid and play. That smile is all we have. The whole relationship between HMG and the Federal Coalition rests upon that smile. Our situation is as delicate as that; and as mysterious. And as critical (56).[1]

There is a certain similarity between the lash applied by Karfeld against the British and the reproaches made by Tiger Tanaka to

Bond less than a decade before. The sarcasm is heavy in Karfeld's address to the mass meeting:

> Germany was rich, after all: richer than France, and richer than Italy. Richer than England, he added casually, but we must not be rude to the English for the English won the war after all, and were a people of uncommon gifts. His voice remained wonderfully reasonable as he recited all the English gifts: their mini-skirts, their pop singers, their Empire that was falling apart, their national deficit . . . without these English gifts, Europe would surely fail. Karfeld had always said so (311).

The English themselves admit to national failure, as in this passage in which the events of the post-war period are summarized as a succession of a constant reduction of political power:

> Not just Europe was in flux. There were no constants anywhere any more. Rhodesia, Hong Kong, Cyprus . . . British troops were running from one to the other to stamp out a forest fire. We were half-way into Europe and half-way out again. . . . We were putting out feelers in Warsaw, Copenhagen and Moscow. One minute we were conspiring against the French, the next we were conspiring with them. While that was going on we found the energy to scrap three-quarters of the Navy and nine-tenths of our independent deterrent (72).

But le Carré's concern is not really for the loss of national prestige, which he sees as a symptom rather than the disease itself. His diagnosis is expressed by de Lisle in one of the central thematic exchanges of opinion in the story:

> We haven't time for it [democracy] any more: a flash of light between feudalism and automation, and now it's gone. What's left? The voters are cut off from parliament, parliament is cut off from the Government and the Government is cut off from everyone. Government by silence, that's the slogan. Government by alienation. I don't need to tell *you* about that: it's a British product (128).

De Lisle's remonstrance is in complete agreement with Smiley's

rationalistic attitude in le Carré's previous stories. The nightmare presented in *STIG* is a desperate call to make us remember our responsibility to govern our own existence.

The repeated spy scandals in England since the war gave le Carré a theme which he used masterfully in his Karla trilogy of the seventies, *TTSS, HS* and *SP*. The theme of the 'mole' was *gefundenes Fressen* in a period during which many English nationals saw it as an admission to defeat to join the other EEC countries. Having expressed critical opinions also against England in his sixties stories, it is as if a more patriotic attitude can be felt in the trilogy. The placing of a mole in the intelligence organization of a country, masterminded by a prominent Soviet spy, gives an air of importance to that country. In the trilogy le Carré succeeds in outlining a picture of England as a country in crisis, but also a country with resources which make it a worthy target of enemy action.

Le Carré's subtle support of patriotic attitudes in his trilogy does not prevent him from continuing his criticism from the earlier stories. But there is a difference between the patriotic support implied in the mole theme and the explicit comments made on the situation of England. In the trilogy Smiley is no more the convinced patriot than in the previous stories, but he lives on preferring the lesser of two evils. Compared with the former agent Jim Prideaux ('But England was his love; ... Best place in the whole damn world!' (TTSS : 17)) and with Haydon, the mole, he sides with Jim Prideaux in principle. His patriotic attachment, however, is always subject to questioning and doubt, as in the flash-back scene in *TTSS* (ch. 23) where he interviews and attempts pressure on Karla in an Indian prison some time in the fifties.

In comparison with *TTSS*, which does not offer very much in the way of explicit comment on the national situation at the beginning of the seventies (it was published in 1974), *HS* from 1977 is rich in such comment. The discovery of the mole's identity in *TTSS* spurs Smiley on to destroy the Soviet spymaster, code-named Karla. In *HS* Smiley seems to show genuine concern about the prestige of his country. There are many problems at stake in *HS*, but Smiley, with the help of Westerby, his agent, manages to save the colonial status of Hong Kong, to regain the respect of friendly, but sceptical nations, to close in on Karla, and to win a moral victory over his American allies.

When in *HS* he is asked to reorganize the English secret service after its collapse as a consequence of Haydon's betrayal in *TTSS*, Smiley chooses to begin his quest by finding out what Haydon must have considered important and therefore deliberately concealed from his colleagues. By this procedure, he finds a channel of payment, a 'goldseam', used by Soviet agents, leading back ultimately to Karla. This is Smiley's official task. Privately, he feels a moral obligation to fill the gaps left by Haydon: 'We *made* Bill,' ran his argument, 'so it's right we should carry the brunt of his betrayal' (450). The need for atonement felt so intensively by Smiley is expressed by his preference for symbolic expressions centered on debt and payment. Smiley's loyalty is to a belief in human trust and consequently in accordance with his fundamental ethical convictions (cf. ch. 4). With regard to England's role in the world, however, the main impression of Smiley's activities is his wish to reconstruct national pride. Smiley's stubborn will to succeed is made all the more impressive against the background of South-East Asia, where the West is rapidly losing its dominance. But le Carré's technique is subtle. There is, for instance, a scene in the British press club in Hong Kong, which illustrates his technique very well:

> The better chairs were already taken by readers of last Thursday's *Telegraph*, which gave a quite dismal picture of the moral and economic miseries of their homeland.
> 'Pound's in the soup again,' a crusted voice growled through a pipe.' Electricians out. Railways out. Pilots out.'
> 'Who's *in*? More the question,' said another, just as crusted.
> 'If I was the Kremlin I'd say we were doing a first-class *job*,' said the first speaker, barking out the final word to give it a military indignation, and with a sigh ordered up a couple of dry martinis (121).

No reader familiar with Smiley or with le Carré's usual tone would accept this supercilious assessment of the situation in Britain as expressive of le Carré's own attitude. The effect of the passage receives an ironic emphasis by the reader's associations with similar scenes in English literature describing the behaviour of tired and slightly *blasé* Englishmen in the colonies.[2] The whole scene and the attitude expressed by the gathered journalists is in discord with the kind of criticism voiced elsewhere, in this story

and earlier ones, so that the reader has a clear impression of the stupidity of the journalists' attitude. Smiley is, consequently, safeguarded on two sides: he acts in accordance with his ethical beliefs, which is honourable, and he is presented as critical, only not in the simple and conventional way of these journalists, which likewise results in the reader's respect. The conclusive effect is the reader's acknowledgement of Smiley's activities as something different from the old kind of unconditioned patriotism. But this is also a way to meet the reader's wish for seeing England in ascendancy again: if not politically or economically powerful, then, at least, morally right. Apart from the exotic overtones so suitable for the alien-land phases of the plot (v. ch. 3), the move away from the political arena of Europe to Hong Kong in *HS* is also thematically significant. With the beginning of the endeavours of *détente*, Europe receded more and more into the background as an area of interesting tension for the genre. Berlin was becoming less of a risk as a result of Kiesinger's and Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, which, in the beginning of the seventies, had considerable success. No doubt the recent American involvement in the Far East could be relied on as not yet quite digested and consequently appealing to the reader of the late nineteen-seventies. Also the general interest attracted to the opening-up of Communist China after Kissinger and Nixon's overtures may be assumed to have been a topic to catch and hold the reader's attention.

But Hong Kong is more than alien land and topical interest. It is le Carré's tool to reassure the reader of England's moral superiority. Le Carré expresses no exuberant patriotism *à la* Kipling in his description of the Crown colony and its relations to Britain: 'Hong Kong became the headquarters of Britain's opium trade to China and in consequence one of the pillars of the imperial economy' (16). The moral superiority is created as a result of the realization that the former wielding of Imperial power has left an obligation, a debt to be paid. Hong Kong also symbolizes, by its facets and variety, its good and evil, the nature of man in le Carré's ethical universe. It is typical of le Carré's sense of values that the true adversary is both the hunted persons at the end of the gold seam. Drako Ko and his brother, and the Americans who insist on results, even to the point of breaking promises. Smiley's humanistic attitude implies an acceptance of the past as a kind of moral lesson and a belief in trust between

people. The Americans fail in both respects. Whereas Smiley accepts his present assignment as a necessary consequence of Haydon's treason, which, in turn, was effected by a false awareness of reality, the role played by the Americans is that of the *parvenu* with no ties to the past and no sense of obligation or involvement: 'This is how they tried to win, . . . from inside soundproof rooms, through smoked glass, using machines at arm's length. This is how they lost' (437). In contrast, Westerby stakes his personal integrity in the game, and Smiley his sense of fundamental human worth. Both Westerby and Smiley are defeated, personally, but their salvation is in their involvement. They care.

The moral superiority suggested in my observations above is implied rather than stated, but there is in le Carré's trilogy a counterpoint structure of implication and statement as regards the situation of Britain. Despite the serious decline of the fifties and sixties, England is presented as worthy of an elaborate mole operation; in the competition with the CIA, Smiley's rudimentary intelligence outfit plays fair and turns out to be the real winner. There is no shortage of reminders that England is poorly in *HS*, and in *SP* the tension between the bleak picture presented of Britain's present situation and the success of Smiley and his organization is even more pronounced. An additional note of disquiet is introduced by the topical allusions to the political climate under the Labour government which had enjoyed a Commons majority since October 1974:

> 'You should hear *them*, George, our new masters! . . . Mistrust at every turn, even from Ministers who should know better. . . . As if British Intelligence were a sort of wholly owned subsidiary of the Conservative Party. Not their Socialist nest. The thirties all over again. Do you know, they're even reviving all that talk about a British Freedom of Information Act on the American pattern' (48).

This outburst should not be credited as le Carré's attitude to the new climate. Judging by the general tone of his stories, the opposite would appear more likely. But although the passage above may appear to be at an ironic distance from the author's apparent convictions, the reader's impression is one of a bewildered attitude to Government and Civil Service, and, conse-

quently, a bewildered attitude to the state of England.[3] Le Carré emphasizes the turn of Smiley's quest into something personal. But Smiley's personal success nonetheless suggests a national triumph: British, not American, agents make Karla defect.[4]

Le Carré's change of scene in *LDG* away from the East-West tensions to the Middle East may be seen not only as a response to the author's tiring of his character and recognition of the possibility that the reader's credulity may be tried considerably by too many summons of the retired spymaster to active service, but also to the formula requirement of the presentation of topical issues. There is no escaping the fact that Smiley's Karla crusade has its roots in the Cold War, a political power constellation which is increasingly felt as history and consequently does not possess the immediacy on which the genre thrives.

As suggested in previous chapters *LDG* does not break with the formula of the genre despite the geographical reorientation. Dichotomy structure, ethical dilemma, romance plot and functional distribution of characters into conventional roles are characteristic of this as well as le Carré's earlier secret-agent fiction. However, as the background of the story is the struggle between Israel and the PLO and as England's part is here marginal, the theme of English international status is not of the prominence we have been accustomed to in le Carré's previous work. If we see a parallel in Kurtz's search for Khalil to Smiley's quest for Karla, it is tempting to extend the parallel to one between England and Israel. It is striking that the sense of claustrophobia expressed so often in le Carré's work about the situation of England applies to the situation of Israel as well as described in this story. But the possible parallel should of course not be strained to disproportions.

Although not in a central position in this story, there are passages which reveal a certain attitude to the situation of England, and it is interesting to note that the change of setting has provided le Carré with an opportunity to apply the lash to his native country with more vigour than usual, since the focus of our sympathy is no longer this victim of new world-power relations.

Except for Charlie all the English characters that appear in *LDG* are presented in a light which is hardly flattering. The occasional criticism of Smiley and his surroundings is always good-humoured, and is in glaring contrast to the sarcasm with which le Carré describes his characters of English origin in *LDG*.

There is the swaggering tyrannical behaviour of Long Al, Charlie's lover; there is the self-deception and pretense of Ned Quilley, Charlie's theatrical agent; and there is, of particular importance, the mocking impression rendered of an English secret-service department. Although Kurtz admits to the existence of 'A fine mind inside the violence' (302) about Picton, the chief of the department, everything about his department is as if taken out of *LGW*. There is no doubt that without a Smiley to exert self-criticism, the picture presented of England is of a nation which has lost all sense of reality, in matters both great and small.

### *Fear of Extremes*

In le Carré's two earliest secret-agent stories, *CFD* and *SWCIFC*, the only countries involved are England and Eastern Germany. It is not until *STIG* (1968) that the English relationship to friendly nations receives attention. In that story le Carré thematizes Anglo-German relations, past and present, to suggest something about the nature of incipient fascism.

At the beginning of the story le Carré has a Whitehall civil servant express the conventional view of the Germans; a view probably shared with many readers: 'A nation of psychopaths. Always think that they are being got at. Versailles, encirclement, stab in the back; persecution mania, that's their trouble' (41). As the action progresses it becomes increasingly clear that such a view is too simple to explain the present situation. The keyword for a thematic interpretation of the story is *illusion*, and nationalistic prejudice is as much an illusion as Harting's conviction that the truth about Karfeld must be brought out, at any cost. The diplomatic endeavour to pave the way for English membership is based on a realization that illusions must be played against each other if the goal is to be reached. The British negotiation potential is in the illusion of military strength: Bradfield explains the situation to the hero:

> 'Hear me out. There is something here that does not exist in England. It is called the anti-Soviet alliance. The Germans take it very seriously, and we deride it at our peril: *it is still our ticket to Brussels*. For twenty years or more, we have dressed

> ourselves in the shining armour of the defender. We may be bankrupt, we may beg for loans, currency and trade; we may occasionally . . . reinterpret . . . our Nato commitments; when the guns sound, we may even bury our heads under the blankets; our leaders may be as futile as theirs.'
>
> What was it Turner discerned in Bradfield's voice at that moment? Self-disgust? a ruthless sense of his own decline? He spoke like a man who had tried all remedies, and would have no more of doctors. For a moment the gap between them had closed, and Turner heard his own voice speaking through the Bonn mist.
>
> 'For all that, in terms of popular psychology, it is the one great unspoken strength we have: that when the Barbarians come from the East, the Germans may count on our support. That Rhine Army will hastily gather on the Kentish hills and the British independent nuclear deterrent will be hustled into service (57-8).

The events of the story suggest, however, that the status of England has already deteriorated to an extent which makes the confidence in the nuclear deterrent obsolete. Karfeld's appeal to the Germans is extremely successful, and at the same time Siebkron, the leader of the police, sees his chance to consolidate his own role in the confusion which is the result of the passivity of a weak government and the appeal of extra-parliamentary voices. Against this background it is unlikely that the English are seen by the Germans as the ultimate protector, and Karfeld receives loud applause when he blames Britain for oppression, cultural and military.

As I suggested in Chapter 4, le Carré's justification of his heroes' activities is in their humanistic endeavour: avoidance of extremes and allowance for human frailty. As Dieter Frey in *CFD* was blamed for his pursuit for the absolute, the Germany imagined in *STIG* representes a similar pursuit, but on a national scale. In the middle of the budding fascism is Bonn, which is emphasized again and again as a 'world in exile' (126). Bonn may be interpreted to symbolize mere potentiality: it may be subject to influence, but is as yet undecided. It is a town of mists.

In the diplomatic quarter of Bonn the English embassy personnel have their enclave. It is a perfect model of a middle-class London suburb, and it symbolizes the potential perversion

of le Carré's humanistic ideals, a self-satisfactory and complacent middle-of-the-road attitude to existence. The fictional Germany has chosen the road to fascism, because this is one way to assert its existence as a nation, but it is a way which is obviously the result of a feeling of victimization combined with delusions of grandeur. Both premises are latent in the bitter and desperate attitudes expressed by members of the English colony in Bonn, notably Bradfield and de Lisle. Bonn is the test of Karfeld's movement as well as of the English attitude to a situation which is, in many ways, similar to the German.

The role played by the USA receives increasing attention in the course of le Carré's work. When in *SWCIFC* Leamas angrily states to his first defection contact that he has been an 'Office boy for the bloody Yanks' (59), he is, of course, supposed to vent his anger as a motive to defection. But at the same time the bitter utterance serves as a prelude to what becomes a major theme in the Karla trilogy. Also in *LGW* there is a brief reference to the superiority of the Americans, but as this story is ironic throughout as regards anachronistic concepts of national importance, Leclerc's exegesis must be read as le Carré's wish to ask the reader to face reality:

> 'The Minister was anxious that we shouldn't alarm them prematurely. One only has to suggest rockets to the Americans to get the most drastic action. Before we know where they are they'll be flying U-2s over Rostock'. Encouraged by their laughter, Leclerc continued 'The Minister made another point which I think I might pass on to you. The country which comes under maximum threat from these rockets - they have a range of around eight hundred miles - might well be our own. It is certainly not the United States. Politically, this would be a bad moment to go hiding our faces in the Americans' skirts. After all, as the Minister put it, we still *have* one or two teeth of our own' (59).

As in the three previous stories, the USA is not directly involved in *STIG*, but whereas America was mentioned in *SWCIFC* and *LGW* as the potential contributor to the action, it is referred to here for the values it represents. De Lisle reflects on the interior of the American Club in Bonn:

> 'Is *all* America like this?' de Lisle enquired. 'Or worse?' He looked slowly round. 'Though it does give a sense of *dimension*, I suppose. And optimism, That's the trouble with Americans, isn't it really? All that emphasis on the future. So dangerous. It makes them destructive of the present. Much kinder to look *back*, I always think. I see no hope for the future, and it gives me a *great* sense of freedom. And of caring: We're much nicer to one another in the condemned cell aren't we? Don't take me too seriously, will you' (121)?

De Lisle's observations on America in the passage quoted above may be read both as the restating of le Carré's belief in the redeeming power of the past and as the prelude to the role America is to play in the trilogy. If fascism is one danger threatening England, 'Americanism' is another.

The critical attitude towards America reaches its culmination in *HS*, but the road is paved carefully in *TTSS*. Like le Carré's other stories this one is based on actual fact. Le Carré has allowed his imagination to work on the likely developments of the treason scandals in Britain since the war, in particular the Philby affair.[5] The plot of *TTSS* is formed by Smiley's endeavours to reveal the identity of a Russian mole at the highest level in the 'Circus', and this makes it possible for le Carré to consider political values from various angles. As I suggested in Chapter 4, the Smiley of this story is not very certain about absolute political convictions; his anger is aroused by Haydon's breach of loyalty and calculated lies rather than patriotic and political considerations. The lines are drawn up sharply in the former agent Jim Prideaux' appreciation of the general political situation. Jim Prideaux, it must be remembered, is a fieldman in many ways similar to Leamas of *SWCIFC*, and, in addition to his lack of nuanced political views, he is bitter about his own personal fate:

> To the west, America, he said, full of greedy fools fouling up their inheritance. To the east, China-Russia, he drew no distinction: boiler suits, prison camps, and a damn long march to nowhere. In the middle . . . (17).

But Jim Prideaux' attitude to the Americans is, despite his lack of sophistication, like de Lisle's in *STIG*: both emphasize the Americans' carelessness about the past. The values represented by

Prideaux' oblique reference to Britain by his 'In the middle . . .' are given substance by Smiley's ironic consideration of himself as a 'soft fool' and the 'very archetype of a flabby Western liberal' (187). Smiley's liberalism is the bulwark against the USA as well as against the Soviet Union. Smiley, however, has no illusions that his assignment to reveal the mole is ultimately a service to the Americans:

> An American connection, a big American dividend I mean, would put the mole Gerald *right* at the top table. The Circus to by proxy of course. As a Russian, one would give almost anything to the English if . . . well, if . . . one could buy the Americans in return (195).

There is a streak of jealousy in Smiley's summary of the situation which anticipates the obvious state of competition in *HS*, and it sets the key for the attitude to the Americans that the last observations on the trans-Atlantic ally are put into the mouth of Haydon, the traitor. His words are mechanical repetitions of ideological articles of faith, and thus repellent to Smiley's individualism, but Smiley does not question their basic message:

> The statement began with a long apologia, of which he [Smiley] afterwards recalled only a few sentences:
> 'We live in an age where only fundamental issues matter . . .
> 'The United States is no longer capable of undertaking its own revolution . . .'
> 'The political posture of the United Kingdom is without relevance or moral viability in world affairs . . .'
> With much of it, Smiley might in other circumstances have agreed: it was the tone, rather than the music, which alienated him.
> 'In capitalist America economic repression of the masses is institutionalised to a point which not even Lenin could have foreseen.
> 'The cold war began in 1917, but the bitterest struggles lie ahead of us, as America's deathbed paranoia drives her to greater excesses abroad . . .' (306).

The result of Haydon's betrayal is that the English secret service has to begin its activities from scratch, which means that the

situation in *HS* is one of 'fatal dependence upon their American sister service' (15).

The general symbol of America in *HS* is money. Smiley makes no secret of his economic dependence on the CIA, but at the same time he implies that the English force is quality which cannot be replaced by quantity; but quality cannot emerge without economic support. Smiley states the problem neatly: 'If we don't, we've no resources. It's simply a matter of balance' (101). There is a faint but distinct echo in this implied distribution of spiritual and material values from Bond's defence of British virtues in *YOLT*. The difference between British and American approaches agrees well with le Carré's favourite theme of pretense versus sincerity and its corollary of the past versus the present. The settings in which the combined meetings between the Circus and the CIA take place illustrate the difference between the economic capabilities of the two services:

> Before the fall, studiously informal meetings of intelligence partners to the special relationship were held as often as monthly and followed by what Smiley's predecessor Alleline had liked to call 'a jar'. If it was the American turn to play host, then Alleline and his cohorts, among them the popular Bill Haydon, would be shepherded to the vast rooftop bar, known within the Circus as the planetarium, to be regaled with dry martinis and a view of West London they could not otherwise have afforded. If it was the British turn, then a trestle table was set up in the rumpus room, and a darned damask tablecloth spread over it, and the American delegates were invited to pay homage to the last bastion of clubland spying, and incidentally the birthplace of their own service, while they sipped South African sherry disguised by cut-glass decanters on the grounds that they wouldn't know the difference (262).

In the description of the chief's office in the CIA's London headquarters le Carré manages to evoke associations which are definitely negative in Smiley's perspective: emphasis on money, ostentatious nationalism and impersonality. It is also interesting that the way Martello, the CIA chief, dresses is incongruous, and that the presence of two assistants may lead the reader to compare this scene with, for instance, the scene in Fleming's *LLD* where Bond is taken to see the gangster chief, Mr Big. The Italian

name of the CIA chief may be intended to give associations to the Mafia:

> The doors, incidentally, were double, with black grilles over black iron, and gilded feathers on the grilles. The cost of them alone would have kept the entire Circus ticking over for a couple more days at least. Once inside them, they had the sensation of coming from a hamlet to a metropolis.
> Martello's room was very large. There were no windows and it could have been midnight. Above an empty desk an American flag, unfurled as if by a breeze, occupied half the end wall. At the centre of the floor a ring of airline chairs was clustered round a rosewood table, and in one of these sat Martello himself, a burly cheerful-looking Yale man in a country suit which semed always out of season. Two quiet men flanked him, each as sallow and sincere as the other (263).

One of the tings noted by Smiley in Martello' office is a portrait of Richard Nixon, although, as Smiley reflects, 'Nixon had resigned a good six months ago' (267). The presence of the former president's portrait may, of course, be due to negligence, but that is hardly the case in the otherwise efficient American embassy. A more likely possibility is that le Carré wishes to indicate a certain unwillingness on the part of the CIA to say goodbye to a president who, as it turned out, preferred clandestine channels to a more open kind of government.

In many ways the USA assumes the role of adversary in *HS* because Smiley has to compete with the ally throughout, and eventually he is outwitted in a conspiracy initiated by some of his own colleagues in association with the CIA. In the fictional universe of this story the Americans represent values which are in fundamental disagreement with Smiley's.

In accordance with the thematic changes in *SP*, the importance of international relations is reduced to almost nil. Although there are many geographical shifts in the story (France, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland) the countries visited by Smiley remain of plot-structural values only (v. chs 3 and 6). Smiley's assignment is in this story a purely personal crusade to get even with Karla, the man who engineered the destruction of the Circus. The impression that the reader gets of nations friendly to England is nothing more than the descriptive detail necessary to

create a minimum of atmosphere.[6] The superiority of the English secret service over the CIA is implied in the circumstance that the success is Smiley's, but the state of competition so obvious in *HS* is absent as a theme in *SP*.

Despite the substition of England by Israel in *LDG* and the consequent disappearance of the USA as the jealous friend ready to step in with superior force but inferior brains Germany once again plays a major part. The opening pages of the book describe the diplomats' suburbia in Bonn which we recognize from *STIG*, and another note of recognition is struck with the introduction of a high-ranking security policeman constantly referred to by the area of his origin, the Silesian. This heavy, unimaginative and tactless officer is a personification of the renewed drive towards fascism as described in *STIG*. Le Carré's strong dislike of this particular aspect of what in more romantic times than ours could have been called its *Volksseele* is voiced partly through this caricature, partly through his superior Dr. Alexis. Although Dr. Alexis is a more faceted figure than the Silesian it only means that le Carré's criticism of the new Bundesrepublik can be carried out with a subtlety more suitable to the author's quiet irony than the musical-comedy directness with which the Silesian performs.

Naturally, there is a certain delicacy in the relations between the Israeli agents and their German counterparts. In le Carré's fictional universe the Germans are taken for several rides by Kurtz and his men. In comparison with Kurtz, who is constantly exposed to danger and forced to make decisions about life and death, Dr. Alexis enjoys an existence comfortably removed from any disturbance apart from investigations of the occasional terrorist bomb. There is something uncannily ludicrous about the way that emphasis is put on the 'clean' lineage of Dr. Alexis as regards the Holocaust, as if Germans, or indeed other human beings, may be divided into two mutually exclusive groups of tainted and untainted. Just as the Nazi rulers dictated the study of lines of descent to detect Jewish ancestry, the modern Germany carries on the identical procedure, admittedly for different purposes, but with the same faith in absolutism and thoroughness. In additional to this major indictment of the new Germany in the person of Dr. Alexis the reader will note the doctor's fondness for external appearance, his glib and superficial nature so useful for the demands of mass society, and hypocrisy in his dealings with the Israelis. Dr. Alexis is quite willing to harvest

from the Israeli progress, but claims ethical scruples when his involvement is required, a claim, however, which obviously enjoys lower priority than his financial interests.

Dr. Alexis is, of course, a fictional character and should be considered as such, but seen against le Carré's earlier portraits of Western Germany there can be little doubt that he is being used to represent national characteristics as well.

In le Carré's stories Germany and the USA tend to assume symbolic importance, and it is impossible to consider their value as symbols without at the same time considering le Carré's sense of ethical values as they are expressed mainly in the figure of Smiley. The Germany of *STIG* and the USA of *TTSS* and *HS* represent developments which are potential developments of Western countries, including England. Both are, in le Carré's perspective, perversions of a truly humanistic development because both countries symbolize the excess which is anathema to the 'flabby Western liberal' (*HS*: 187) in the figure of Smiley. If *SP* is meant as the exit of Smiley for good, the thematic pattern of the trilogy is a move away from severe criticism of the development preferred by the USA to what may be considered complete disillusionment as regards the checking of potentially pernicious political developments. There is a striking similarity between the frustration of Turner at the end of *STIG* when he witnesses the force of Karfeld's hordes and the frustration of Smiley at the end of *HS*: both men are powerless before the values represented by Karfeld's movement and the USA respectively. Turner tries to act, but is stopped in the attempt (by the German police!), and Smiley resigns. When le Carré's hero returns in *SP*, international politics have been abandoned as the motivation for his action and are only left as a facade that justifies what is essentialy his private effort to prove the superiority of himself to Karla.

### *Treason: Evil Incarnate*

As Fleming realized (v. ch. 8) it became increasingly difficult to persuade the reader that international politics were clearly white and black. In spite of the Berlin and Cuba crises the tension seemed definitely to abate. With the exception of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, relations between East and West showed more and more promise. But from the beginning of

the sixties it also became increasingly obvious that the world was ruled from Washington and Moscow, and that England, along with other European nations, could not hope realistically to gain any influence in the balance of terror:

> Probably the most important development of the 1960s, for the world as a whole and more particularly for Europe, was the opening of the dialogue between the two superpowers, America and the Soviet Union. This became more and more exclusive. The West European countries found themselves more and more shut out, though the British could hope for a little more information than others from the Americans, at least in nuclear matters. When the Labour Government, making its fresh approach to the Common Market, talked repeatedly about the need to make a European voice heard in world affairs, this was much more than a political catchphrase. It reflected a hard reality. By the end of the 1960s, no European country could feel that it had any real share in making the decisions which would shape world events in the 1970s (Barker 1971 : 241).[7]

The change in the political climate which Fleming responded to by introducing SPECTRE, was recognized in a more sober mood by le Carré. He responded by suggesting that the opposition to English national interest is ideological as well as social, manifested as international political tension on the one hand and tension within the power structure of the agent's own organization on the other. Ultimately, both aspects may be seen to symbolize a psychological struggle in which the individual tries to avoid the dangers of absolute convictions and pretense (v. ch. 4).

The political opposition in *CFD* is the GDR, not the Soviet Union, although the influence of that nation lurks in the background ('There is, you see, no positive evidence that Frey was operation for the Russians' (144)). But there is no simple and dramatic 'trial of strength between two extremely tough and ruthless men, . . . to upset . . . the governments of the Western world' (*T* : 43) in le Carré's story. Smiley struggles as much with himself as with his adversary in *CFD*. Eventually his struggle is against the worm of doubt, and when he comes out the winner, he asks himself: 'who was then the gentleman' (145)? No answer is offered, because there is no conclusive answer. Smiley won over

Frey, and international status quo is maintained. Smiley's personal reaction is however one of disgust: he declines the offer of a high post in intelligence and flies to Switzerland to give his broken marriage a new chance.

As a security officer it is Smiley's duty in *CFD* to investigate the personal background of George Fennan, a civil servant with access to classified material. It is a routine task, but Smiley gets to like the man, and he finds himself in the somewhat paradoxical situation that he feels sympathy for the civil servant, and antipathy against Maston, his superior, because of the superficiality and superiousness which are Maston's characteristics. Smiley tries to give Maston a true picture of the whole investigation, an attempt which Maston obviously dislikes:

> 'The allegation against Fennan was pretty thin - university membership in the '30s and vague talk of current sympathy. Half the Cabinet were in the Party in the '30s.' Maston frowned (20).

Fleming obviously found it hard to understand the fact that England's role as a world power had been played out already a long time before he began his writing career. Bond carries out his assignments on the basis of a sense of an inherited right. But Smiley is always doubtful, always searching; his universe is relative. Smiley prefers the English way of life because of its respect for the individual and for its traditional skepticism. The difference between his adversary Frey and himself is more profound than merely national allegiance:

> They had come from different worlds of thought and conduct. Dieter, mercurial, absolute, had fought to build a civilization. Smiley, rationalistic, protective, had fought to prevent him (145).

Smiley understands the attraction that Marxism has for a man like Fennan, because it might have appealed to himself on account of its rationalism. Fennan had

> put all his energy into philosophical and historical reading, and found, to his surprise, comfort and peace in the intellectual purity of Marxism. He feasted on its intellectual ruthlessness,

> was thrilled by it fearlessness, its academic reversal of traditional values. In the end it was this and not the party that gave him strength in his solitude, a philosophy which exacted total sacrifice to an unassailable formula, which humiliated and inspired him; and when he finally found success, prosperity, and integration, he turned his back sadly upon it as a treasure he had outgrown and must leave at Oxford with the days of his youth (*CDF*: 70-1).

But in le Carré's view there is a difference between Marxism as an intellectual exercise and as a practical way of life. In philosophy, the absolute has an attractive purity, but in everyday life the absolute is unattainable, even dangerous. This is how Smiley sees the ideology which he fights to keep off the shores of England. From his rationalistic point of view he tries to explain the motives of his opponents in terms which describe their political efforts as the results of individual psychological factors, as in this passage where Smiley explains to Guillam and Mendel his guesses about Elsa Fennan's and Dieter Frey's motives:

> 'Why did she do it?' Mendel asked suddenly. Smiley shook his head slowly: 'I think I know, but we can only guess. I think she dreamed of a world without conflict, ordered and preserved by the new doctrine. I once angered her, you see, and she shouted at me: 'I'm the wandering Jewess,' she said; 'the no-man's land, the battlefield of your toy soldiers.' As she saw the new Germany rebuilt in the image of the old, saw the plump pride return, as she put it, I think it was just too much for her; I think she looked at the futility of her suffering and the prosperity of her persecutors and rebelled. Five years ago, she told me, they met Dieter on a skiing holiday in Germany. By that time the re-establishment of Germany as a prominent western power was well under way.
> 'Was she a communist?'
> 'I don't think she liked labels. I think she wanted to help build one society which could live without conflict. Peace is a dirty word now, isn't it? I think she wanted peace.'
> 'And Dieter?' asked Guillam.
> 'God knows what Dieter wanted. Honour, I think, and a socialist world.' Smiley shrugged. 'They dreamed of peace and freedom. Now they're murderers and spies.'

> 'Christ Almighty,' said Mendel.
> Smiley was silent again, looking into his glass. At last he said: 'I can't expect you to understand, You only saw the end of Dieter. I saw the beginning. He went the full circle. I don't think he ever got over being a traitor in the war. He had to put it right. He was one of those world-builders who seem to do nothing but destroy: that's all' (155-6).

The doubt which is characteristic of the conflict theme in *CFD* is not shared by Leamas, the hero of *SWCIFC*. By introducing in this story a new figure in the hero's role and retaining Smiley in the wing, le Carré has managed to respond both to the acute political tensions caused by the Berlin Wall and to hint at the general atmosphere of scepticism from *CFD* by having Smiley unobtrusingly washing his hands in the background. Leamas realizes that the opposition is of two kinds, depending on perspective. As a civil servant engaged in clandestine work for the nation his target is the subversion of the GDR intelligence top. As an individual, however, his enemy is the system that he works and dies for. The ideological opposition remains unchanged throughout Leamas' ordeals, whereas the opposition presented in the hero's own organization, which symbolizes the inertia of the Establishment, comes to he hero's awareness by degrees.

In *CFD* as well as in *SWCIFC* the heroes' missions are directed at the intelligence apparatus of the GDR. As I observed above, the attitude to Marxism and communism has undergone a change from le Carré's first secret-agent story to his second, a change which may be ascribed to the suddenly renewed, but just as suddenly abating political tensions in East-West relationships over the Berlin crisis. Leamas is aware of a change:

> As they crossed the fifty yards which separated the two checkspoints, Leamas was dimly aware of the new fortifications on the Eastern side of the wall - dragons' teeth, observation towers and double aprons of barbed wire. Things had tightened up (117).

There is no doubt about le Carré's ideological allegiance in this story, although his manner of describing the other side is much subtler than Fleming's. In *CFD* Fennan tired of practical party work and turned instead to theoretical Marxism as a purely

intellectual exercise. The alien land (v. ch. 3) which Leamas enters into after having passing the dragons' teeth is not the fantastic, almost surrealistic places to which Fleming has accustomed his readers. Superficially, there is similarity between the world which Leamas has left and the one he arrives in:

> They went into the house, the man leading the way. It was got up like a hunting lodge, part old, part new. It was badly lit with pale overhead lights. The place had a neglected, musty air as if it had been opened for the occasion. There were little touches of officialdom here and there - a notice of what to do in case of fire, institutional green paint on the door and heavy spring-cartridge locks; and in the drawing-room, which was quite comfortably done, dark, heavy furniture, badly scratched, and the inevitable photographs of Soviet leaders. To Leamas these lapses from anonymity signified the involuntary identification of the Abteilung with bureaucracy (120).

Le Carré's alien land does not depend on geographical difference. It is a state of mind, rather, in which the individual feels lost and confused, and this is why there is no difference, in principle, between political and social opposition in le Carré's fictional universe. They are both symbolic expressions of a general human need to create existential significance by reacting against alienating forces. This state of mind is indicated already when Leamas is briefed for his new assignment on coming home from Berlin. Control attempts to appeal to Leamas in a way which is not very different from what M. might have tried on Bond, but Leamas is strongly aware of the double standard of morality. Control talks about Mundt, the target of Leamas' mission:

> 'He tried to kill George Smiley, And of course he shot the woman's husband. He is a very distasteful man. Ex Hitler-Youth and all that sort of thing. Not at all the intellectual kind of Communist. A practitioner of the cold war.'
> 'Like us,' Leamas observed drily. Control didn't smile (22).

Although he sees through the pretense of his employers Leamas does not take to the ideological opposition instead. The plot of which Leamas has been the decoy proves to him a similarity

between the system of which he is a representative and the system which he was sent out to fight: the negative barrenness of ideas against the positive fulness of life. On the symbolic level his real mission, the personal one, is an effort to see through the veils of ideology as well as of human vanity. Leamas is equally alienated from his own society symbolized by the figure of the superior as from the ideological opposition of the GDR.

Like Smiley of *CFD* Leamas sees the justification of his activities in defending individualism against absolutism, as here in a late conversation with Liz, his communist love:

> 'What the hell are you complaining about,' Leamas demanded roughly. 'Your Party's always at war, isn't it? Sacrificing the individual to the mass. That's what it says. Socialist reality: fighting night and day - that relentless battle - that's what they say, isn't it? At least you've survived.
> I never heard that Communists preached the sanctity of human life - perhaps I've got it wrong,' he added sarcastically. 'I agree, yes, I agree, you might have been destroyed. That was on the cards. Mundt's a vicious swine; he saw no point in letting you survive. His promise - I suppose he gave a promise to do his best by you - isn't worth a great deal. So you might have died - today, next year or twenty years on - in a prison in the workers's paradise. And so might I. But I seem to remember the Party is aiming at the destruction of a whole class. Or have I got it wrong' (229-30)?

There is in *SWCIFC* a clear tendency to define the hero's opposition in political *and* psychological terms: communism *and* pretense. In *CFD* Maston is portrayed as a glib, unpleasant figure, who tries above all to place himself in the best light and smooth over uncomfortable facts. In *SWCIFC* Leamas' superiors engage in a plot which sacrifices one of their own by simple delusion. Whereas Fleming did not seem to be aware of the anachronism of his Bond saga, le Carré made anachronism the theme of *LGW*, in which he ridicules, but not without a touch of pity, the men who refuse to accept new times. The reader cannot help making comparisons with the nostalgia of George Smiley in *CFD* and reading *LGW* as an ironic comment on it. The general attitude among the members of Leclerc's stubborn organization is characterized by phrases like these: 'We all have to do our bit . . .

take risks. We all do. I did in the war, you know. You're too young to remember the war. This is the same job: we're fighting for the same thing' (13). But there are moments when the truth dawns on the members, as when Avery reflects: 'He recognized that it provided shelter from the complexities of modern life, a place where frontiers still existed' (72). It is the radical change of these frontiers which is the main theme of *STIG, TTSS, HS, SP* and *LDG*.

There is neat symmetry in le Carré's series of secret-agent stories, when the perspective is post-*SP*. In both *CFD* and *SWCIFC* le Carré takes his themes from the issues of the Cold War with incipient symbolic tendencies in the direction of moral allegory. In *LGW* and *STIG* le Carré takes his leave of the political tensions of the fifties and early sixties by destroying the old gods in the former, and by trying to sound out the new ones in the latter. In the trilogy the atmosphere of *détente* is dominant, and by their complex narrative structures they remind the reader of le Carré's two first secret-agent stories.

The near future in which the action of *STIG* takes place is a time of general unrest, both in Germany and in Britain. The unrest is not due to the East-West power balance, but is something coming from within, as it were, personified in the German leader, Karfeld. The man, it turns out, has an abhorrent past in Hitler's Germany, and the story may be read as a warning against a new Nazi Germany (*'And now it's all happening again'* (293)). However, it is more rewarding to see the figure of Karfeld as a representative of the reaction against the lack of rapport between government and the governed, a lack of rapport which lends itself easily to symbolic interpretation. The philosopher of the story, de Lisle, introduces this possibility in the following:

> Where was I? Artificial divisions. Yes. They absolutely bedevil us here. Always the same: in a grey world we reach frantically for absolutes. Anti-French, pro-French, Communist, anti-Communist. Sheer nonsense, but we do it time and again. That's why we're so wrong about Karfeld. So dreadfully wrong. We argue about *definitions* when we should be arguing about *facts* (125).

The search for absolute values was Dieter Frey's 'crime' in *CFD*, and dishonest pretense caused Leamas' death in *SWCIFC*. The

two kinds of opposition are related in Smiley's scepticism, his willingness to accept life as a compromise in analogy to man's nature.

There are many parallels between Fleming's Blofeld and Karfeld. They present forces opposed to the hero's virtues, but are raised above international politics. They have formed their own worlds of neurotic dimensions, only to be destroyed by the intervention of human *ratio*, a *ratio* which can only exist by negating the absolute in favour of scepticism and relativity. Blofeld is an international threat, and seen against the background of the GDR - England polarity of *CFD* and *SWCIFC*, le Carré in *STIG* makes national differences insignificant.

It will be remembered that the political background of the story is England's attempt to join the EEC by entreating the German government to overcome the resistance of France. On the concrete level the tension described in le Carré's first two stories between GDR and England is here transformed into one between England and Western Germany. When viewed, however, in the perspective of the Karfeld crisis, this antagonism disappears and unites the two nations in a shared deadlock:

> 'Both *Welt* and *Frankfurter Allegemeine* draw parallels with recent events in England; they refer specifically to the anti-Vietnam protests in London, the race riots in Birmingham and the Owner Tenants Association protests on coloured housing. Both speak of the widespread alienation of voters from their elected Governments whether in England or Germany. The trouble begins with taxation, according to the *Frankfurter*; if the taxpayer doesn't think his money is being sensibly used, he argues that his vote is being wasted as well. They call it the new inertia' (26).

Bonn becomes a symbol of a world gone mad, a world which can be led by the nose by a man like Karfeld, because it has not yet learnt to oppose the absoluteness of this ideas with rational compromise. Bonn is a town, a small town in Germany, but it symbolizes the numbness of lost humanity:

> Even the most obvious fact was curiously implausible; even the most gruesome event, by the time it had travelled to Bonn, seemed to have lost its flavour. He tried to imagine what it

> would be like to be beaten up by Halbach's students; to be slapped until your cheeks bled; to be shaved and chained and kicked . . . it all seemed so far away. Yet where *was* Cologne? Seventeen miles? Seventeen thousand (26-7)?

Turner's quest starts as a hunt for an ordinary thief, but his sense of opposition changes as he learns about Leo Haring's objective: to point out a serious flaw in Karfeld. Leo Harting is killed, however, before he can attain his goal: 'A man who had felt, and felt no more; an innocent, reaching beyond the square for a prize he would never find' (319). The conclusion of the story is deeply pessimistic. Karfeld is able to continue his 'crusade' over the dead body of his forgotten conscience. Why is it, then, that both Leo Haring and Turner are unsuccessful? Because basically they exhibit a flaw similar to Karfeld's: the longing for absolute values. Leo Harting is 'reaching beyond the square for a prize he would never find' (319), and Lumley, Turner's superior, penetrates to the core when he tells Turner: 'What are you looking for? Some bloody absolute. If there's one thing I really hate it's a cynic in search of God. Maybe a bit of failure is what you need' (50). Failure is required for man to be human, not a monster like Karfeld. It is also the ever-visible insecurity and doubt displayed by Fiedler in *SWCIFC* which makes him into a tragic and thus human figure, opposed to the successful monster Mundt. Sceptiscism, and understanding of life as consisting of facets of many patterns and colours, not all of them equally pleasant, is needed.

Six years elapsed between the publication of *STIG* and *TTSS*. The period between 1968 and 1974 was a period in which England succeeded in entering the EEC, and in doing so concluded a tradition of splendid isolation that had lasted for centuries. The Rhodesia interlude had weakened England's leading role in the Commonwealth even more, and the intensified *détente* between the super powers was beginning to show results in the early seventies in the SALT negociations. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 did not signal a new period of tension. The USA was beginning to realize the impossibility of victory in Vietnam, and warnings about energy crises on an international scale were heard.

In *TTSS* we meet George Smiley in a mood similar to James Bond's in his between-assignments periods. And like Bond, Smiley cannot help throwing the present in relief by reference to

the well-defined values of his youth: 'But the war, as Smiley sometimes had to remind himself, was thirty years ago' (23). Smiley's sense of opposition, however, has not changed since *CFD*. He is still deeply suspicious of the Establishment, which he sees as pervaded with pretense and shallowness: 'Martindale spoke in a confiding upperclass bellow of the sort which, on foreign holidays, had more than once caused Smiley to sign out of his hotel and run for cover' (23). Although retired, Smiley is possessed of the fear of revenge against him: 'the secret fear that follows every professional to his grave. Namely, that one day, out of a past so complex that he himself could not remember all the enemies he might have made, one of them would find him and demand the reckoning' (29). In *CFD* and *SWCIFC* Smiley and Leamas are clearly conscious of a social opposition between themselves and their superiors. In *TTSS* the political and social oppositions are combined into one, because Smiley is given the task of finding a traitor, a mole at top level in his former organisation. Ultimately, of course, the real opponent is the nation which has raised and feeds the 'sleeping' agent, but not until *HS* is Smiley able to point his finger at the man behind. Smiley must conduct his delicate investigation among people well-known to him, even some that he likes. But Smiley's assignment is also a personal ordeal. By going back in the files, Smiley must face his own past, and his investigation assumes the shape of a quest for his own true identity:

> They were extraordinary nights for Smiley alone up there on the top floor. Thinking of them afterwards, though his days were just as fraught and on the surface more eventful, he recalled them as a single journey, almost a single night. . . . As Smiley retraced path after path into his own past, there was no longer any difference between the two: forwards or backwards, it was the same journey and its destination lay ahead of him (113).

*TTSS* is a blown-up version of the technique, structure, and themes used in *CFD*, but the political atmosphere has changed, as Smiley realizes:

> Ten? Twelve years ago? It was not his night for understanding time. Among Smiley's jobs in those days was the vetting of

> recruits: no one was taken on without his nod, no one trained without his signature on the schedule. The cold war was running high, scalphunters were in demand, the Circus's residencies abroad had been ordered by Haydon to look out for likely material (35).

Le Carré began his writing career when the Cold War was on the wane, and by proposing realism instead of adventure he was able to create a stylistic parallel to an increasingly less tense political situation. But, by employing the theme of the mole, he was at the same time able to draw on the past with its comparatively clear issues of the Cold War. In le Carré's Karla trilogy, the tendency to turn away from political issues to the pursuit of private goals is the result partly of the mole's 'origin' in the past, partly of Smiley's quest for his own identity. Haydon's betrayal in *TTSS* is seen as an offence against a set of values rather than a political offence. Thus what used to be political opposition on a world scale, i.e. the mole's past, becomes the arena of a psychological struggle: the activities of the mole indicate the weak spots in the human mind; they provoke an ever renewed statement of honesty as the only thing really worth struggling for. It is characteristic that Peter Guillam, Smiley's helper, is outraged at Haydon's betrayal of le Carré's sense of humanistic values, not at Haydon's political persuasions, as it appears from Guillam's ruminations at this moment just before the catch:

> His butchered agents in Morocco, his exile to Brixton, the daily frustration of this efforts as daily he grew older and youth slipped through his fingers; the drabness that was closing round him; the truncation of his power to love, enjoy and laugh; the constant erosion of the plain, heroic standards he wished to live by; the checks and stops he imposed on himself in the name of tacit dedication; he could fling them all in Haydon's sneering face. Haydon, once his confessor; Haydon, always good for a laugh, a chat and a cup of burnt coffee; Haydon, a model on which he built his life. More, far more. Now that he saw, he knew. Haydon was more than his model, he was his inspiration, the torch-bearer of a certain kind of antiquated romanticism, a notion of English calling which - for the very reason that is was vague and understated and elusive - had made sense of Guillam's life till now. In that

> moment, Guillam felt not merely betrayed; but orphaned. His suspicions, his resentments for so long turned outwards on the real world - on his women, his attempted loves - now swung upon the Circus and the failed magic which had formed his faith. With all his force he shoved open the door and sprang inside, gun in hand (299).

Smiley's own reaction at the same moment is essentially similar, but Haydon's betrayal seen as a general negation of human values is emphasized by Smiley's unwillingness to accept Haydon as the only traitor:

> Then for a moment one part of Smiley broke into open revolt against the other. The wave of angry doubt which had swept over him in Lacon's garden, and ever since had pulled against his progress like a worrying tide, drove him now on to the rocks of despair, and then to mutiny: I refuse. Nothing is worth the destruction of another human being. Somewhere the path of pain and betrayal must end. Until that happened, there was no future: there was only a continued slide into still more terrifying versions of the present. This man was my friend and Ann's lover, Jim's friend and for all I know Jim's lover too; it was the treason, not the man, that belonged to the public domain.
>
> Haydon had betrayed. As a lover, a colleague, a friend; as a patriot, as a member of that inestimable body which Ann loosely called the Set: in every capacity, Haydon had overtly pursued one aim and secretly achieved its opposite. Smiley knew very well that even now he did not grasp the scope of that appalling duplicity; yet there was a part of him that rose already in Haydon's defence. Was not Bill also betrayed? Connie's lament rang in his ears: 'Poor loves. Trained to Empire, trained to rule the waves. . . . You're the last, George, you and Bill.' He saw with painful clarity an ambitious man born to the big canvas, brought up to rule, divide and conquer, whose visions and vanities all were fixed, like Percy's, upon the world's game; for whom the reality was a poor island with scarcely a voice that would carry across the water. Thus Smiley felt not only disgust; but, despite all that the moment meant to him, a surge of resentment against the institutions he was supposed to be protecting: 'The social contract cuts both ways,

> you know,' said Lacon. The Minister's lolling mendacity, Lacon's tight-lipped moral complacency, the bludgeoning greed of Percy Alleline: such men invalidated any contract: why should anyone be loyal to them (297)?

To Smiley, communism, Russia, Karla and Haydon are interchangeable names for the power in his own mind which is irreconcilable with his deep sense of human decency. If read symbolically, the conclusion of *TTSS*, in which Smiley's love for Ann merges with the aim of his assignment, makes good sense, because here the distinction between private and public ends. Smiley's effort is a step onwards in a never-ending struggle with whatever obscures the English tradition for individualism. The monomaniac nature of Smiley's quest in *HS* is emphasized again and again, particularly in the first hundred pages. There is no doubt about Smiley's target; his wish to reconstruct the intelligence organization from the bottom in order to regain the confidence of the Americans is no more than a pretext for his private act of faith: 'once George had got Karla under his skin, they said, there was no stopping him' (15). The picture of Karla hangs like an icon in Smiley's office:

> . . . a passport photograph by the look of it, but blown up far beyond its natural size, so that it had a grainy and some said spectral look. One of the Treasury boys spotted it during an ad-hoc conference about scrapping the operational bank account. 'Is that Control's portrait by the by?' he had asked of Peter Guillam, purely as a bit of social chit chat. No sinister intent behind the question. Well surely one was allowed to *ask*? Control, other names still unknown, was the legend of the place. He had been Smiley's guide and mentor for all of thirty years. Smiley had actually buried him, they said: for the very secret, like the very rich, have a tendency to die unmourned. 'No, it bloody well *isn't* Control,' Guillam the cupbearer had retorted, in that off-hand, supercilious way of his. 'It's Karla' (54).

The picture hangs there as a memento whose effect is not wholly unlike the prickings of conscience: a feeling unpleasantly acute, and always present:

> Even Lacon was a mite bothered by that picture. 'Now seriously, why do you hang him there George?' he demanded, in his bold, head-prefect's voice, dropping in on Smiley one evening on his way home from the Cabinet Office.
> 'What does he mean to you, I wonder? Have you thought about that one? It isn't a little macabre, you don't think? The victorious enemy? I'd have thought he would get you down, gloating over you all up there?'
> 'Well, Bill's *dead*,' said Smiley, in that elliptical way he had sometimes of giving a clue to an argument, rather than the argument itself.
> 'And Karla's alive, you mean?' Lacon prompted.
> 'And you'd rather have a live enemy than a dead one? Is that what you mean?'
> But questions of George Smiley, at a certain point had a habit of passing him by; even, said his colleagues, of appearing to be in bad taste (55).

A last pregnant passage emphasizes the interpretation of Karla as essentially a symbol of a threat to the individual mind, a power of negation and destruction. Guillam is watching Smiley at a conference in Hong Kong:

> It's his Karla expression, Guillam decided: the one that comes over him when he looks at the photograph. He catches sight of it, it surprises him and for a while he seems to study it, its contours, its blurred and sightless gaze. Then the light slowly goes out of his eyes, and somehow the hope as well, and you feel he's looking inward, in alarm (459).

In *SP* the pursuit of Karla is brought to an end. Smiley makes Karla defect, but Smiley's last line puts a question mark to the finality of the battle. It is, after all, a continuous battle, because as presented by le Carré, it is really an allegorical battle about the human situation. Smiley and Karla represent alternative existential possibilities. Connie, one of Smiley's old helpers, an expert Moscow-gazer, puts it to the point when she describes the two of them in this way: 'Twin cities, we used to say you were, you and Karla, two halves of the same apple' (182). Smiley himself reflects: 'He read as far into his own past as into Karla's and sometimes it seemed to him that the one life was merely the comple-

ment to the other: that they were causes of the same incurable malady' (247). The man that Smiley succeeds in defeating is also a man reduced to the last illusion of the illusionless man, love:

> It was no brute whom Smiley was pursuing with such mastery, no unqualified fanatic after all, no automaton. It was a man; and one whose downfall, if Smiley chose to bring it about, would be caused by nothing more sinister than excessive love, a weakness with which Smiley himself from his own tangled life was eminently familiar (308).

This is the real opposition in *SP*. But in this story a token interest in the nature of the political opposition is again introduced. The Russia that le Carré describes in *SP* is a country very much like Fleming's Russia. Ostrakova, the Russian *emigrée* whose perspective dominates the opening of the novel, sets the key in her description of a Soviet intelligence agent:

> The stranger blushed and ordered two ham omelettes with *frites*, and two Alsatian beers, all without consulting Ostrakova. Then he took himself to the men's room to repair his courage - confident, presumably, she would not run away - and when he returned his face was dry and his ginger hair combed, but the stink of him, now they were indoors, remined Ostrakova of Moscow subways, and Moscow tramps, and Moscow interrogation rooms. More eloquently than anything he could ever have said to her, that short walk back from the men's room to their table had convinced her of what she already feared. He was one of them. The suppressed swagger, the deliberate brutalisation of the features, the ponderous style in which he now squared his forearms on the table and with feigned reluctance helped himself to a piece of bread from the backet as if he were dipping a pen in ink - they revived her worst memories of living as a disgraced woman under the weight of Moscow's malevolent bureaucracy (11).

Le Carré also refers implicitly to the recent debate about psychiatric treatment beyond the Iron Curtain as an instrument partly of re-education, partly of punishment:

> In a privat psychiatric clinic in Switzerland said the priest,

> there was confined a young Russian girl who was suffering from an advanced state of schizophrenia; 'In the Soviet Union this form of ilness is not sufficiently understood,' said the priest. Grigoriev recalled being strangely touched by the priest's finality. 'Diagnosis and treatment are too often complicated by political considerations,' the priest went on. 'In four years of treatment in our hospitals, the child Alexandra has been accused of many things by her doctors. Paranoid reformist and delusional ideas ... And over-estimation of her own personality ... Over-inflation of her capabilities ... a bourgeois decadence in her sexual behaviour.' Soviet doctors have repeatedly ordered her to renounce her incorrect ideas. This is not medicine, said the priest unhappily to Grigoriev. 'It is politics. In Swiss hospitals, a more advanced attitude is taken to such matters.' It was essential that the child Alexandra should go to Switzerland (299).

However, such passages are not convincing as causes for Smiley's vindictive urge. They are too much in line with the picture of Moscow and the Soviet Union painted by Fleming in *FRWL*. Much more convincing is the description of Berlin in *SP*. The conviction is, to some extent, due to le Carré's expert grip of the Berlin atmosphere, but more, I suggest, to Berlin's symbolic significance as the point from where it is possible to see alternatives clearly and consequently where it is necessary to make decisions. These are Smiley's recollections of Berlin:

> He had known Berlin when it was the world capital of the cold war, when every crossing point from East to West had the tenseness of a major surgical operation. He remembered how on nights like these, clusters of Berlin policemen and Allied soldiers used to gather under the arc lights, stamping their feet, cursing the cold fidgeting their rifles from shoulder to shoulder, puffing clouds of frosted breath into each other's faces. He remembered how the tanks waited, growling to keep their engines warm, their gun barrels picking targets on the other side, feigning strength. He remembered the sudden wail of the alarm claxons and the dash to Bernauerstrasse or wherever the latest escape attempt might be. He remembered the fire brigade ladders going up; the orders to shoot back; the orders not to; the dead, some of them agents. But after tonight, he

> knew that he would remember it only like this: so dark you wanted to take a torch with you into the street, so still you could have heard the cocking of a rifle from across the river (319).

Also to Peter Guillam, waiting for Karla to defect, the Wall means a place of decision: 'Whatever reservations he might occasionally have about the Western freedom, here, at this border, like most other things, they stopped dead' (320). But what kind of decision does Smiley make? As I have suggested, the evil fought by Smiley is the tempting power of the absolute, a power which, if succumbed to leaves man as a sub-human being. Smiley's reaction to Connie's description of Karla and himself as 'twin cities' is violent: 'He was standing over her, incensed by her cheap and unjust comparison, knowing that neither Karla's methods nor Karla's absolutism were his own. He heard himself say *'No Connie'* (182)! But a negation is not enough. Smiley must aim at some possible point of weakness in Karla's armour:

> He thought of Karla again, and of his absolutism, which at least gave point to the perpetual chaos that was life's condition; point to violence, and to death; of Karla for whom killing had never been more than the necessary adjunct of a grand design. How can I win? he asked himself; alone, restrained by doubt and a sense of decency - how can any of us - against this remorseless fusilade? The plane's descent - and the promise of the renewed chase - restored him. There are two Karlas, he reasoned, remembering again the stoic face, the patient eyes, the wiry body waiting philosophically upon its own destruction. There is Karla the professional, so self-possessed that he could allow, if need be, ten years for an operation to bear fruit: in Bill Haydon's case, twenty; Karla the old spy, the pragmatist, ready to trade a dozen losses for one great win.
> And there is this other Karla, Karla of the human heart after all, of the one great love, the Karla flawed by humanity. I should not be deterred if, in order to defend his weakness, he resorts to the methods of his trade.
> Reaching in the compartment above him for his straw hat, Smiley happened to remember a cavalier promise he had once made concerning Karla's eventual downfall. 'No,' he had replied, in answer to a question much like the one he had just

> put to himself. 'No, Karla is not fireproof. Because he's a fanatic. And one day, if I have anything to do with it, that lack of moderation will be his downfall' (216).

Smiley's only possibility is to enter into the inner sanctum of love in his adversary's soul, and consequently exploit the last illusion which is Karla's motive. The reason why Smiley is unable to persuade himself about the success of his assignment is his realization of his own degradation. 'Who was then the gentleman?' he fantasied in *CFD*, quoting Webster. In *SP* Smiley's adversary finally appears as the man who is willing to admit his human frailty, and this, in a way, makes Karla equally victorious.

The shift of focus to another theatre in *LDG* suspends the East - West confrontation for the time being, and with the Israel - PLO conflict the reader is made aware that there are other and just as important issues as the deadlock between the two super powers. It is to the point that le Carré has the Silesian, the somewhat naive German security-police officer in charge of the investigation of the bomb explosion that opens the story, express his opinion of the matter:

> As to the ponderous Silesian - well, as he did not tire of reminding everyone who would listen to him, they were all looking for the same enemy, weren't they? The Reds, clearly (8).

Coming from this character, with his limited understanding of the situation, the statement implies a quite different actuality. Not that le Carré in this book blames any particular party for what is going on - he refrains from speculations about the larger political scenario - but the indication is that the Silesian's view, in accordance with his use of the dated term 'Reds', no longer applies.

There are heroes and villains in *LDG*, but the Israelis are a bit too unscrupulous for us to side with them wholeheartedly, and the PLO men are too romantic and attract too much sympathy for us to be wholly against them. In this story sympathy and antipathy are relative matters, with the need for survival as the redeeming force on either side.

If the reader sides with Israel in this story, it is partly because Israel despite the location in the Middle East is felt as part of the

western world, partly because le Carré's bias is slightly against the PLO, and in this bias it is possible to see a continuation of themes from previous stories. There is, however, one important reservation to be made: in *LDG* there is a significant distinction to be made between the efforts of Kurtz and his men on the one hand and the Israeli government hawks on the other. The policy of massive retribution favoured by Kurtz's employers is in contrast to the tension-lowering effects of Kurtz's clandestine and precisely aimed operations. How, then, does Kurtz differ from his PLO counterparts? To a superficial glance there is not much difference, but it is to be found in Kurtz's belief in moderation and his pragmatic attitude to Israel's situation. 'What can be achieved with as little violence as possible towards securing Israel's position in the Middle East?' seems to be the premise of his operations. In a world increasingly inclined to support Arab views since the beginning of the oil crisis in the early seventies, it is of immense importance for Kurtz not to offer any occasion for the criticism that inevitably follows the arbitrary waste of regular war. It is exactly the lack of moderation and the almost religious devotion to their cause that present the PLO in negative contrast to the dove Kurtz. There is a revealing passage where Kurtz warns Professor Minkel, a quasi-political figure who is the next item on the Palestinians' assassination list:

> According to information now available to us, it is evident that one of their less academic groups has singled you out as a dangerous moderate, capable of watering the pure wine of their cause (373).

And in contrast to the carefully planned precision of Kurtz's operations there are the messy and arbitrary effects of the PLO actions, like the one that starts the plot of *LDG*.

In le Carré's fictional universe the communist world poses a threat because communism aims at eliminating the significance of the individual. Already in his first stories it is emphasized that the opposition is communism seen as an absolutist ideology. There is no doubt that le Carré considers communism, and any absolutist ideology, a tragic misunderstanding of human nature. His presentation of an opposition which is essentially a contradiction of man's innate characteristics keeps all his stories together and explains the heroes' feeling of disgust not only for

their adversaries, but also for their colleagues in superior positions who work by guile and pretense. Le Carré is a moralist who believes in simple virtues like honesty and fairness and who acknowledges his debt to a liberal-conservative and pragmatic cultural tradition. To le Carré political absolutism and expediency are temptations to be overcome, because they appeal too easily to man's longing for order and system. His heroes' struggles take place in concrete settings, but they are emblematic of an inner struggle: an existential choice between accepting the human condition as it is with all its incompleteness and compromise, or preferring an ideology that negates the individual in favour of the mass.

# 10 Len Deighton: Adjustment

*The Presentation of Clichés*

Fleming's last stories express a somewhat abject appeal to remember times of glory and to recreate the communal effort so often relied on in times of national crisis. For what purposes the effort must be recreated remains, however, unclarified. To le Carré it seems obvious that the English decline, apart from uncontrollable international influences, is due to the inflexibility of the institutions which govern the nation. Deighton's attitude to England is a curious mixture of pompous seriousness and ironic distance. If James Bond is the dreamer and George Smiley the idealist, then Deighton's hero is, first and foremost, the pragmatist who, with very few reservations, is thoroughly sceptical about ideals and dreams. It is characteristic that the realization of the decline of England, which led Fleming into anachronism and le Carré into humanism on the defensive, has practical effects for Deighton: he attaches his hero to the Americans from *SS* (1974; also the year in which le Carré's *TTSS* was published) onwards. From this 'expatriate' position it is possible to keep the condition of England in a certain perspective, and to measure Britain and the USA against each other from a neutral stand, as it were.

Deighton is the one of the three authors who is least interested in commenting on the matters of topical interest in connection with the decline of England. As his observations are restricted to rather standard phrases about English virtues and faults, there is, except from the changing of loyalties in *SS*, virtually no development since *IF* from 1962.

The few passages in which criticism of the contemporary situation of England is expressed reveal a cliché-marked attitude to what Deighton sees as typically English peculiarities. The Americans are the accusers, but at the same time they reveal the

lack of individuality and tolerance which, by implication, must be assumed to be Deighton's defence of his nation. The efficiency problem, which has been generally recognized as mastered by the Americans and constantly bungled by the British, is lectured on by an American army brigadier, who sees inefficiency not only as an English, but also as a common European disease:

> 'You Europeans always think in terms of cartels. That's one of your worst failings. An American guy figures out how to make a ballpoint pen; he figures on selling them at a nickel a throw. In Europe when you first had speed-balls I saw them on sale nudging two English pounds! The difference is: the English guy makes three and a half *thousand* per cent profit, and his competitors steal his ideas, but the American with a two per cent profit sells so many that no one can catch up - he winds up a millionaire' (*IF*: 126).

Deighton's reliance on cliché is visible partly implictly in the fervour with which the hero pursues his duty to protect values to which he expresses an attitude at the same time loving and ironically overbearing; partly explicitly stated, as in this passage:

> 'Ypres,' said Hudson as he lit the cigarette, 'was that the site of a World War One battle?'
> 'One of the biggest,' I said. 'There's scarcely an Englishman that didn't have a relative die here.
> Perhaps a piece of Britain died here too' (*EPD*: 172).

The loving and ironically overbearing attitude is a hallmark of Deighton's style of writing. Among the numerous instances I have chosen one in which the characterization of the English way of life is put into the mouth of Vulkan, a German of a somewhat uncertain reputation:

> The British were deadly, Vulkan decided. He remembered his last visit there. The big hotel in Cromwell Road, and the rain that never stopped for a week. A nation of inventive geniuses where there are forty different types of electrical plug, none of which works efficiently. Milk is safe on the street but younger girls in danger, sex indecent but homosexuality acceptable, a land as far north as Labrador with unheated houses, where

> hospitality is so rare that 'landlady' is a pejorative word, where the most boastful natives in the world tell foreigners that the only British shortcoming is modesty (*FIB* : 49).

If we may judge from a single passage about Deighton's overall attitude to the situation in which England finds herself in the seventies, there is a sarcastic observation in *YS* when the hero and his future adversary are dining together in a posh London restaurant: 'We both watched the far end of the room, where two Socialist Cabinet Ministers exchanged jokes about their golf handicaps, and tips about the stock exchange' (8). The hero's contempt for the ministers is caused by their duplicity of behaviour. They are examples of the vice for which le Carré feels the deepest disgust: pretense. Unlike Fleming, Deighton here suggests something about the reason for the English decline, not just something about its symptom. Like le Carré, he finds the reason to be of a generally human nature rather than a specifically political deficiency, despite his naming of a political party.

### *Disillusionment*

Also in Deighton's stories the USA achieves significance both in terms of competition for international prestige and in terms of symbolizing an alternative approach to life as compared with the English. In the latter respect Deighton does not restrict himself to a purely critical attitude as le Carré does, but sees features which he obviously prefers to the English.

When Deighton looks to Continental Europe, he expresses views which are not in any way startling, because, like Fleming's, they are confirmations of traditional nationalistic prejudice, and occasionally he allows himself a comment on the social situation in a country. The Portugal of *HUW* is not only idyllic fishing villages and long beaches, but also a country with enormous social gaps.[1] About French police methods Deighton implies something quite similar to Vesper Lynd's remark in Fleming's *CR*;[2] about Switzerland the author manages to mention cleanliness, order and money in one paragraph, and no ironic distance is felt;[3] nor is it surprising that about Germany the word hardness remains as a key word.[4]

As I suggested above, Deighton's attitude to the USA is more complex than le Carré's. The scorn which he pours on the characteristics of the trans-Atlantic neighbour is countered by a pragmatic attitude which includes a certain admiration. This tension, however, is not fully developed until *SS* when the nameless hero becomes attached to the American Colonel Schlegel. In *IF* there is a discussion of general power politics, and it appears from it that the hero's attitude is somewhat suspicious towards American political wisdom. His manner reflects the English policy of the time, which was the result of a wish to gain the status of internationally acknowledged arbitrator between the super powers. The following conversation takes place on a Pacific atoll on the eve of an American nuclear test explosion. An American brigadier is in the process of offering his views:

> 'If we can make the biggest, damnedest, greatest bang, no one is going to give a damn about details. They are just going to stay well clear of Uncle Sam.'
> Finding something lacking in the audience reaction, he hastily added, 'And well clear of N.A.T.O. too. The whole free world in fact.'
> 'I don't think that's what Dalby means,' I said. I was always explaining to people what other people meant. 'He grants you the ability but is unsure if you will use it correctly.'
> 'You're going to give me the old "Europe: home of diplomacy" stuff, eh, boy?' The brigadier turned his huge grey head to face me. 'I thought Khrushcev tactics had brought you guys up to date on that stuff.'
> 'No, merely that Europeans have a firm and fearful knowlege of what happens when diplomats fail,' I told him. 'Diplomats and surgeons never fail,' said Dalby. 'They have too strong a union ever to have to admit it.'
> I went on. 'America develops a competitive attitude, Europe a compromising one. Americans are not noted for assuming failure to be possible before starting something.'
> 'Oh heck, relationships between any rival business outfits are the same as between nations.'
> 'I think that was true at one time, but now the destructive capabilities are such that, to extend your analogy, we must think in terms of cartels. Rivals must unite to live and let live' (125-6).

The hero's conciliatory tone agrees with the detached distance which is characteristic of him (cf. ch. 6), but it is not often that the hero engages in discussions on concrete political subjects. He prefers to draw conclusions from the interplay between nuclear power politics and world economy. The USA becomes the symbol of the excess of Western materialism, and it is not the nation as such that Deighton objects to, but its leading role in the combination of defence and general economy. His view comes out with the usual ironic twist in a passage which precedes the quotation above by a few pages. The hero has climbed the construction on which the bomb rests:

> I was standing atop the thing that all this was about, this atoll, this multi-million-dollar city, this apogee of twentieth-century achievement, this focus point of hemispherical animosity, this reason why a Leeds supermarket operator can't afford a third car, and a farmer in Szechwan a third bowl of rice. (108).[5]

To Deighton's hero, the West represents a way of life which is characterized by accelerating and unlimited consumerism. The hero never offers an alternative, but remains the detached and critical observer, as in these reflections on West Berlin in *FIB*:

> Brassieres and beer; whiskies and worsteds; great words carved out of colored electricity and plastered along the walls of the Ku-damm: a great, gobbling, yelling, laughing stage crowded with fat ladies and dwarfs, marionettes on strings, fire-eaters, strong men and lots of escapologists (24).

The hero's secondment to an American sister organization from *SS* onwards does not mean a change of his critical attitude to the consumer race led by the USA.

Deighton is able, by his new perspective, to consider England from a distance, so that the hero's detachment is given maximum possibilities by the maneouvre. From the author's point of view it is an opportune choice to have the hero join the Americans, as the plausibility of the action could hardly be retained against the background of Britain's decreasing importance.[6] In contrast to le Carré's chamber music Deighton's stories are always fully orchestrated symphonies. But the shift also means that at the same time as the hero remains the detached observer with a

critical attitude to the Western preference for convenience and consumer goods, he feels a growing sympathy for what may be considered basic American 'pioneer' virtues. The figures of Schlegel (*SS* and *YS*) and Mann (*TTLS*) represent the combination of flashy Americanism with fundamental honesty and drive. Compared with the hero's compromising attitude as expressed in his conversation with the American brigadier in *IF* (see quotation above), the dialogue below indicates the revised attitude:

> 'Champion saved your life,' Schlegel reminded me. 'If you can't hack it, just say you want out.'
> 'I know what kind of out I'd get,' I said bitterly.
> Schlegel nodded. 'And I'd countersign it,' he said. In a way I preferred Schlegel's New World directness: the others would have tried to persuade me that such a request would have had no effect on my career (*YS*: 16).

The hero's preference for the New World directness is a result of his realization that whereas Europe has taken over the flashy and superficial characteristics of the New World, it has not retained traditional strengths, and consequently it has become too weak and decadent to cope with present-day problems. The background of *YS* which is the oil crisis of the early seventies and the rising power of the Arab nations, offers an occasion to cast into relief the general condition of Europe. Bitter words of criticism are expressed by Champion, the hero's adversary. Champion secretly began to support the Arabs when he realized their future role and is know in the possession of a high military rank in the Egyptian army:

> When we [the Arabs] needed money to fight starvation, disease and poverty, Europe couldn't be bothered. But when they had to start walking to the railway station . . . then they put their hands in their pockets' (213).

On the evidence of the hero's usual critical attitude it is very likely that he agrees with Champion's condemnation.

Despite Deighton's exchange of the superior from an English to an American one, and despite the hero's growing sympathy for the American way of doing things, the main target for criticism remains the pernicious influence of a kind of society which has

made consumption an end in itself. It is as if the West as portrayed in *SS*, *YS* and *TTLS* has been split into two, not according to national border, as in Fleming's stories, but according to the extent to which consumerism is accepted as a basic rule of life. Schlegel's glittering surface is redeemed because underneath there is honesty and fairness (as far as allowed by his profession, at least); even Mann of *TTLS*, who is a far more brutal and insensitive type than Schlegel, symbolizes the positive alternative to the hero's former superiors, who all excelled in hypocrisy and pretense.

Fleming, le Carré and Deighton all use the West as more than mere background; the nations which are England's allies, or at least amicably disposed towards her, are given a status of a scale of values against which the values represented by England may be measured. Not surprisingly, Fleming's description of this part of the world is more concrete and builds much more on what may be assumed to reflect common prejudice than le Carré's and Deighton's descriptions. The use of a Western country as a symbol of what are, ultimately, ethical values, reaches a culmination in le Carré's *STIG*, in which it is difficult to visualize something concrete because of the ever-present symbolic overtones. It is furthermore characteristic that all three authors have given thematic priority to the USA above Europe. As a reflection of the international power struggle this priority is quite obvious, but in the fictional universes of the three authors' stories the demands of reality are countered by a compensation mechanism. Although it seems a matter of course, it must be emphasized that international *status quo* is secured by an English agent. Only in *SS*, *YS* and *TTLS* is the hero's significance reduced to being equal to an American agent's. On a more abstract level, the compensation mechanism is disguised as criticism of the trans-Atlantic ally. In Fleming's version, the criticism is a half-hidden accusation of lack of sportsmanship: the Americans have failed in their gentleman's agreement to exchange information. In le Carré's fictional universe, the USA is made to represent the contradiction of the traditionally English virtues which form the basis of Smiley's ethical conviction. Not only does the USA pay tribute to the future only, it also lacks the honesty and trust which is a major premise of interhuman relations. Deighton's attitude is ambivalent. In his stories, too, the USA symbolizes values which are presented as highly negative, but in Deighton's universe the USA

is associated with a way of life rather than given an international political significance. The American way of life is seen to consist of a surface and an essence. Deighton objects strongly to the first, but sees it as a way of life adopted by all Western countries, thus the USA is just one country among many to worship the god of consumerism. To the second he appears attracted. The reader glimpses this side of the USA partly in the acceptance of its leading role in *SS, YS* and *TTLS*, partly in the hero's manifest preference of New World directness.

In their wry and reluctant admission of American superiority Fleming and le Carré share a premise, but also in their particular presentation of the compensation mechanism they are closer to each other than Deighton is to either of them. Fleming and le Carré are repelled by what they feel to be encroachments on virtues symbolized by the English (aristocratic) tradition, and both repay by making their heroes the ultimate victors. Deighton, however, reveals a much more pragmatic attitude in his acceptance of US superiority, and the implicit criticism which there is in the praise of New World directness is refreshing after a diet of Fleming and le Carré. Neither Fleming nor le Carré are much concerned with the Americanization which is regularly experienced by most European readers. Despite the obvious differences between Fleming and le Carré, there is a certain resemblance in their attitudes towards the USA: an emphasis on a state of competition, which implies equality between the two 'partners', and, eventually, a demonstration of lack of fair play from the Americans. Whereas this is a trait which is shared by Fleming and le Carré, Fleming and Deighton are quite close to each other in their conventionally prejudiced view of other friendly nations, especially in Europe; these are, of course, only general tendencies in the stories of the three authors. There are exceptions to the similarities, but they represent the most frequently employed responses to the formula feature of giving England a more exalted status than reality may allow for.

It seems to be a formula feature that the positive values pointed to as fundamental for the desired, but purely hypothetic, state of the nation, all tend to become associated with the past in some way. Fleming is the one of the three to evoke the past most forcibly in the concrete terms of the Empire that was. However, to him the idea of Empire is a manner of behaviour rather than a canon of values. He may echo a widespread feeling of increasing

slackness in society among his many readers, but he never succeeds in persuading the critical reader of the blessings of the past, because his nostalgia remains a wish for the shell, not the core. To le Carré the past is inextricably tied to a belief in the integrity of man, a time when a promise was a promise. The present has become a time of bewilderment and insecurity in politics owing to disintegration of basic human values. Deighton's attitude to the past is at the same time sentimental and ironic. He is obviously fond of the Rupert-Brooke approach to martial honour (cp. the quotation about Ypres above), and his enumeration of 'standard' English virtues provides a foundation of existential values which, despite the hero's fondness for phrasal expressions, resemble le Carré's ideals very much. And like le Carré, he seems to find fault with the present because of its apparent tendency towards surface and pretense. Perhaps Deighton's problem is a problem of expressing what le Carré is so good at. However suave, Deighton's use of irony cannot quite conceal an approach to the values of the past more stereotyped than le Carré's.

### *Simplicity Regained*

In Fleming's fictional universe there is a simple opposition pattern. Bond's target may be SMERSH or SPECTRE, and we may even interpret his adversary in an allegorical perspective, but Bond remains the faithful servant of his country, represented by M. Le Carré's presentation of the opposition, with its obvious symbolic overtones (v. preceding ch.), places the hero uneasily between two adversaries, communism and the Establishment. In Len Deighton's stories the hero finds himself in a similar situation, as expressed in *IF*:

> The pub across the road had just opened. I downed a couple of Dubonnet and bitter lemons. What chance did I stand between the Communists on the one side and the Establishment on the other - they were both outthinking me at every move (70).

As I suggested in Chapter 6, Bond and Smiley go about their duties with the devotion of gentlemen amateurs, whereas Deighton's hero sees his job through the disillusioned eyes of the

meritocratic employee. The attitude of Deighton's hero towards communism is characterized by Bond-like clichés and is never quite convincing, and he is on professional and friendly terms with Colonel Stok of the Soviet counter-espionage organization. His attitude towards his own organization is marked by distrust of his superior's motives, a sharp eye for possible selfishness among those who have government power, and badly concealed annoyance mingled with jealousy towards the members of the Establishment. Deighton's stories lack the consistency of delineating the political and ideological opposition that we find in Fleming and le Carré. The hero's sense of social alienation seems to cut him off from any deeply felt commitment of a nationalistic kind.

Whereas le Carré responded to the new political climate of the sixties by formulating a general ethic, Deighton's response may be interpreted as the non-constructive alternative to le Carré's constructive effort. Deighton's hero opts out, but this does not mean that he allows himself to be pushed around at random. Like Hammett's and Chandler's big-city heroes Deighton's hero is the knight-errant who fights evil on a mercenary basis, as it were.

Although Deighton's hero is fond of his England background, he does not leave the reader in any doubt about the dangers that he sees to lurk in a modern welfare state like England. With the irony of paradox Deighton makes the mass society, whose values a popular genre like the secret-agent story is usually considered to confirm and support, a main target of his criticism.

An essential thematic strain in all Deighton's stories is the complexity and inertia of the organization to which the hero belongs. Although employed by an intelligence service whose activities are supposed to be directed unambiguously against the potential enemy, the hero invariably finds himself entangled in plots which surpass his understanding. The theme of the hero-as-decoy so superbly handled by le Carré in *SWCIFC* is a characteristic of all Deighton's stories. His hero is constantly engaged in the struggle with the official adversary following the developments of international tension, but in addition, and more important, he attempts to understand the forces of which he is the agent. The effort to understand, and, in consequence, to set things right in accordance with his own sense of honesty and proportion, constitutes the hero's real opposition in terms of snobbery, corruption and philistinism. In *IF* Deighton's hero is

sent out on a series of fool's errands, whose nature is only fully realized by him on his discovery of his superior's duplicity. At a rather late stage he discovers that he is being used by Dalby as a red herring, at the same time as he is approaching some light in his original assignment to establish a case against Jay, a suspected kidnapper of top-level English scientists. The sum total of all this is that soon he finds himself hunted by Jay, the CIA and the English police for a murder planted on him. Eventually he finds out that the Soviet Union is responsible for Dalby's treason as well as for Jay's activities. Dalby committed his treason for money, Jay as an act of ideological faith. But whereas money is a 'legitimate' motive for treason, Jay's explanation/defence of himself shortly before he is taken is interesting. Jay's statement is a popularized rendering of Marx' catastrophe theory, but the hero is not attending to the lecture. He is listening to the radio for news that may concern his personal fate:

> I was silent. Jay leaned forward from where he was sitting in the big black-leather armchair. 'You can't really believe that the Communist countries are going to collapse and that this strange capitalist system will march proudly on.' He tapped my knee. 'We are both sensible, objective men, with, I think I might say, wide political experience. Neither of us could deny the comfort of it all.' He stroked the rich leather. 'But what has capitalism to offer? Its colonies that once were the goose that laid the golden egg, they are vanishing. The goose has found out where to sell the egg. The few places where a reactionary government has suppressed the socialist movement, why, in those places those governments are merely propped up by fascist force, paid for in Western gold.'
> Behind Jay's voice I could hear the radio playing very quietly. An English jazz singer was even now Gee Whizzing, Waa Waa and Boop boop booping in an unparalleled plethora of idiocy. He noticed that I was listening, and his attack veered. What of the capitalist countries themselves? What of them, then, racked with strikes, with mental illness, with insular disregard for their fellow men? On the brink of anarchy, their police beset by bribes, and by roving bands of overfed cowards seeking an outlet for the sadism that is endemic to capitalism, which is in any case licenced selfishness. Who do they pay their big rewards to? Musicians, aviators, poets, mathematicians?

> No! Degenerate young men who gain fame by not understanding music or having talent for singing' (170–1).

My point is that the hero does not seem provocable by a speech like this; indeed, he is quite in agreement with Jay's opinions on modern popular music. The hero's interest is a purely understandable selfish interest to extricate himself. Fleming's and le Carré's heroes usually raise to the bait of ideological discussion, but to Deighton's hero ideological and ethical theory is but part of the opaqueness that surrounds him on all sides other than his purely professional interests and contacts. In *BDB* and *SS* there is mutual understanding between the hero and Colonel Stok, in *IF* the hero secures an exit by nursing sympathetic relations with a couple of Jay's former helpers. The problem is that playing the game on so many levels simultaneously may result in playing the game for its own sake. This is what Jay suggests when the hero asks him who killed his old friend Charlie Cavendish. Jay's excuse is more than an attempt to free himself from the whole burden. Deighton's ironic touch here serves to underline a distinction between the nature of real issues which are lost sight of in the progression of this story and the game-within-the-game that supersedes reality.

In all Deighton's stories the pseudo-reality of the game-within-the-game is employed as the target of the author's critical irony. The complicated plot of *HUW* revolves on a combined narcotics and political assignment, and one of the numerous ramifications is a Cabinet Minister's war-time fascist sympathies. In the course of his investigations the hero is up against a present-day Portuguese fascist who represents a parallel to the more extremist elements of his Establishment employers. The fascist da Cunha is a farcical porjection of the hero's social antipathies, and he is allowed to remain a farcical figure because of his foreign nationality. The hero can afford not to take da Cunha's convictions too seriously:

> 'You have come a long way to see me. I appreciate that. I am given to understand that you are highly placed in the Civil Service of your country. Whether you come offering good or threatening ill does not change the compliment you pay me. I shall give you advice to take back to your government: "Don't destroy the middle classes!"'

> I thought of taking that message back to the government of my country. I imagined trotting into Dawlish and saying. 'We are not to destroy the middle classes.' I looked at da Cunha and said 'Yes' (215).

But da Cunha's belief in the redeeming virtues of the middle classes nonetheless poses the real threat in this story, as it turns out that there is an identity between the farcical da Cunha and the Cabinet Minister in their symbolic significance as the objects of the hero's contempt. Da Cunha declares that: 'The new Europe will be a middle-class Europe. Run by people with taste, run not by jumped-up trade unionists and terrorist rabble-rousers but by men of culture, breeding and taste' (215). Middle-class culture, breeding and taste was experienced with obvious distaste by the hero in his meeting with the Minister prior to his conversation with da Cunha:

> The butler led me along soft corridors, men in red coats and tight trousers looked quietly down from the dark paintings lost in a penumbra of coach varnish. Mr. Smith was seated behind a table polished like a guardsman's boot. A slim eighteenth-century clock with frail marquetry panels paced out the silence, and from the Adam fireplace a coal fire ran punk fingers across the moulded ceiling. On Smith's table a lampshade marshalled the light on to heaps of papers and newspaper clippings. Only the crown of his head was visible. He spared me the embarrassment of interrupting his private study. The butler motioned me to a hostile Sheraton chair (138).

Eventually Deighton's hero finds out about his own status as a mere decoy and *agent provocateur* ('You didn't understand your role, my boy, . . . we didn't want you to *discover* anything. Somehow we knew that you would make them do something indiscreet' (226)), and he realizes his own organization's double moral standard. His assignment har resulted in averting a threat against the English government from an international fascist movement, and thus status quo is regained. More important, however, his assignment has meant added power to his own organization. The matter is no longer the fight of good against evil, manifested as England against fascism, but of one kind of evil

outwitting another, adding a new facet to the game-within-the-game theme:

> 'When will Smith be arrested?' I asked.
> 'Arrested?' said Dawlish. 'What an extraordinary question; why would he be arrested?'
> 'Because he is a corner-stone of an international Fascist movement dedicated to the overthrow of democratic government.' I said it patiently, even though I knew that Dawlish was deliberately leading me on.
> Dawlish said, 'You surely don't imagine that they can put everyone who answers that description in jail. Where would we find room for them, and besides, where would the Bonn government get another Civil Service?' He gave a sardonic smile and tapped the pile of documents. 'Our friends here are much more useful where they are - as long as they know that H. M. Government have this little pile in Kevin Cassel's cellar' (225).

In *FIB* the hero gets his man, but only because he finds himself in a situation in which self-defence is called for. As for any official action against Mohr, one of the hero's adversaries, his superior repeats himself from *HUW*:

> 'Shall we try and get that bastard Mohr?' I said. 'You are a callow youth.' said Dawlish, 'If we tell Bonn he is a war criminal, either they won't claim him at all or else they will give him some nice fat government job. You know what always happens' (226-7).

In the multi-level plot structure of this story the political opposition between England and the Soviet Union is indicated only by the story's setting in divided Berlin. The discussions between the hero and his Soviet counterpart, Colonel Stok, are marked by a certain respect and understanding, as observed by the hero in conversation with his superior: 'Stok and I are in the same business - we understand each other only too well' (229). Their relationship is based on professional agreements, and their talks are used by Deighton to point out weaknesses in Western capitalism. The reader is left with the impression that the devil's advocate, in the shape of Colonel Stok, has a better case than the hero. Stok tells the hero a parable: 'There is a village in Africa

where the tribesmen stand in the deep crocodile-infested water, fishing. They send the fish they catch for barter to the next village where the main industry is manufacturing wooden legs' (89). Stok's explanation of the tension over Berlin is an application of the vicious circle of the parable:

> 'You know how much twenty-one billion dollars is, English? It's what the U.S. Government spent on armaments in one year. Do you know who gets it, English? The General Dynamics Corporation got one and a quarter billion; and just four other corporations got about a billion each. That's real money, isn't it?'
> I said nothing.
> Stok said, 'Over eighty percent of the twenty-one billion dollars is spent without the big businesses doing any competitive bidding. Are you following me?'
> 'I'm way ahead,' I said. 'But what's it to do with you?'
> 'Tension here in Berlin is a lot to do with me - it's my job. Your military men are pushing that tension as hard as they can go. I'm trying to reduce the tension in every way I can.'
> 'You don't reduce it,' I said. 'You play a tune on it like a gypsy minstrel.' Stok sighed histrionically.
> 'Look, my friend. Next year, lots of your military friends will be retiring into big capitalist businesses that make armaments. Most of them have signed the contracts already . . .'
> 'Wait a minute,' I said.
> 'I won't wait a minute,' said Stok. 'We know what's happening. We spend a lot of trouble and money finding out. The type of job your generals retire into depends upon how many big orders for armaments they place. A state of tension makes it easy to order guns. Gehlen provides the tension - it increases the demand - just like an advertising agency. That's the kind of people who are twisting you around their fingers' (90).

Deighton's crusade against the power of the Establishment, in England and elsewhere, is an expression of a sceptical attitude towards the excesses of Western liberalism. In *IF, HUW* and *FIB* the target of his criticism is the willingness of those in power to accept expediency as the final solution. In spite of the farce and fantasy of *BDB* there is also in this story a serious concern about a potentially self-destructive element of the liberal 'ideology'.

It is possible to read *BDB* as a warning against the dangers of the electronic revolution. But General Midwinter rather than his machine poses the real threat. The movement created and headed by the general is a horribly systematized version of McCarthyism, even to the extent of including a private mercenary force. The hero's job is to destroy this organization because of the risk it causes to the equilibrium of the super powers. But the real thematic concern is a continuation of the struggle against the excessive-liberalism-into-fascism theme that I suggested his previous stories to express.

General Midwinter himself is a nightmarish version of the traditional American belief in private enterprise. The general takes it upon him to conduct a private war against the Soviet Union as well as against the increasing bureaucracy of the Western welfare state. He has to be stopped because he endangers the stability in the power relations - the formula requirement - but more important, he must be stopped because his idea of liberalism has reached the point where it turns to either fascism or anarchy. The general's point of view is expressed in a lecture to the hero, who has gained access to the organization under cover:

> 'There are only two sorts of mind left today. Either you are going to have everything done for you by the Government, like you are some sort of invalid. Either you are going to have everything from diapers to Derbys made in some state factory, and your body'll wind up on some dump where they make fertilizer . . .'.
>
> I said, 'Spending my afterlife as fertilizer is the least of my problems.' Either Midwinter didn't hear or didn't choose to. His voice went on,' . . . or you believe that everyone is free to fight for what he believes is right' (174-75).

There can be no doubt that the USA symbolizes a threat of the same degree, although of another kind than the political contrast of the Soviet Union. The figure of General Midwinter is a symbol of liberalism having run amok. Another aspect is the tendency towards the consolidation of a *kitsch* culture. Harvey Newbegin, an agent of the general's, explains his defection to the Soviet Union as caused by his having been fed up with articificality.

> I don't need Walt Disney and Hollywood, Detroit and Madison

> Avenue to tell me how to dress and think and hope. But they write the script for the American dream. Every night Americans go to bed thinking that when they wake up tomorrow there will be no Red China. They dream that the Russians will have finally seen reason. Time, Life and Reader's Digest will all have Russian-language editions and Russian housewives will be wearing stretch pants and worrying about what kind of gas stations have clean toilets and whether Odessa will buy the Mets (218).

As in *FIB*, the hero and Colonel Stok conduct bird's-eye-view conversations about the relative merits of communism and capitalism in *BDB*. It is significant, however, that in both stories these discussions are of an academic nature. In the level of abstraction and the urbanity of tone there is none of the emotional insistence so typical of le Carré's heroes' response to communism. Deighton's hero can afford the academic distance, because he does not feel the organic attachment to a set of traditional virtues as Smiley does. Smiley's acceptance of fragmentation and compromise grows out of his idea of humanistic individualism as rooted in the positive aspects of Western liberalism. Deighton's hero, a social exile whose background makes Smiley's world inaccessible and forbidding, accepts compromise for no profounder reason that it is common sense, and, in addition, he remains sceptical towards high-flown ideas and ideologies. The individualism of Deighton's hero is not part of a deliberately existential attitude to life, but of a condition forced upon him without any real alternative. There is no doubt that the hero has developed his awareness of this situation into an almost neurotic urge to bring down other people's obsession with vague generalizations of ideals and ideologies to repressions of feelings of frustration and insufficiency. All these aspects appear from one of the hero's conversations with Colonel Stok in *BDB*:

> 'Harvey Newbegin was your friend?! Stok asked.
> 'To tell you truthfully,' I said, 'I don't know.'
> 'He had little faith in the Western world.'
> 'He had little faith in anything,' I said. 'He thought faith a luxury.'
> 'In the Western world it is a luxury,' Stok said. 'Christianity tells you to work hard today for little or no reward, and

> tomorrow you will die and awake in paradise. Faith like that is a luxury.'
> I shrugged. 'And Marxism says work hard today for little or no reward, and tomorrow you will die and your children will awake in paradise. What's the difference?'
> Stok didn't answer, he tugged at his chin and watched the crowded pavements. Finally he said, 'A high official of your Christian Church spoke at a conference recently. He said what they have most to fear is not a Godless world but a faithless Church. This is the problem of Communism too. We do not fear the petty psychopathic hostility of your Midwinters, if anything they help us, for our people become at once more unitied when they understand the hate directed towards us. What we have to fear is the loss of purity within ourselves - the faithlessness of leadership, an abandoning of principle for the sake of policy. In the West all your political movements from the muddled left to the obsessional right have learned how to compromise their original - perhaps naïve - objectives for the sake of the realities of power. In Russia we too have compromised.' He stopped talking.
> 'Compromise is no pejorative word,' I said. 'If we choose between compromise and war, I'll take compromise.' Stok said, 'I am not talking about a compromise between my world and the West; I am talking about a compromise between Russian socialism today - powerful, realistic and worldly - and the Russian socialism of my youth and even my father's youth - uncompromising, idealistic, pure.'
> 'You are not talking about socialism.' I said. 'You're talking youth. You are not regretting the passing of the ideals of your boyhood, you're regretting the passing of your boyhood itself' (230).

In Deighton's last story of the sixties the Soviet Union is replaced by China in the role of opposition. With the relative success of the *détente* in Soviet-American relations, acute political crises gave way to drawn-out negotiations with an ensuing lack of dramatic public appeal. At the same time the traditional secrecy surrounding China offered the alien-land atmosphere required by the formula. (Not until 1977 did le Carré use China, and at that time Deighton had appealed to another shift of topical interest in *YS* (1975)). With *EPD* Deighton signals a less ambiguous distinction

between friend and foe than in his previous four stories. Given the chance of changing the brand of communism away from the Soviet kind described by Stok in the quotation from *BDB* above to a more idealistic and, counting by adherents, much more menacing version, Deighton responds to a probable craving for innovation. The new and more absolute distinction appears from a conversation between the hero and his adversary:

> 'I don't think you are a true Marxist at all,' I said. 'You merely relish the downfall of the West. A Marxist at least comforts himself with the idea of the proletariat joining hands across national frontiers, but you Chinese Communists relish aggressive nationalism just at a time when the world was becoming mature enough to reject it.'
> 'I relish nothing. I just record,' said Datt. 'But it could be said that the things of Western Europe that you are most anxious to preserve are better served by supporting the real, uncompromising power of Chinese communism than by allowing the West to splinter into internecine warrior states. France, for example, is travelling very nicely down that path; what will she preserve in the West if her atom bombs are launched? We will conquer, we will preserve. Only we can create a truly world order based upon seven hundred million true believers' (205).

Deighton published his *EPD* in 1967 and le Carré his *STIG* in 1968. Both stories may be considered expressive of thematic reorientation: le Carré choosing symbolic complexity and Deighton a simpler and more absolute distinction between the good and the bad side. Deighton's reorientation may be interpreted in the light of the reader's waning interest in the international situation because of lack of sensational crises to feed his interest.

I comparison with le Carré's trilogy of the seventies, Deighton's three 'American' stories from the same period seem much less unified. What they do share, however, is a portrayal of the Soviet Union which reminds the reader more of Fleming rather than of Deighton's earlier stories. The Cold-War atmosphere reintroduced by Deighton in his stories from the seventies may be interpreted as a compensation by means of an almost aggressive simplification of political developments for reality's lack of the qualities of simplicity and sensationalism. The harsher picture of

the Soviet Union is accompanied by the presentation of a more staid hero than the rebel we get to know in the sixties stories. The hero is still caught in the web of his own organization, and still it requires a considerable effort of him to fight that as well as the official adversary. But he has resigned himself wholly to his role as the professional employee. In this capacity he will make his ironic observations on the social mores of his betters, but the ardour is lost. Deighton's hero of the seventies is an agent who has reconciled himself to a view of the world based on what appears as the natural disillusionment of his increasing age.

Compared with reality, the hero's distance and simplification of events may be seen as the author's response to the diffuse nature of the international relations of the seventies, and introduction of an American superior as a symptom of England's growing insignificance. This new feature, however, also contributes to a clearly felt dichotomy pattern in the three stories under consideration. The struggle is now clearly one between the USA and the Soviet Union, and the hero's new expatriate situation leaves him in a position of 'irresponsibility' which is so well suited to his ironic attitude.

Deighton's return to a Cold-War-like attitude to the Soviet Union and, in general, towards a simpler pattern of political opposition is obvious from the hero's reflections in *SS* (1974):

> Well, it had to be the Russians, I thought. There was something inimitable in it. Just like the business of forcing us off the road and then waiting in The Bonnet to show us who they were. Just like the intelligence trawlers that followed NATO ships, and the big Soviet Fleets that harassed us at sea. It was all part of the demonstration of their resources and their knowledge, an attempt to bully opponents into ill-considered action (70–1).

The political opposition faced jointly by the hero and his new American superior, Schlegel, is the threat posed towards the equilibrium of international relations by a possible German reunification. Such a step would endanger what remained of England's position, financially as well as politically. The implications of a reunification are discussed in a rather long conversation between various people of importance and power. It is overheard by the unparticipating hero and filtered by his usual

callous irony. Although also in this story the hero shows his distance to the people of his own organization who 'out-class' him, the main target of his antagonism is the Soviet Union. Disliking his own role as a decoy (as in *IF* and *HUW*), the hero feels a greater sense of unity with his own people than in Deighton's sixties stories.

An extension of the East-West tension into a North-South tension is presented in *YS* (1975). Also in this story the hero's loyalties have been more firmly connected with England/USA. The topical interest in *YS* is the by then fully realized worldwide energy crisis. Against the background of the energy crisis Deighton constructs a plot involving treason and defection, the staple diet of the modern secret-agent story.

Whereas *SS* may be read as symptomatic of the reconciliation of an extremely facetted political reality with a simple dichotomy pattern, *YS* is a much more ambitious attempt to do justice to contemporary international issues.

Claude, a war-time Gestapo officer and a minor character of *YS*, makes an attempt to outline the political situation of the mid-seventies to the hero in terms of personal developments:

> Yes, we're all fighting a new war: the battle lines have been drawn afresh. Frankel is a racist, I've become a champion of parliamentary government, you are working to defeat the Communists you once fought alongside, and Champion has become an active anti-semite (139).

The new war is seen against the background of the old war, the Second World War, at which time the hero represented views similar to those he now opposes:

> Claude smiled. 'I can remember a few nights during the war when you were telling us all how much you favored theoretical Communism.'
> 'Yes,' I said. 'Well, almost everyone's in favor of *theoretical* Communism. Maybe even those bastards in the Kremlin' (141).

The hero's modified views are important for the light they throw on the kind of opposition that the Soviet Union is made to represent in Deighton's fictional universe at this time. A development has taken place since the academic exchanges of half-

committed political opinions between the hero and Colonel Stok in the sixties. Then it was the clash of ideologies. Now it is a question of misguided idealism, of a social experiment gone wrong and berserk at the same time, and therefore in need of restraint. This state of affairs also chimes in with the hero's reliance on his conscience as his ethical sighpost (v. ch. 4). His objective is the destruction of a political opponent at the same time as it is an effort to live in accordance with ideals. This double aspect is brought out clearly in Frankel's explanation of his present position to the hero:

> 'I'm not a Communist any more,' he said. 'You realize that, I suppose.'
> 'I'd detected some disenchantment,' I said.
> 'Did the czars ever dream of such imperialism? Did the Jew-baiters dream of such support? The Russians have us all on the run, Charles, my boy. They urge the Arabs to deny us oil, they pass guns and bombs and rocket launchers to any group of madmen who will burn and maim, and blow up the airports and hijack the planes. They brief the trade unionist to lock up the docks, halt the trains and silence the factories.'
> I reached for my coffee and drank some.
> 'Make your throat dry, does it?' he said. 'And well it might. Do you realize what's happening? In effect we'll see a movement of wealth to the Arab countries comparable to the movement of wealth from India to Britain in the eighteenth century. And that generated the Industrial Revolution! The U.S.S.R. has now become the biggest exporter of armaments in the world. Algeria, Sudan, Morocco, Egypt. Libya - I won't bother you with the list of non-Arab customers - are buying Soviet arms as fast as they can spend. You're asking me if I help the Israelis! Helping the Israelis might be the West's only chance to survive' (133).

Paradoxically Steve Champion, the hero's old friend and present adversary represents an attitude towards international politics which seems richer in perspective than the hero's somewhat feeble defence of the West. It is noteworthy that Champion's aims and ideals are in agreement with the most recent international policies in the interrelationship between the West and the oil countries, whereas the hero sees Champion's change of sides as

mere opportunism. Champion here explains his investments in Arab countries to the hero:

> 'And you put that money into the fruit and veg.'
> 'Much more than money ... soil analysis, a professor of botany, a program of seeding techniques, long-term contracts for the farmers, minimum price guarantees for seasonal workers, refrigerated warehouses, refrigerated transport and contracted refrigerated shipping. I put a lot of money into the Arab countries.'
> 'And now they have oil as well.'
> 'Oil is a one-crop economy,' said Champion.
> 'A gilt-edged one,' I said.
> 'That's what they said about coffee and tea and rubber,' said Champion. 'I truly believe that North Africa must trade with Europe, right across the board. The Arab countries must have a stake in Europe's well-being. The economies must link, otherwise Africa will let Europe die of inflation.'
> 'I never thought of you as a crusader, Steve' (12).

If *YS* indicates a reorientation of the lines of opposition in Deighton's fictional universe which is in accordance with contemporary international developments, *TTLS* is a return to the pattern of *SS*. In comparison with *YS, SS* and *TTLS* are relatively unfacetted in their presentation of relations between England/America and the Soviet Union. In both stories the hero is used by his superiors as an only half-informed decoy to ensure a desired development of the action, and in both stories the Soviet Union is represented in the role of the aggressive conspirator in a manner that reminds the reader of Fleming's stories. It is possible for Deighton, however, to retain a degree of plausibility in spite of his reliance on primary colours to paint the picture of the adversary. By placing the English hero in a satellite's orbit round his American masters (in *SS* Schlegel and in *TTLS* Mann), Deighton is at liberty to create a certain distance between his hero and his hero's superior. Both Schlegel and Mann are described as almost caricatures of the usual European idea of Americans with heavy emphasis on their will to success no matter the costs. Implied in this view of Americans is a directness in approach that disregards any finer distinctions as merely obstacles. In other words, when Schlegel or Mann voice their dislike of the Soviet Union, as

illustrated in the passage below, a double purpose has been served: the world has been cut neatly into two according to an extremely simplified distinction and through the hero's distance the simplicity of the American view is excused. In this passage Mann is leaning heavily on Bekuv, a Soviet scientist who has defected to the West:

> 'You've got it a little bit wrong haven't you, Professor? The U.S. immigration department has no executioners on its payroll. These executions you want to make me responsible for will be carried out after you return. They'll be carried out by your little old K.G.B. comrades. Remember the K.G.B., Professor? Those wonderful people who gave you the Gulag Archipelago.'
> 'You have never lived in the Soviet Union, or you would know how little choice a man has. The K.G.B. ordered me to work for them - I did not volunteer to do so.'
> 'You're breaking my heart, Professor' (149).

Deighton's obvious difficulties in his 'American' stories of keeping a balance between adventure and realism illustrates very well one of the major problems inherent in the formula. Building on two literary traditions, novel and romance (v. ch. 3), the genre is placed between a demand for realism and the ever-present possibility of 'regressing' to the conventions of the older literary kind with its origins in quest myth. It is significant that all three authors, more or less successfully, give evidence of this double inheritance, particularly in their treatment of international conflict.

Fleming's response to incipient *détente* was to escape into pure romance, leaving reality behind as mere decoration. Even though his 'escape' may appear naive, there is consistency in his unambiguous appeal to the reader's craving for adventure.

Le Carré has turned both novel and romance to advantage in his stories, especially in his seventies trilogy: combining Smiley's romance-like quest for Karla with a background of plausible presentations of international conflicts in the constant light of Smiley's ethical commitment, le Carré creates stories with an admirable consistency on all levels.

It is obvious that in his progress towards simplicity in his presentation of international conflict, Deighton approaches the conventions of romance in the way of Fleming. Unlike Fleming,

however, he never makes the complete move. Where le Carré succeeds, essentially because of the all-pervasive quality of Smiley's ethical motivation, Deighton's later stories fail, because in them the contrast between romance fantasy and novel realism is too crude to convince the reader of a complete and consistent fictional universe.

# Epilogue

# 11 Formula and Evaluation

The idea of the formula as an evaluative yardstick presupposes the reader's awareness of the thriller as a kind of game in which he participates for the duration of a story. The thriller is then accepted on its own structural and thematic premises as a kind of literature which is not by itself a menace to the morale of the reader (v. ch. 2).

The formula of the secret-agent story does not allow the genre to transcend the limits of its own conventions without damage to the reader's enjoyment, based, as it is, on his genre expectations:

> Each formula has its own set of limits that determine what kind of new and unique elements are possible without straining the formula to breaking point. We can point to at least two special artistic skills that all good formulaic writers seem to possess to some degree: the ability to give new vitality to stereotypes and the capacity to invent new touches of plot or setting that are still within formulaic limits (Cawelti 1976 : 10–11).

As I have suggested, any evaluation of literary quality must be according to the nature of the text under consideration. This means that different standards must be applied to different texts. To judge James Joyce's *Ulysses* mainly on its capacity for creating suspense would be unfair to that particular work, as this is not at all of central importance to it. On the other hand, to require profound psychological reflections and linguistic experiment in a formula genre would be equally unfair, because that is not in the nature of such literature.

The formula of the secret-agent story seems to be more tolerant of variation than, for instance, the formula of the formal detective story. It is possible within its five essential features – dichotomy structure, ethical dilemma, a constant role structure in which prominence is given to two figures: hero and adversary, plot consisting of a series of ordeals, and a thematic concern for

the British decline in international affairs - to invent a wide range of variations while not violating the formula.

The breaking point of the formula comes within sight when the reader feels that the gap between his expectations and the book he is reading is becoming too broad. It should be emphasized, however, that the breaking point is in the nature of a borderline between different kinds of literature rather than constituting the beginning of a vast limbo area outside the genre proper. Some writers have transcended the formula and written finely about secret-agents without intending their books as formula secret-agent stories. Graham Greene's *The Human Factor* (1978) is a case in point. Reading that book the reader soon becomes aware that he must suspend his formula expectations and approach the book as he approaches any other novel, with only the vaguest idea of genre in contrast to his very distinct ideas arising from formula expectations.

Throughout my study I have compared and evaluated the three writers' responses to the formula requirements on the five analytical levels. Fleming's strength is in his optimal exploitation of the formula features in forms which are quite close to what may be called their lowest common denominators. On the whole Fleming is an efficient craftsman rather than a good writer. His weakness appears when he quantifies the formula features to such as degree that the reader becomes aware of technique instead of events. As a portrait easily becomes a caricature if certain conspicuous traits are exaggerated, Fleming's quantitative exploitation of the formula sometimes develops into unintended self-irony. This is the case when we feel that Bond is too much the expert on all things, food, wine, firearms and women alike.

Both le Carré and Deighton are far better writers than Fleming. Although Deighton's tendency to leave considerations of realism somewhat behind at times may remind the reader of Fleming's later stories, his contribution to the genre is on the whole remarkable. Even if the ingenuities of his plots may sometimes be lost on the reader, the pace is always rapid and certain to keep the reader's attention. Deighton's two main contributions are his style and his hero. The two aspects are interconnected, not only for the formal reason that Deighton's stories are narrated in the first person, but essentially because the distance created by his piercing irony is in keeping with his meritocratic hero's pervasive feeling of alienation. It is as if Dashiel Hammett's, Raymond

Chandler's and Ross MacDonald's American heroes have been transferred to another genre. Not only has Deighton transferred a style and a figure, but he has also brought over their sense of public responsibility and conscience along with the aura of suspicion with which they meet the world and with which the world meets them.

In le Carré's secret-agent stories we find elaborate descriptions of setting, profound analysis of character, and philosophical reflections of great length. No doubt le Carré has aspirations to use his chosen genre as a vehicle for ideas and problems whose treatment reaches beyond the confined possibilities of a formula genre. Nevertheless, le Carré's grip of the genre is unquestionable. He has a gift for creating an objective correlative of the searching and insecure mood of the sixties and seventies. In his figure of George Smiley le Carrè has managed to create a dynamic centre of our interest, who appeals to us because he is so typically human. As I see it, the main reason why le Carré's secret-agent stories are not felt to strain the formula to breaking point, is that all their elements are felt to be relevant for whatever issue is at stake in them. Smiley's thoughts on the ethical dilemma, for instance, is a genre-pertinent problem, and so are the elaborate considerations on the nature of political ideologies that we find in stories like *SWCIFC* and *STIG*. Le Carré uses the genre of the secret-agent story both as a framework for a good story, and as a possibility to discuss problems whose nature is quite in agreement with the formula requirements, although occasionally we may feel that their consideration slow down the pace.

Ian Fleming, John le Carré and Len Deighton are representative writers of a genre in which there is no hiding that priority is given to the *dulce* far above the *utile*. To the general reader secret-agent stories offer hours of entertainment by their nature of a game. To the literary critic they are texts which, by their mass appeal and formula nature, in a quite unique way makes the study of the author - text - reader complex possible. In comparison with the modern novel, the secret-agent story, even in the skilful hands of le Carré, has a limited scope, and it would be to confess to a lack of sense of proportion to deny that this is so. But it would be equally wrong to conclude from the limitations of the genre to the misapplication of critical endeavours. To the literary critic all literature is worthy of systematic attempts to

analyse texts and establish connections between texts and between texts and non-literary contexts.

In their chosen genre Fleming, le Carré and Deighton repeat, in a modern disguise, a number of literary elements which, through the ages, have proved of never-tiring appeal: we like to see reality refracted meaningfully by the romance pattern (although we may not be aware of it as such), we like to daydream about our individual capacities and our nation's worth, and, perhaps most of all, we like to see existence not as something fragmentary and loose-ended, but as fully consistent, demystified and always under our control. All this we are offered in a few hours' absorption in a secret-agent story.

# Notes

## *Chapter 1: Contexts of History*

1. This view has been criticized by Becker: 'Die Aussage, dass die Publikation von Coopers *The Spy* "solidified the status of the spy story as a genre all its own", muss als Lokal-Patriotismus des amerikanischen Autors erscheinen' (1973 : 28). ('The Statement that the publication of Cooper's *The Spy* . . . must be due to pure patriotism on the part of the American author.') Becker refers to the American critic Davis (1967 : 228).
2. In England Forster's Education Act was passed in 1870. According to Webb, it meant a 'giant step towards creating a common level of education beneath which no child was allowed to sink' (1969 : 338). Elementary education was made compulsory in 1876.
3. Poe published his stories about Auguste Dupin in the USA in the 1840s. Doyle's first story about Sherlock Holmes (*A Study in Scarlet* (of novel length) appeared in 1887, and his many short stories appeared in the *Strand Magazine* between 1891 and 1927.
4. T. S. Eliot wrote about *The Moonstone* that it is the 'first and greatest of English detective novels' (1932/1951 : 464). Eliot made a distinction between the Poe kind of detective story which resembles a chess problem and the English detective story with its 'intangible human element'.
5. Wellington and Peel carried out a police reform act in 1829 modelled on the establishment of a police force in Ireland. This act was the statutory basis for the new Metropolitan Police Office at Scotland Yard (Thomson 1950 : 66–7).
6. As premises of the genesis of the genre I consider these two compensation complexes of major importance, but the genre's potential for drawing on the news services of the fast developing electronic mass media - the BBC was given its charter in 1927 - also contributed substantially, as interest in international politics was probably being widened by the feeling of greater immediacy.
7. Cf. McCormick: 'Looking back, it may now appear that the Ambler, Greene, Fleming, le Carré, Deighton period was the golden age of spy fiction, say from 1939–69, though most of these books were published after 1955' (1977/1979 : 18). There is no doubt that Fleming's success contributed considerably to the appeal of the genre, as Hackett observes: 'In the 1960's espionage became the most popular theme in the suspense field. Paperback editions and movies made from James Bond stories made 007 the most highly publicized spy-detective ever. The James Bond craze became almost a cult' (1967 : 63), and 'The phenomenon of the 1960's was Ian Fleming,

with his James Bond, Agent 007 espionage stories. Spy stories continue to replace the older school of detective fiction' (1977 : 49).

8. For a detailed historical survey v. Becker 1973. Brief surveys are in Broberg 1964, Symons 1972, Becker and Buchloh 1973, la Cour et al. 1975, Smith 1976, McCormick 1977.
9. There is a typical example of such an imitation by G. W. M. Reynolds (1814-79) in Haining 1975 : 85-94 called 'The Body-Snatchers'.
10. V. e.g. de Vries 1971, Haining 1975, James 1976, Sutherland 1976, Neuburg 1977.
11. Symons uses the expression 'less objectionable' (1972/1974 : 215) about 'one or two' of the *Dark Series* stories.
12. The literary atmosphere of the fifties in England is characterized by, e.g., Phelps: 'In many respects, indeed, they [the angry young men] were involved with the establishment in a kind of symbiosis. One has the feeling that they beat against the doors not in order to destroy them, but in the confident hope that if they made enough fuss they would be let in' (1973/78 : 511), and Williams: '. . . it [*Look Back in Anger*] is a primarily emotional protest, barely articulate, with an intensity beyond its nominal causes' (1973/1978 : 538), and Hughes: 'The second war after all was a colossal negative revelation. In a sense it meant they [the Movement poets] recoiled to some essential English strengths. But it set them dead against negotiation with anything outside the cosiest arrangement of society. They were like eskimos in their igloo, with a difference' (Faas 1980 : 201). (Cf. also Morris's reaction to Allsop 1958 : 37-8 in 1976 : xix and xxiv.)
13. Reliable statistics on the course of the success of Fleming's stories are not available, only in absolute figures, cf. Hackett 1977. As the bestseller lists published jointly by *The Bookseller* and the *Sunday Times* did not exist until 1974, there are only the bestseller lists in *Smiths Trade News* published by W. H. Smith & Son Ltd. to give some evidence. The lists contain no statistical information and only state that certain books were among a number of bestsellers during the year:

| *Year* | *Number of titles in list* | *Among which* |
|---|---|---|
| 1957 | 33 | *FRWL* |
| 1959 | 26 | *G* |
| 1961 | 31 | *T* |
| 1962 | 32 | *SWLM* |
| 1963 | 29 | *OHMSS* |
| 1964 | 28 | *YOLT* |
| 1965 | 27 | *MWGG* |

(I wish to express my gratitude to T. W. Baker-Jones, archivist at W. H. Smith & Son Ltd. for looking up old issues of *Smiths Trade News*.)

14. On the cinema history of the genre v. Parish and Pitts 1974, and on the James Bond films in particular v. Brosnan 1972.
15. Cf. *The Spy Who Loved Me* of which only the title has remained in the film version and of which a new book has been written according to the film

script and published simultaneously with the release of the film. (Christopher Wood, *The Spy Who Loved Me*, 1977). On such tie-ins between literature and film v. Sutherland 1981.

16. The title figures in *Smiths Trade News* (cf. note 13) in 1964. In the USA it topped the annual list for 1964 (cf. Packett 1977 : 193); her comment: 'Never before had a "thriller" headed all fiction titles of a year. *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, aided by unusual word-of-mouth praise, sold a whopping 230,000 copies through bookstores. In 1965 *The Spy* sold more than two million in paperback.'

## *Chapter 2: Contexts of Criticism*

1. There is no established generic sub-division of the thriller. A rigid classification is attempted in the *Cumulated Fiction Index* (quoted by Buchloh and Becker 1973 : 4–5). The list reads: thriller, spy stories, crime, criminals, police work, detective stories, inverted detective stories, murder, murderers and suspected murderers, psychological thriller, suspense stories. A comprehensive bibliographical survey is Hagen 1969. V. also Barnes 1975, Barzun and Wendell 1971, Herman and Stiel 1974, la Cour et al. 1975, Smith 1976.
2. According to the *Book Promotion Feasibility Study Report* by the advertising agency Masius Wynne-Williams (1974) about thirty-five per cent of all fiction read are 'crime/thrillers', a figure whose reliability is corroborated by, for instance, the annual *Euromonitor Book Readership Survey* (first edition 1976).
3. V. H. Douglas Thomson's almost axiomatic formulation: 'The detective story is not ... popular because it is badly written, but badly written because it is popular' (1931 : 17).
4. V. e.g. Haycraft 1941 (rev. edn 1968).
5. V. e.g. Buchloh and Becker 1973 or Routley 1972.
6. V. e.g. Edmund Wilson's now classic attack (1945), Bergonzi 1958 or Eco 1965/1979.
7. V. Williams 1961/1965.
8. Already in 1785 Clara Reeve had published a long and vigorous defense of popular romance (v. also Fielding's ironic excuse for *Joseph Andrews* as an epic in prose (London 1742 : preface). On the debate on mass literature in the nineteenth century cf. e.g. anon. (*Eclectic Review*) 1845, anon. (*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*) 1858, Strahan 1870, Millar 1898.
9. v. Leavis 1932, which is a classic of its kind.
10. V. e.g. Buch 1965 or Egloff 1974.
11. Cf. Raymond Chandler's categorical comment: 'All men who read escape from something else into what lies behind the printed page; the quality of the dream may be argued, but its release has become a functional necessity. All men must escape at times from the deadly rhythm of their private thoughts. It is a part of the process of life among thinking beings. It is one of the things that distinguish them from the three-toed sloth; he apparently – one can never be quite sure – is perfectly content hanging upside down on a branch, not even reading Walter Lippman. I hold no particular brief for the detective story as the ideal escape. I merely say that *all* reading for

pleasure is escape, whether it be Greek, mathematics, astronomy, Benedetto Croce, or The Diary of the Forgotten Man. To say otherwise is to be an intellectual snob, and a juvenile in the art of living' (1950/1972 : 13–14).

12. It is very difficult to get a complete and reliable impression about the 'consumption' of literature. Some sources are based on book production, some on library lending and some on reader interviews. There are no standard procedures for investigation, and the lack of shared terminology often makes comparison of sources impossible. Differences in time and geography are further complications. The best possibility for keeping an eye on the literary 'marketplace' – its English corner – is to read the annual *Euromonitor Book Readership Survey* (first edition 1976). For more detailed observations v. Sauerberg 1983.

## *Chapter 3: The Hero at Home and Abroad*

1. Many of Fleming's critics agree with Bergonzi's line. Especially well-known is Umberto Eco's notion of 'redundancy' (1965/1979 : 160) as a parallel to Bergonzi's 'affective superstructure'.
2. The term is used by Ann S. Boyd (1965 and 1966) to describe one of the eight deadly sins she reports Fleming to have defined as the real objects of Bond's missions. The others are avarice, cruelty, snobbery, hypocrisy, self-righteousness, moral cowardice and malice.
3. There seems to be a parallel in the travels of myth: 'The idea that the passage of the magical threshold is a transit into a sphere of rebirth is symbolized in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale' (Campbell 1949 : 90). At the risk of straining the parallel, it may be observed that the means of transportation by which the secret agent is carried into the alien land often receives strong emphasis. The modern equivalent of the belly of the whale is the inside of an aeroplane (in *SS* the inside of a nuclear-powered submarine!) (v. also Lehmann 1980.)
4. One may wonder why regular enemy territory is avoided in the genre. There is, of course the practical difficulty that the writers of secret-agent stories know less about the East than the West. Another explanation may be that an excursion beyond the Iron Curtain is simply irrelevant, since in the genre it is the conflict that counts, not the setting of the conflict, as long as a mood of strangeness and mystery surrounds it.
5. Once in the alien land, the hero experiences a gradual intensification of his unease, as he approaches the 'lion's den'. The alien land signals a difference in *kind* from home. In the alien land, the lion's den differs in *degree* from its surroundings. Examples in the Bond stories are the house of Le Chiffre in *CR*, the cave of Mr. Big in *LLD*, the office-turned-prison in *M*, the train in *DAF*, the Ritz hotel room in *FRWL*. In the stories by le Carré there are the house-boat in *CFD*, the court room in *SWCIFC*, the hotel room in *LGW*, the rally at the end of *STIG*, the empty flat of *TTSS*, the island at the end of *HS*. And in Deighton's stories: the simulated prison in *IF*, Da Cunha's house in Marrakech, Hallam's flat in *FIB*, the commando centre in Texas in *BDB*, Datt's house in *EPD*, the Scottish house in *SS*, Steve Champion's house in *YS* and the abandoned Sahara castle in *TTLS*.

6. As Frye suggests, romance is frequently found as an element in the novel (1957/1971 : 304), e.g. in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, and, I may add, even in such realistic novels as Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* and Doris Lessing's *The Summer Before the Dark*. My point is that the secret-agent story makes use of romance to a much higher extent than the novel.
7. I have chosen *Sir Gawain* as my illustration, because it presents, at a convenient length, most of the features of romance.
8. I refrain from a general discussion of the nature of myth, and restrict myself to observe that in recent years the term myth has gained a wider currency than it used to. There has been a strong tendency to extend the concept of myth to embrace phenomena which are not at all felt to be myth in the traditional sense of a narrative that communicates ideas about 'the roots of things in the ancient sense of being the key to existence, the whole meaning of life, and experience as a whole' (William Golding quoted in Allen 1964 : 288). The sense in which the socalled myth-critics (Robert Graves, Francis Fergusson, Richard Chase, Philip Wheelwright, Leslie Fiedler, Northrop Frye) employ it, still makes it possible to distinguish between literature and myth as such. The distinction has increasingly been lost sight of as Structuralism, especially in the French version, has made myth into a 'type of speech' (Barthes 1957/73 : 109), not, as it has been the traditional view, an 'object, a concept or an idea' (109).

## *Chapter 4: National Cause and Private Conscience: an Ethical Dilemma*

1. Their ten-volume project about Martin Beck and his colleagues of the Stockholm police was planned and executed as a progressively critical and penetrating analysis of the short-comings of a modern bureaucratic state, in which the individual counts less and less. (V. Søholm 1976).
2. Symons has described his own intentions in the following way: 'the thing that most absorbs me in our age is the violence behind respectable faces, the civil servants planning how to kill Jews more efficiently, the Judge speaking with passion about the need for capital punishment, the quiet obedient boy who kills for fun . . . If you want to show the violence that lives behind the bland faces most of us present to the world, what better vehicle can you have than the crime novel?' (1972/1974 : 198).
3. I am aware that the distinctions presented in these brief paragraphs are too categorial for the specialist, especially, perhaps, my attempt to explain the nature of ethics as dependent on the way of life of a given community. However, my observations are not intended to be on a philosophically ambitious scale, as my argument does not depend on delicately technical distinctions, only on the main differences between the two kinds of commitment, which, I believe, are not misrepresented. It is tempting, however to invoke Kierkegaard's distinction between the aesthetic and the ethical stages which illuminate Bond and Smiley respectively.
4. Le Carré wrote a highly committed introduction to Page, Leitch and Knightley's book on Philby, the 'spy who betrayed a generation' (1968 : 9–24).

5. Cf. my quotation from le Carré's introduction to Page *et al.* (1968) in chapter 9, p. 171.
6. As expressed by Smiley in his letter of explanation near the end of *HS* (532) from which I quote later in this chapter (p.62).
7. Cf. *SP*: 'You have a duty, as we all do. A loyalty.' Duty to *what*? Smiley wondered, with that part of himself which sometimes seemed to be a spectator to the rest. Loyalty to *whom*?' (61) and 'Returning to bed, he opened a copy of Cobbett's *Rural Rides* and tried to read it while he loosely pondered, among other weighty matters, his sense of *civitas* and how much, or how little, he owed to Oliver Lacon: "Your *duty*, George." Yet who could seriously be Lacon's man? he asked himself. Who could regard Lacon's fragile arguments as Caesar's due?' (135–6).
8. As the hero is nameless, it is difficult to decide whether the hero is a new one in each story or the same throughout. There are, however, so many recurrent features of character and an approach to development that it makes sense to opt for the latter possibility.

## *Chapter 5: Plot*

1. It is not, I believe, a coincidence that the genre operates with six roles. Although there are many differences between the Russian folktale and the secret-agent story, V. Propp's inductive analysis (1927/1968) and my deductive observations confirm a common basis of meaning in both genres. Propp hints at a mythical pattern in the folktale, and Frye points to the quest myth in the form of romance as a fundamental pattern of the modern genre (v. chs. 2 and 3).

   A. J. Greimas reduced Propp's seven roles to six in his *Sémantique Structurale* from 1966, to comply with his now famous 'mythical actant model'. Greimas assumes that man's capability for making his world meaningful is the result of a process of perception which works in terms of contrasts and exclusions. And this is what he sees illustrated in Propp's reductionist approach. But the value of any heuristic model must be assessed on its own premises and aims. Propp's material was a large number of folktales in which he saw similarities different from such as were traditionally used for genre categorization. His aim was to demonstrate that folktales may be categorized more consistently on the basis of structure than on theme. Greimas' aim was fundamentally different. He used Propp's analysis of folktales to argue for an epistemological theory generally valid wherever meaning is created. The Structuralist approach in literary criticism, which acknowledges Propp as one of its most important sources of inspiration has shown fondness for thrillers to illustrate general principles, e.g. Barthes, 1966; Culler, 1975; O'Toole, 1975. (And Structuralist principles have been applied to analyse thrillers, e.g. Eco 1965/1979; Dupuy 1974 (173–9)).
2. There has been considerable discussion about the status, nature and terminology of the narrative units which constitute the plot. I see my suggestion of radical change as basic criterion to be in agreement with Propp's notion of the function (1927/1968) as developed generally by

Structuralists, e.g. Claude Bremond in his notion of elementary sequences (1979). According to Bremond, any narrative consists of such elementary sequences which correspond to the 'three phases of all process: at first potential, then actualizing itself, and finally achieved' (1970 : 248). To apply the theory to practical analytical purposes it is necessary to give priority to some elementary sequences as more important than others, hence my idea of radical change, cf. Jonathan Culler: 'As he [the reader] goes through it [a story] for the first time, he can, retrospectively, resolve his initial uncertainties about the function of certain elements and recognize which are properly constitutive of the plot' (1975 : 130).

For the history of plot theory, v. Dipple 1970.

3. Eco has compared the progressive movement of Fleming's stories to a game of chess with nine moves:

   A. M. moves and gives a task to Bond;
   B. Villain moves and appears to Bond (perhaps in vicarious forms);
   C. Bond moves and gives a first check to Villain or Villian gives first check to Bond;
   D. Woman moves and shows herself to Bond;
   E. Bond takes Women (possesses her or begins her seduction);
   F. Villain captures Bond (with or without Woman);
   G. Villain tortures Bond (with or without Woman);
   H. Bond beats Villain (kills him, or kills his representative or helps at their killing);
   I. Bond, convalescing, enjoys Woman, whom he then loses' (1965/1979 : 156).

   Eco observes that the order of the moves is subject to change in individual stories. In my description, this reduction has the status of a variation-plot description of Fleming's stories.
4. There seems to be no fixed number of ordeals, as it is the case in, for instance, the folktale with its traditional three.
5. Palmer suggests a parallel to the Christian notion of 'kerygma' in the ordeal structure of the thriller: 'In Christian theology "kerygma" is the moment when someone announces to the non-believer the "good news" that Christ died to save humanity, . . . it is the moment at which the purely personal life of the individual is invaded by the sacred. . . . In theology the kerygmatic statement is not intended to prove anything, at least not in the intellectual sense. It is an encouragement, not a demonstration. . . . Kerygma operates basically by capturing the imagination of the non-believer and persuading him that here is the solution to all his problems; if it is successful he is caught up in the tide of enthusiasm that nascent faith provides. . . . The actions of the hero have a similar effect. They inspire those who are on his side; they sway those who are wavering; they paralyse the opposition. And they persuade the reader that this man is admirable' (1978 : 64). Palmer adds to kerygma the notion of "machismo", which means the hero's attraction to 'dangerous confrontations in order to prove what one is, to prove that one has . . . the necessary status to be a hero' (1978 : 62–3).
6. Palmer's suggestion of an 'anti-thriller' as fundamentally different from the "ordinary" thriller (1978) is only valid when the hero's personal fate is made

the basis of genre distinctions. In my view, the circumstance that the result of the hero's action, irrespective of his own fate, is identical in all the novels under consideration, makes the 'anti-thriller' into a variation of a constant formula feature.

## *Chapter 6: Roles and Characters*

1. Although in *IF* Deighton's hero keeps asking Dalby for a sum of money due to him for some past assignment and although in *SS* he feels financially inferior to his posh colleague Foxwell, his economic status seems rather secure. In *HUW* the hero has the rank of a temporary permanent under-secretary.
2. The term appeared for the first time in Michael Young's *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (London, 1958). Anthony Sampson has described the sixties as the decade of the 'apotheosis of the clever grammar-school boy' (1971 : 660).
3. V. *BDB* : 188 and *SS* : 42.
4. Bond's double-o signifies his licence to kill in the line of duty. He has the status of the public executioner.
5. Cf., e.g., Emma's father in Jane Austen's novel.
6. *MWGG* is seen to confirm this view. Miss Moneypenny, M.'s secretary, is then the rather strained parallel to Jocosta. But, it must be remembered, Freud's theory is so comprehensive that virtually all kinds of rebellion, voluntary or, as here, involuntary, may be explained by it.
7. V. Smiley's impression of Mendel's private life in *CFD* : 48.
8. All Fleming's adversaries have names which are highly suggestive. But there are also sometimes symbolic overtones in le Carré's and Deighton's choice of names, cf. Dieter Frey in *CFD* and Steven Champion in *YS*.

## *Chapter 7: Cold War,* Détente *and Secret-Agent Fiction*

1. For Fleming's war-time activities, v. Pearson's biography (1966).
2. Ted Allbeury, himself a former spy and now, among other occupations, a writer of thrillers, has written a brief, but illuminating essay on the problem (1973).
3. The kind of analysis undertaken in this and the following chapters poses a problem of a methodological nature. The historical comparison cannot, of course, be made between the literary text and reality as such, but between the literary text and historians' accounts and interpretations of the period. I rely on what I believe to be standard works on post-war Britain, the titles and authors of which appear from the references.
4. V. Jenkins' characterization of the British belief in the superiority of both the USA and Britain towards Europe as a 'benevolent but a detached view; it was based upon an over-estimate, a substantial over-estimate of our own power' (1972 : 6).

## *Chapter 8: Ian Fleming: Anachronism and Adventure*

1. Cf. historians' opinions of Kennedy's consultation of Macmillan and Ormsby-Gore on the Cuba crisis, e.g. Bartlett 1977 : 204.
2. V. Barker's observations on Churchill's, Eden's and Macmillan's belief in what Lord Strang called the British 'conciliatory quality' (1971 : 119).
3. Cf. Turner's characterization: 'That the historic change was occurring was clear even at the time; though not, perhaps, quite so manifest as it has become in retrospect' (1971 : 68). (Cf. also Northedge 1974 : 359-60).
4. Cf. Havighurst on the British acquisition of a national nuclear deterrent: 'All this left in the English mind little sense of the urgency for a new Europe that was found in Paris, Berlin, Rome, and Vienna - where the old order had been destroyed. In contrast, the British way of life had not only survived but seemed to have triumphed' (1979 : 449).
5. *DAF* from 1956 is only indirectly about international politics, but the reader is assured of English economic superiority when M. outlines the situation to Bond: 'Seems that most of what they call "gem" diamonds in the world are mined on British territory and that ninety per cent of all diamond sales are carried out in London. By the Diamond Corporation.' M. shrugged his shoulders. 'Don't ask my why. The British got hold of the business at the beginning of the century and we've managed to hang on to it. Now it's a huge trade. Fifty million pounds a year. The biggest dollar-earner we've got. So when something goes wrong with it, the Government gets worried. And that's what happened' (16).
6. I wish to emphasize that this does not affect the alien-land status of such countries, v. ch. 3.
7. One of Fleming's short stories, 'The Living Daylights' (1962) from the collection *Octopussy*, is set in Berlin.
8. France appears in *CR, FRWL, G, T, OHMSS*.
9. In the perspective of the 80s Fleming's early black-and-white rendering of East-West relations may seem exaggerated, but to contemporary readers it must have been genuine, cf. Barker: 'Soviet propaganda organs and Soviet spokesmen at the United Nations and elsewhere attacked the Western Powers in vitriolic language on almost every front, and gave praise and encouragement to almost every movement or group, anywhere in the world, which opposed the West. It was therefore easy to see "communism" as a centrally-controlled monolithic force directed from Moscow and aiming at world-wide disruption leading to world domination. Also, Stalin's ruthless achievement in creating an empire of apparently docile vassal states in Eastern Europe between 1944 and 1948, led to the dubious inference that the Soviet Union could repeat the performance in other parts of the world. All this produced a widespread tendency, even after Stalin's death, to overestimate the efficiency and coherence of the 'communist bloc' or 'international communism' (1971 : 98).
10. That Bond's consciousness is not solely directed at *political* objectives appears from this passage from *LLD*: 'Never before in his life had there been so much to play for. The secret of the treasure, the defeat of a great criminal, the smashing of a Communist spy ring, and the destruction of a

tentacle of SMERSH, the cruel machine that was his own private target. And now Solitaire, the ultimate personal prize' (124).

11. V. Bond's remark to Honey in *DrN*: 'It's like this. I'm a sort of policeman. They send me out from London when there's something odd going on somewhere in the world that isn't anybody else's business' (91).
12. Fleming's uneasy position appears clearly from the passage in *MWGG* where the brain-washed Bond lectures M. on *détente* (22). My point is that Bond is in agreement with what was actually happening in international affairs at the time, but Fleming creates a note of doubt about the Soviet sincerity, and thus paves the way for a new Cold-War plot in his story.

## *Chapter 9: John le Carré: the Enemy Within*

1. V. Watt's comment on this phase of the negotiations: 'Whatever the case, the events of November 1967-February 1968 were to reveal that for Britain concentration on being a European power was no longer a matter of choice but was all that was within her power. Her seat at the nuclear table continued: but her ability to capitalize on it was rapidly disappearing' (1971 : 210).
2. The reader will recall scenes from Forster, Greene, Maugham, Waugh.
3. The bewilderment is expressed very well in Lacon's half-drunk admission to now being out of his depth: 'They had dined, appallingly, in the steak-house Lacon had suggested. They had drunk Spanish burgundy out of a carafe, and Lacon had raged wildly over the British political dilemma. Now they were drinking coffee and suspect brandy. The anti-Communist phobia was overdone: Lacon had declared himself sure of it. Communists were only *people*, after all. They weren't red-toothed monsters, not any more. Communists wanted what everyone wanted: prosperity and a bit of peace and quiet. A chance to take a breather from all this damned hostility. And if they didn't - well, what could we do about it anyway? he had asked. Some problems - take Ireland - were insoluble, but you would nevet get the Americans to admit *anything* was insoluble. Britain was ungovernable; so would everywhere else be in a couple of years. Out future was with the collective, but our survival was with the individual, and the paradox was killing us every day' (253).
4. Of course, Smiley is depressed as usual at the successful termination of his assignment, but this does not change the fact that he *is* successful.
5. Le Carré has shown his great interest in Philby and his motives in his preface to Page *et al.* 1968.
6. Le Carré, however, manages to echo hastily the idea that the Germans are good at technical matters (205-6).
7. V. also Baker 1971 : 268 and Northedge 1974 : 262.

## *Chapter 10: Len Deighton: Adjustment*

1. Cf. the hero's reply to da Cunha in *HUW*: 'I'm not sure how your ideas of honour could be expected to key in with mine', I said. 'You could buy a pair

of shoes for every barefoot kid in Albufeira with that pen set' (71).

2. Loiseau, a representative of the French police, tells the hero that

   'I have been authorized to find Datt and his film collection by any means I think fit.'

   'When does the armoured column leave? What's the plan - helicopters and flame-throwers and the one that burns brightest must have been carrying a tin of film?'

   'You are too hard on the police methods in France. You think we could work with bobbies in pointed helmets carrying a wooden stick, but let me tell you, my friend, we wouldn't last two minutes with such methods' (*EPD*: 125).

3. 'I looked out through the hotel's spotlessly clean windows, and watched the plume of water that is Geneva's last despairing attempt at gaiety. The tall jet fell back into the lake and hammered the surface into steel. The traffic, moving slowly along the lakeside, stopped, started and then stopped again. There was no hooting, no flashing headlights, no arguments, no complaining. The citizens of Geneva are as well-adjusted as its clocks. It was then A.M. but the city was silent, except for the rustle of banknotes and the ticking of a couple of billion wrist-watches' (*YS*: 62).

4. 'Johnnie Vulkan, wealthy, attractive and a personification of *Knallharte* - the tough, almost violent quality that postwar Germany rewarded with admiring glances' (*FIB*: 45).

5. Is this an ironic echo of John of Gaunt's 'scept'red isle' speech? (*Richard II*, II, ii).

6. In *SS* a colleague of the hero's observes that 'It's obvious the bloody Yanks are going to close us' (51).

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