A Literary Reading of Olivia Manning's World War II Trilogies: War Narration, Place and End of Empire, and Gender Roles in The Balkan Trilogy and The Levant Trilogy

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A NOTE ON SPELLING AND FORMATTING

This thesis has been written in British spelling all throughout the main text, but I have maintained the original spelling in quotations. Similarly, I use the form *Romania* (the variant most generally accepted nowadays) rather than *Rumania* (as used in Olivia Manning's novels). Minor discrepancies in spelling between the main body of the text and the quoted material are unavoidable in such cases.

I have written this thesis in general accordance with the guidelines established by the *MLA Handbook* (8th edition). For this reason, Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy* is shortened to *BT* and *The Levant Trilogy* to *LT* in in-text citations. Likewise, Phyllis Lassner's *British Women Writers of World War II: Battlegrounds of their Own* is shortened to *British Women Writers* and her *Colonial Strangers: Women Writing the End of the British Empire* to *Colonial Strangers*. And correspondingly, Paul Fussell's *Abroad: British Literary Travelling Between the Wars* appears as *Abroad* in in-text citations, his *The Great War and Modern Memory* as *Great War* and his *Wartime: Understanding and Behaviour in the Second World War* as *Wartime*.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. WHO IS OLIVIA MANNING?

Olivia Manning was born in Portsmouth, England, in 1908. She was the daughter of Olivia Morrow and Oliver Manning, and she had a brother, Oliver. Her father having served in the Royal Navy since his youth and her brother having died on active service in 1941, she was in close contact with the military world ever since her earliest childhood.

Manning always had an interest in the arts and in literature: she learnt to read when she was only four years old and she frequently visited the local library in Portsmouth, and then, when she was sixteen, she became a student at the Portsmouth School of Art. Some years later she moved to London, where she could approach the literary business. She spent all her life surrounded by people who enjoyed art and literature. For one thing, her father was very imaginative and would always make up stories for her and her brother. Besides he was very fond of theatre. For another thing, her mother would read books aloud to her when she was a child, and despite the fact that when Manning grew up her mother became strict towards her, she was very proud of her writing and would always praise her. Furthermore, not only did she have the support of her family, but also that of her friends, her lovers and her husband, Reggie Smith. Most of Manning's acquaintances and friends were writers, publishers, editors or intellectuals. Her first love was Hamish Miles, who was her first publisher at Jonathan Cape and who convinced her to write under the name of Olivia Manning[1]. Amongst her close friends were Stevie Smith, William Gehardie and Francis King, all of them successful writers. As for Reggie Smith, he was an admirer of Manning's writing even before they actually met for the first time.

[1] Before this, Olivia Manning had used male pseudonyms: she had first published under the

Reggie Smith had been a paid-up member of the Communist Party, and in 1938 he started working for the British Council. He met Manning in July 1939, when he was on leave from his first British Council post in Romania. Less than a month later, on August 18, 1939, they got married and nine days afterwards he was ordered to return to Bucharest immediately, so the newly married couple left London as the Second World War was becoming more and more likely to start. During the war, they lived in Romania, Greece, Egypt and Palestine. In 1945, when the war was over, she returned to England ahead of him, and when he joined her later that summer, they established themselves in London.

During her lifetime, Manning wrote novels, short stories, sketches, screenplays, radio plays, and also non-fiction books, essays and reviews. Her first published novel was *The Wind Changes* (1937), which was followed by *Artist Among the Missing* (1949), *School of Love* (1951), *A Different Face* (1953) and *The Doves of Venus* (1955). In 1960 she published what would become the first novel of *The Balkan Trilogy*, *The Great Fortune*. In 1962 she published the second volume, *The Spoilt City*, and in 1965 she published *Friends and Heroes*, which completed the trilogy. *The Play Room* (1969) and *The Rain Forest* (1974) were published before the first volume of *The Levant Trilogy*, *The Danger Tree*, came to light in 1977. It was followed by *The Battle Lost and Won* (1978), and in 1980 the last volume of the trilogy, *The Sum of Things*, was published. Three collections of some of her short stories and sketches were also published: *Growing Up* (1948), *My Husband Cartwright* (1956) and *A Romantic Hero and Other Stories* (1967). Amongst her non-fiction works are *The Remarkable Expedition* (1947), *The Dreaming Shore* (1950), which is a travel book about Ireland, and *Extraordinary Cats* (1967).

1.2. CRITICAL RECEPTION

Manning was often highly praised by important figures in the literary world: Anthony Burgess once said to Manning "[y]ou are the most considerable of our women novelists", Reggie Smith thought *The Wind Changes* showed "signs of a genius", and Julian Mitchell said that Manning was like a "real bird, and she flew higher than most" (qtd. in Braybrooke 3, 58 and 270 respectively). In spite of this, she never got as much recognition as some other writers at the time, a fact which always upset her. She would be very disappointed on not being accorded solo reviews in the Sunday papers and she took any sort of criticism very badly. In fact, she never had the success she would have liked to have and would often complain: "I don't want fame when I am dead. I want it *now*" (Braybrooke 4).

In 1969 Ruth Inglis wrote in a profile for the *Observer* that a common reaction when people were asked if they knew Manning was: "The name rings a bell, but I haven't read her" (24). It is no wonder her name rang a bell: she was a most unusual woman who led an interesting and extraordinary life and who was determined to be a part of the literary scene of London ever since she moved from Portsmouth in 1934. People were often struck by her intelligence, and her wit and sharp tongue aroused curiosity about her. This interest in Manning as a woman and in her life continued to 2004, when Neville and June Braybrooke published her first biography: *Olivia Manning: A Life*. June Braybrooke, who wrote under the name of Isobel English, and her husband Neville were close friends of Manning during the last twenty-four years of her life, and their biography offers a beautiful and thorough account of who Manning was and of what she was like.

Despite her great literary output, Manning was never a best-selling author. Furthermore, the fact that the reviews she got only offered lukewarm praise did not help to enhance her success. John Coleman, for example, wrote about *The Great Fortune* in the *Spectator* that "A sense of direction – the why of a novel – is conspicuously, fatally absent"

(qtd. in Braybrooke 188), and David Craig said in the *New Statesman* that "the rendering of the characters' inner emotions [of *Friends and Heroes*] is dry and schematic. The characterisation is done from the outside" (qtd. in Braybrooke 188). Following Craig's idea, Randall Stevenson refers to *The Balkan Trilogy*'s "limitations in point of view and sense of individual human depth" (Stevenson 164). Admittedly, other contemporary reviewers highly praised Manning's writing. For example, the idea that Manning's characterisation lacks depth contrasts sharply with Jameson's review of *The Wind Changes* in the *Sunday Times* in April 1937: "She can create living men and women and allow them to develop by the logic of their own natures, which is the gift of a real writer" (Jameson qtd. in David 53). Similarly, an anonymous review of *The Great Fortune* in the *Times Literary Supplement* on January 29, 1960 admired Manning's "objective, analytical approach which displays the futility of so much conversation … Her direct and ironic sense of style, never "literary," but professional as a Mozart quartet, is what one expects from so unsentimental a writer" (qtd. in David 87).

Neither was Manning more popular in the academic world during her lifetime and the first years after her death. Scholars very rarely paid attention to her works and it is only in the last years that she has received critical consideration. One of the reasons for her not having been successful until recently is the formal distinction between experimental and realist fiction, which prevented a wide range of authors, such as Manning, from receiving the attention they deserved. In relation to this, Gyde C. Martin explains that

> Manning's talent, like that of other novelists of her generation, was eclipsed by the Angry Young Men who dominated the literary scene during the first half of the 1950s ... Book length studies of the post-war era seldom devote more than a page to [Manning], if they mention her at all. One reason for this omission may be the fact that any discussion of the contemporary scene tends to focus on what is new rather than on what has survived. To scholars, Manning was

> consequently of less interest than the Angry Young Men of the fifties or the new experimental novelists of the sixties (160).

In the past, Manning's writing and that of other mid-century writers was neglected for not following the premises of either modernism or realism. These writers left outside the academic world were often labelled under the name of Middlebrow writers.

Originally, the term 'middlebrow writer' had negative connotations: it was used to refer to writers who were thought not to have high literary ambitions or capacity. The novels they produced were underestimated and qualified as simple, sentimental and of little intellectual and cultural value.[2] Among these middlebrow authors are, to name a few, Michael Arlen, James Hilton, Oliver Onions, Elizabeth von Arnim, Warwick Deeping, Winifred Holtby and Stella Gibbons, and Manning has often also been considered to belong to this group. Amongst the common features of their novels there is the portrayal of middle-class domestic life, the description of a romance and a humorous, satirical tone at some points. The middlebrow novel has been defined as "one that straddles the divide between the trashy romance or thriller on the one hand, and the philosophically or formally challenging novel on the other: offering narrative excitement without guilt, and intellectual stimulation without undue effort" (Humble 11 – 12).

It is precisely upon the realisation that Middlebrow artists had been unjustly left outside the academic world that there has been a growing interest in the last years in studying their works. Several research groups, university departments and networks have already been created in order to analyse them and reassess them. The Middlebrow Research Network is possibly one of the most active ones at the moment, which is interdisciplinary in its research

[2] One just needs to consult a dictionary to realise how negatively charged the term is. For example, the Oxford English Dictionary defines 'middlebrow' when applied to an artistic work as "of limited intellectual or cultural value; demanding or involving only a moderate degree of intellectual application, typically as a result of not deviating from convention" ("Defining the Middlebrow").

and interests.[3] It aims at re-evaluating the term 'middlebrow' and at promoting research on middlebrow cultural production. Leading scholars of the field as for example Nicola Humble, author of *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity and Bohemianism* (2001), and Erica Brown, editor of *Investigating the Middlebrow* (2008), are members of the network.[4]

In relation to this mid-twentieth-century literary criticism that undervalued women's writing, Jenny Hartley argues in her *Millions Like Us* (1997) that it was specifically hostile "to women writers in the manly zones of war" (8). The scholar explains how "[w]ar [was] seen as men's stuff, in the field and on the page. […] When women writers did achieve literary recognition it was because they conformed to criteria established by a male elite" (8). Hartley's statement explains, at least partially, that Manning did not receive much critical consideration. As a matter of fact, it is only recently that Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy* have been unanimously read as World War II fiction. In the past, reviewers and scholars had understood the trilogies differently. For example, after the publication of *The Great Fortune*, the writer Ivy Compton-Burnett complained to Barbara Pym that "[a] great many novels nowadays are just travel books … Olivia has just published one about Bulgaria" (Braybrooke 145). For Compton-Burnett, "abroad was abroad", and she did not notice that the setting of Manning's book was in fact Romania, not Bulgaria (145). In a more praising tone, Vesna Goldsworthy also highlighted that *The Balkan Trilogy* is "perhaps the most memorable description of Romanian life in Western literature" (13). Other critics read the trilogies as a series of romance novels dealing with the marital life of a young British couple in exotic countries. Inglis, for example, argued that *The Balkan Trilogy* is "a finely-drawn study of the marriage of a young British left-wing intellectual couple against the

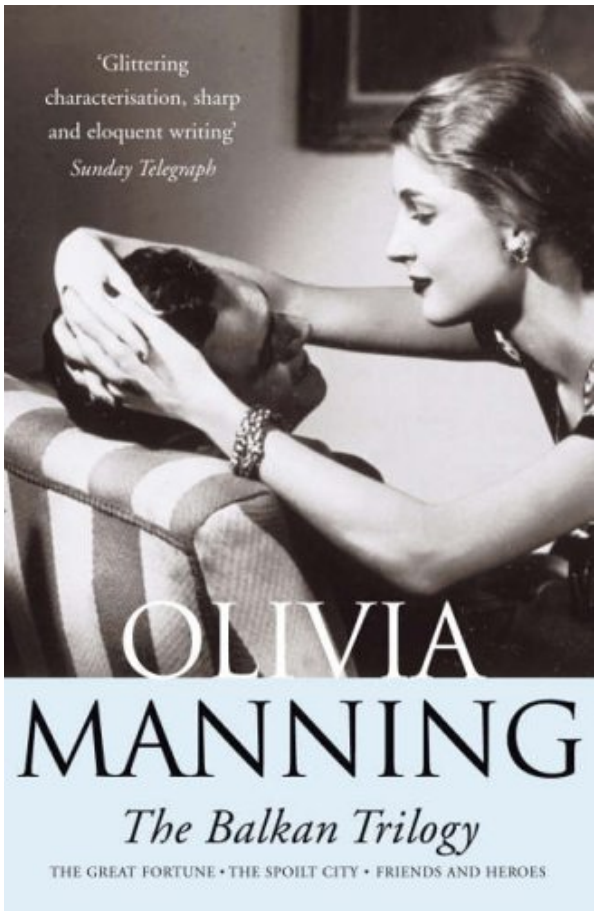
[3] Access http://research.shu.ac.uk/middlebrow-network/index.php to consult it.
[4] Some others are Faye Hammill, leader of the Middlebrow Network project, Ann Ardis, Sophie Blanch, Kristin Bluemel, Mary Grover, etc.

backdrop of the disintegrating wartime Balkans", placing the focus on the marriage plot rather than on the war (24). Admittedly, there have also been critics who have emphasised the war plot as essential to the novels, and this is, as suggested above, the most accepted reading of the trilogies nowadays. Burgess, for example, argued that *The Balkan Trilogy* is "one of the finest records we have of the impact of [the] war on Europe" (95). Roy Foster stated in a 1981 BBC radio programme on Manning that "[i]ronic, astringent and detached, her Balkan and Levant trilogies have the strength to remain – among a great deal else – arguably the best evocation of the Second World War in English" ("Never a Day without a Line"). Likewise, Harry J. Mooney stated in 1982 that "[n]ot only are [Manning's novels] centrally about politics and its consequences, they also appear to explore the topic from as many angles as possible" (50), and he added that Manning's work "should earn her a permanent place among the authors of that very considerable literature arising out of the Second World War" (59). Along the same lines, historian Anthony Beevor ranked Manning's trilogies as number four in his list of the 'Five Best' works of World War II fiction (Beevor, *wsj.com*). Other contemporary critics have also noted that Manning's works have great literary merit and in fact some of these scholars have been very critical with their colleagues who have not acknowledged these works' value. This is the case, for example, of Karen Schneider. Although her *Loving Arms: British Women Writing the Second World War* is considered to be good in its analysis of a group of works, most of the reviews she has received highlight as a failure the fact that she did not include Manning's war trilogies.[5]

In fact, one only needs to pay attention to some of the covers that different publishing houses have chosen for the trilogies to see that they have been understood, read, and promoted very differently: figure 1 shows a book cover of *The Balkan Trilogy* that suggests

[5] Richard Smyer, for example, writes that "readers may wish that some attention had been paid to Olivia Manning's war trilogies" (368 – 369), and Anne Zahlan states that "particularly perplexing is Schneider's (unexplained) failure to consider Olivia Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy* (1960-65) and *The Levant Trilogy* (1977-80)" Zahlan 170-173).

the plot of the novels is the amorous relationship between a young, glamorous couple, and the book covers in figures 2 and 3 suggest that *The Levant Trilogy* deals with the exploration of the pyramids and the luxurious, relaxing life of wealthy people in Egypt. On the other hand, figures 4 and 5 show two different book covers of *The Balkan Trilogy* that emphasise the presence of the Second World War in a city landscape, and finally, the book cover of *The Levant Trilogy* in figure 6 puts the focus on the destruction brought about by the war as witnessed by a young man.



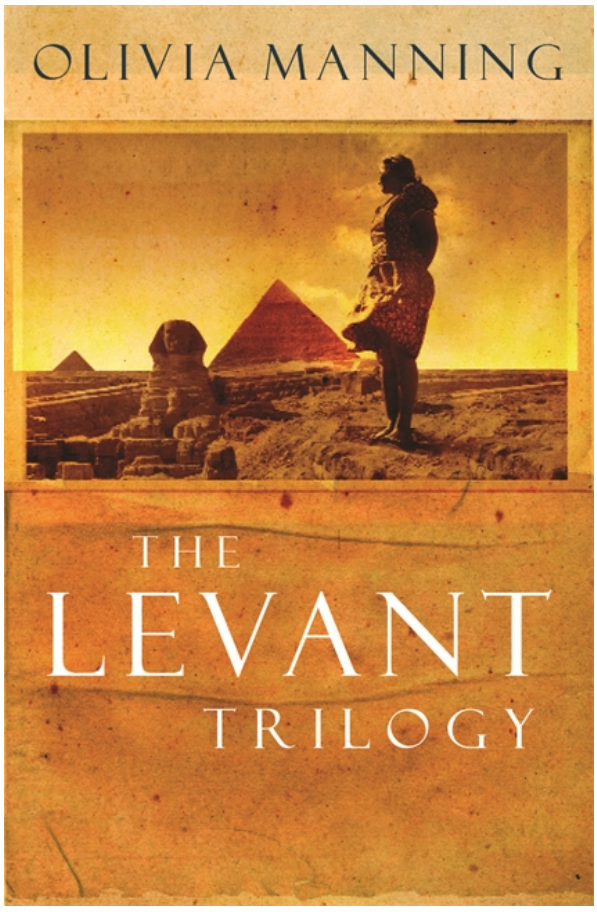
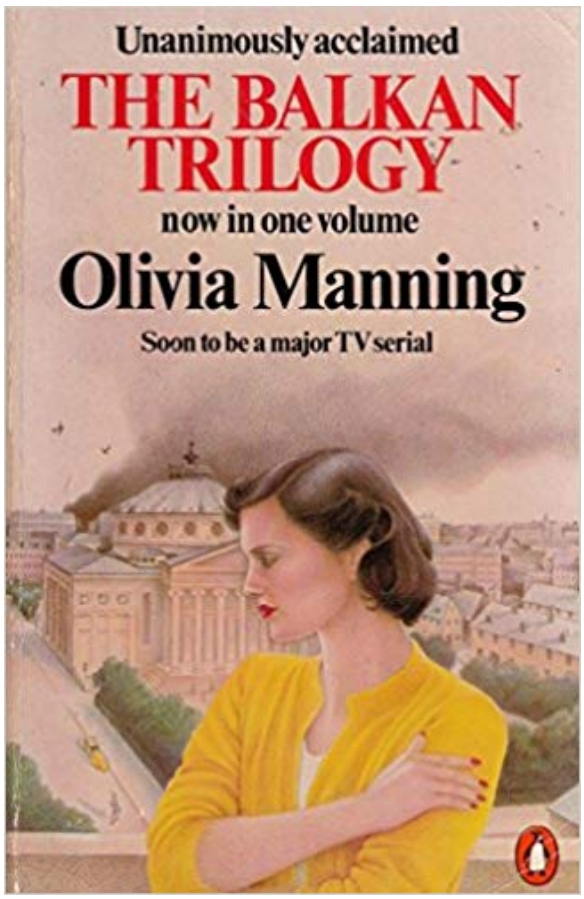


Fig. 1. (left) Book cover of the Arrow Books edition of *The Balkan Trilogy* printed in 2004.

Fig. 2. (right) Book cover of the Phoenix edition of *The Levant Trilogy* printed in 2003.



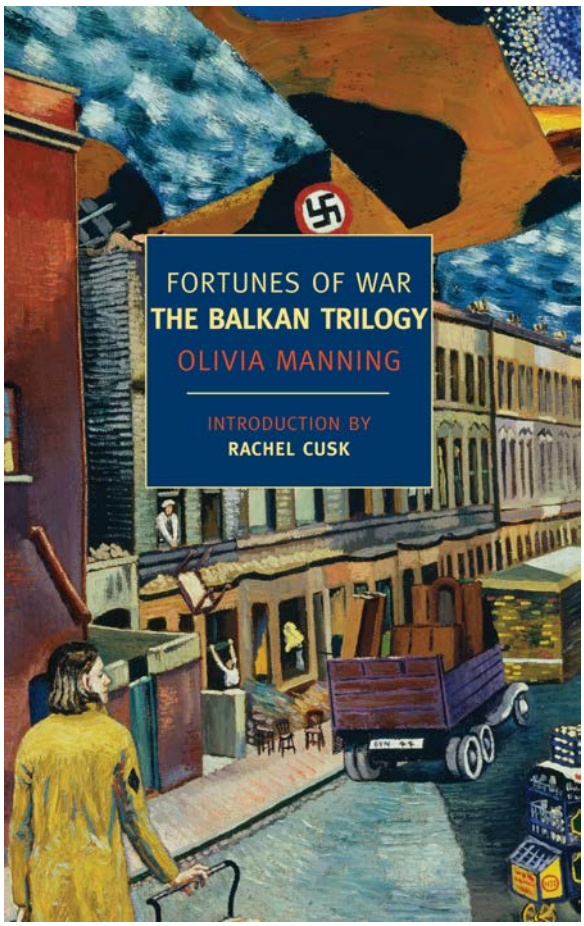


Fig. 3. (top, left) Book cover of the Penguin books edition of *The Levant Trilogy* printed in 2001.

Fig. 4. (top, right) Book cover of the Penguin edition of *The Balkan Trilogy* printed in 1985.

Fig. 5. (bottom, left) Book cover of the New York Review of Books of *The Balkan Trilogy* printed in 2010.

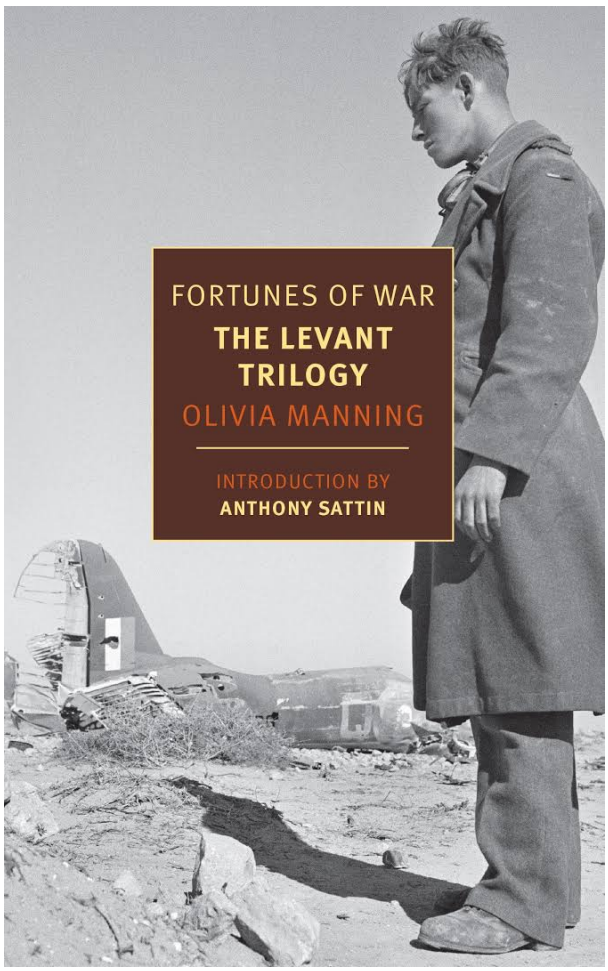


Fig. 6. Book cover of the New York Review of Books of *The Levant Trilogy* printed in 2014.

1.3. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING

Most of Manning's fictional writing is to a greater or lesser extent autobiographical. She very often based her characters on people she had actually met and she sometimes reproduced actual conversations and situations in her works. The sketches of *My Husband Cartwright*, for instance, are clearly about Reggie Smith, and *The Balkan Trilogy* has been said to be "three-quarters autobiographical" (Braybrooke 71). Manning herself frequently said that she wanted the two war trilogies to be both history and autobiography (David 4). In relation to this, she once wrote in a note: "My subject is simply life as I have experienced it and I am happiest when writing of things I have known" (Braybrooke 71). She proudly insisted that there was a strong connection between her life and her fiction, and she once even

claimed that this was so because she had no imagination. It is difficult to know whether she stated this out of false modesty or to emphasise the validity of her account of World War II, but it is clear in all her works that she did not lack imagination or literary talent.[6] In fact, it seems quite natural in writers to base their fiction on personal experiences. As poet William Butler Yeats stated in his essay 'A General Introduction for my Work',

> A poet writes always of his personal life, in his finest work out of its tragedy, whatever it be, remorse, lost love, or mere loneliness; he never speaks directly as to someone at the breakfast table, there is always a phantasmagoria … [E]ven when the poet seems most himself, … he is never the bundle of accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast; he has been reborn as an idea, something intended, complete. (Yeats 509)

What writers offer, therefore, is always an elaborate piece of fiction based on a personal experience, and this should never be understood as a lack of imagination.

The autobiographical connection between Manning's life and her fiction has been the basis of most critical and scholar criticism on her and it has provoked two opposed reactions. Some, like Irvine Wardle, believe the fact that she wrote out of experience affects the novels negatively. In his review of *Friends and Heroes* for the *Observer*, he wrote that Harriet Pringle (the female protagonist of *The Balkan Trilogy*) is "a dubious witness. Even the characterisation becomes suspect ... The undisclosed degree of alliance between Harriet and her creator makes one wary of the novel's larger purpose" (qtd. in Braybrooke 188). This

[6] Derek Mahon talked about this in a radio programme about Manning entitled 'Never a Day without a Line' that was broadcast on Radio 3 by the BBC in 1981. Mahon states that, for example, one could think that one of Manning's later novels, *The Rainforest*, is set on an real island in the Indian Ocean, but in fact it is not, Manning completely invented all the setting. He also mentions the scenes of the war in the desert described in *The Levant Trilogy*. He believes Manning's depiction of it is "extremely convincing", but of course she had no experience on that. Equally, David claims that Manning's "self-deprecating denial of a feel for fantasy is contradicted by her earliest publications – the thrilling adventure serials that appeared in her local newspaper when she was in her early twenties." (David 5)

mistrust and rejection of the autobiographical element in *Friends and Heroes* may seem unreasonable. In the essay "Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel" (1941), Bakhtin traces the origins of the novel as a genre in the Socratic Dialogues (fourth century BC) and other serio-comical genres of the time, and he explains that

> the "serio-comical" is characterized by a deliberate and explicit autobiographical and memoirist approach. The shift of the temporal centre of artistic orientation, which placed on the same temporally valorised plane the author and his readers (on the one hand) and the world and heroes described by him (on the other), making them contemporaries, possible acquaintances, friends, familiarising their relations (we again recall the novelistic opening of *Onegin*), permits the author, in all his various masks and faces, to move freely onto the field of his represented world, a field that in the epic had been absolutely inaccessible and closed. (27)

Bakhtin also claims that the novel materialised when epic distance was abandoned, when writers started dealing with unfinished events in the on-going present, and he adds that "at its core lay personal experience and free creative imagination" (39). Writing with an autobiographical and memoirist approach was already a feature of the genres from which the novel evolved, and it is a feature of the novel in itself. Hence, Wardle's suspicion of the autobiographical element in Manning's novel may seem unjustified.

In fact, many other scholars have embraced these links between the author's personal life and her work. Basing their readings on the autobiographical element, Hartley (1997) and Theodore Steinberg (2005) examined Manning as a war novelist, and Phyllis Lassner (2004) read her as an anti-imperialist writer. The well-known novelist Rachel Cusk has also emphasised the idea that "Guy and Harriet are Olivia and Reggie's undisguised alter egos" (viii). But undoubtedly, one of the most outstanding of these scholars is Deirdre David, who

in 2013 published *Olivia Manning: A Woman at War*, a literary biography of the author. Just as the Braybrookes had done, David narrates the life of Manning, but she goes a step further by tracing all the parallels between the author's life and her work (both fictional and non-fictional). She presents Manning as a woman and writer who was at war on different fronts (mostly figuratively, but also literally during World War II) from her early childhood to the moment she died. David writes about Manning's hostile relationship with her unloving mother, about the constant arguments her parents had because of her father's infidelities, about her jealousy of her brother, and about Manning's loathing of Portsmouth and its provincialism, and explains how these unhappy memories of her early life are reflected in most of the writer's work. We also read about Manning's economic difficulties once in London and about her everlasting struggle to become a successful writer in a world mostly ruled by men. This, David argues, explains why Manning's protagonists are often strong, intelligent women who, one could say, try to achieve public recognition and a certain degree of independence from men. David recounts Manning's tumultuous sentimental life too: her first known partner, Hamish Miles, whom she loved deeply, was a married man, and he died after three years of relationship; her marriage to Reggie Smith was hurried, and even though it lasted until Manning's death, it was certainly not always what she had expected, and they both had numerous extramarital affairs. Again, David points out how all this shaped Manning's representations of amorous and marital relationships. And undoubtedly, the author's first-hand experience of the Second World War in the Balkan and Levant countries is most evident in Manning's work, especially in the two trilogies: "her life as a woman at war is scrambled and disjunctive, punctuated by the violence of public history and of private trauma" (David 14-15). With her literary biography, David accomplishes what seem to be her two main goals: she presents Manning as a survivor of the numerous war fronts in her life,

from her early days in Portsmouth to her last days in London, and she vindicates the need to re-examine and revalue Manning's much obliterated work.

Two years before David, scholar Eve Patten published the first full-length study of Manning's writing: *Imperial Refugee: Olivia Manning's Fictions of War* (2011). Patten connects Manning's war writing to several literary genres and styles – such as the autobiography and the Gothic, and she suggests several interesting literary affiliations – to name a few, Elizabeth Taylor, Elizabeth Bowen, Storm Jameson, and even Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh and Paul Scott among many others. Patten also examines issues of identity, the theme of displacement – recurrent in Manning's novels, and the figure of the wartime refugee. She does this by offering a historical and spatial reading of Manning's novels focusing on her representation of Romania, Greece, Egypt and Palestine during World War II. Catherine Smith notes that Eve Patten's monograph on Manning "rejects a simplistic biographical reading as one which adds little to an understanding of Manning's work" (118), and she praises Patten's attempts to explore Manning's "aesthetic of deracination" to assess the ideology of [the trilogies …] and to place the novels in the context of a woman's wartime writing that resists a patriarchal 'norm'" (118). However, it must still be acknowledged that Patten's book is, in her own words, "a literary biography, shaped by the parameters of the Second World War" (9), and therefore Manning's life and experiences are essential to Patten's reading of the novels.

The publication of Patten's and David's literary biographies put an end to the lack of critical interest on Manning, and undoubtedly, they represent the most important critical works of her fiction up to date. That a great part of Manning's life is present in her work is undeniable, and, as David claims, "to ignore the resemblance between a tracing of the life and a reading of her work would be to evade exploration of the enticing interstices between what actually happened and how what actually happened gets shaped into compelling stories" (9).

However, it seems to me that these autobiographical readings of Manning's work fail to provide a successful and complete account of all her writing. Marc McLaughlin's review of David's book pinpoints at this problem: David's "campaign to prove that Manning's life is accurately rendered in her trilogies is deflated by various factors, including admissions that Manning was often economical with the truth" (343). McLaughlin concludes that David's work "falls short of offering a sustainable, standalone case for a renegotiation of Manning's current, peripheral position in the canon as a 'talented observer' of wartime" (344).

Indeed, autobiographical readings are circular and eventually restrictive, and they can hardly lead to new readings of Manning's novels now that all the autobiographical connections have been established. In addition, they do not explain what could be initially understood as contradictions or inconsistencies in Manning's works. For example, it is undeniable now that Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy* are war writings, yet, as I will examine in chapter four, their protagonist does not seem follow the accepted forms of behaviour of women in times of war as described by Sandra Gilbert (1983) or Kenneth Howard (1945) amongst others. Likewise, Manning has also been read as an anti-imperialist writer, yet as I will argue in chapter three, she usually describes the settings and events in her novels from the point of view of a British character and as an outsider, and native 'colonised' characters are rarely involved.

1.4. OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

Taking the idea that a literary reading of Manning's work based on her great novelistic skill rather than on her life is possible as a starting point, and in the belief that Manning's work is much aware of the great debates of the twentieth century, in this dissertation I intend to analyse Manning's narration of World War II focusing on the figure of the war narrator, on

the representation of place and space, and on the portrayal of sexuality and gender from a literary rather than autobiographical point of view.

I will now outline the structure and content of my thesis:

Chapter two, entitled "Narration of War: the Figure of the Witness", studies the narration of war and explores the role of the fictional hero as a witness of war. Taking Mark Rawlinson's *British Writing of the Second World War* (2000) and Kate McLoughlin's *Authoring War: The Literary Representation of War from the Iliad to Iraq* (2011) as a theoretical framework, this chapter analyses Manning as a Second World War writer and examines the different strategies she used to convey war. The different fictional witnesses of war in *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy*, both male and female, combatant and non-combatant, are analysed in order to see who portrays war more comprehensively.

Chapter three is entitled "'A Global War. A War of Globe-Trotters. A Traveler's War': The Balkan and Levant Countries in Olivia Manning's Fortunes of War". Taking Paul Fussell's *Abroad* (1979) and McLoughlin's chapter 'Zones' as a starting point, this chapter offers an analysis of the portrayal of place and travelling in wartime, and compares different characters' responses to their surroundings in *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy*. Furthermore, this chapter analyses Manning's representation of Romania, Greece and Egypt and of its native people, taking into account that these countries were (or had been) territories under the influence of the former British Empire.

Chapter four is entitled "War and Gender in Manning's Trilogies", and it explores the different ways in which war alters gender roles in Manning's war fiction. With the starting hypothesis that Manning's heroine fails to follow the pattern of female sexual behaviour in wartime as described by Gilbert (1983) and Howard (1945), this chapter studies the different ways in which the public and domestic sphere interact in Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy* and

The Levant Trilogy. To do this, I examine Manning's portrayal of sexuality, marriage, home and motherhood to analyse the different ways in which they are altered by the war.

Finally, the conclusions chapter presents the main ideas that emerge from my findings in chapters two, three and four. These general conclusions are followed by a suggestion for possible lines of future research.

CHAPTER 2: NARRATION OF WAR: THE FIGURE OF THE WITNESS

It is widely accepted now that Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy* are war books, and in fact scholars such as Hartley have stated that "[a] study of women's Second World War fiction would be incomplete without Manning's two great trilogies, *The Balkan Trilogy* (1960 – 1965) and *The Levant Trilogy* (1977 – 1980). In her six-volume epic of a woman in the zones of war, Manning has succeeded in her complex project of getting history into fiction" (179). Similarly, Patten believes *The Levant Trilogy* is "among the most vivid fictional representations of wartime experience to exist in modern literature in English" (111). Most of the arguments scholars have given to support this idea are based on the fact that Manning herself experienced World War II, but very few go past the autobiographical connections between Manning and her work. The aim of this chapter is therefore to analyse Manning's skills as a war writer and to explore the different techniques she used to convey war and history in her fiction. To do this, I will consider inarticulate war narrators in Manning's trilogies (war as a war reporter) and also articulate war narrators, paying special attention to the comic tradition in war writing, issues like authoritativeness and credibility, and the figure of the fictional witness.

When trying to examine any literary narration of World War II one needs to take Rawlinson's *British Writing of the Second World War* and McLoughlin's *Authoring War: The Literary Representation of War from the Iliad to Iraq* as a starting point, for they are possibly the most complete recent accounts of the representation of war in literature. Rawlinson focuses exclusively on the narratives of the Second World War, often comparing or juxtaposing them to the Great War ones, while McLoughlin aims at being as comprehensive as possible and offers a historical study of the literary representation across all genres of

different wars in different geographical and cultural contexts, from the representation of the Trojan war in *The Iliad* until literary representations of World War II, the Vietnam War and even the Iraq war.

Even though Rawlinson and McLoughlin analyse different texts, they identify certain challenges that war writers often seem to encounter and they describe the strategies that have been most used to face them. This chapter focuses on the different strategies related to the war narrator, and explores whether and how Manning applied them in her two war trilogies.

2.1. WAR'S RESISTANCE TO LITERARY REPRESENTATION

Both Rawlinson and McLoughlin acknowledge the difficulties of representing war and violence. War resists literary representation because, McLoughlin argues, there is "a complex set of problematics relating now to authorial powers, now to the nature of the subject matter, now to the medium of representation, now to the reader's response – and now to other intangible variables" (7). The bellicose rhetoric traditionally used in epic writings seems to fail in recounting modern warfare, and modern writers struggle to find ways of narrating war. Leo Tolstoy, as McLoughlin notes, was already aware of these difficulties, and when his Nicolai Rostov, a character in *War and Peace* (1869), has to describe a war scene in which he has participated, he does so using the language he knows is expected of him:

> He described the Schön Graben affair exactly as men who have taken part in battles always do describe them – that is, as they would like them to have been, as they have heard them described by others, and as sounds well, but not in the least as they really had been. (qtd. in McLoughlin 1)

This excerpt exposes the break between combatant and officialdom: Rostov did not describe war as he had actually witnessed it because his narration would not have conformed to the

(traditional) official discourses, and consequently, it would not have been accepted as true and valid. [7]

This idea that there is a specific language used to describe war which writers cannot seem to escape is supported by Julia Kristeva's and Roland Barthes' ideas of intertextuality. In 'Word, Dialogue and Novel' (1966) Kristeva recalls Mikhail Bakhtin's theory and argues that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (qtd. in McLoughlin 6) and similarly, in *Image, Music, Text* (1977) Barthes argues that "a text is ... a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (qtd. in McLoughlin 6). The 'absorption' and 'transformation' of previous narrations of war is therefore a common way for writers of eluding war's resistance to representation, but, ironically enough, this in turn perpetuates the "official" or traditional bellicose rhetoric which does not seem to recount modern warfare successfully.

When writing her two Second World War trilogies, Manning must have confronted the limitations of language to describe war, and therefore she had to rely on the rhetoric used in previous narrations to build her own. Manning had read a great amount of epic narratives conscientiously, and she was consequently familiar with the bellicose rhetoric used in literature. In a BBC radio programme broadcast in 1981, Neville Braybrooke revealed that she had studied Tolstoy's battle scenes thoroughly. Jeremy Treglown also comments on this and adds that:

> Manning herself hadn't, of course, seen front-line military action, but she knew people who had, and came closer to it than a lot of men who actually 'served'.

[7] In *Wartime* (1989), Fussell explains that this happened too in the making of the documentary *Desert Victory* (1943). One of the cameramen admitted in a TV programme in 1981 that some scenes had been filmed at the infantry base depot, and that the film-makers were trying to "fix up 'an ideal situation from a picture point of view, … trying to recreate war as we were all taught in history books.'" Fussell adds that "the action must be rendered in the received clichés: otherwise it will look inauthentic to the audience" (190).

> Besides, war is as much a subject for the imagination as anything else, and ever more so as the events themselves recede into the past. (Treglown 153)

Following this same idea, McLoughlin claims that "war, as a subject, is the greatest test of a writer's skills of evocation" (9). Hence, what Manning did was, to use McLoughlin's terms, *absorb* a variety of accounts of war, both from the literary and military worlds, and then *transform* these into her own in her trilogies.

McLoughlin also makes reference to Fussell's idea in *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) that "literature leaks in" (qtd. in McLoughlin 13), and she explains that "perceptions (as well as representations) of warfare are shaped by previous representations" (13). It must be noted, though, that in the case of twentieth century war writing, these *previous representations* that work as reference point are not all war narrations but First World War narrations in particular. In his introduction to *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry* (2006), George Walter explains that "the First World War was, in a very real sense, the first total war: total in that no-one who lived through it could remain untouched by it" (xi). Possibly because of this, there was a shift in the attitude towards war at the beginnings of the twentieth century and this was represented in literature: First World War poetry did not portray war as ennobling; instead, poets tried to use realism to represent "a demystified truth about war" (Rawlinson 9), and this was a turning point in twentieth century war literature. In relation to this, Rawlinson states that

> it is a commonplace that a cadre of English Great War poets and memoirists helped redefine attitudes to war by altering the way it was described in literature. Viewing the poetry of disenchantment as a cultural watershed in the representation of war thus superposes emergent moral and rhetorical distinctions. […] The prominence of this writing has tended to polarize violence and discourse. (9)

Violence and literature were posited as opposite and therefore narrations of war did not justify or glorify it anymore. I shall refer to this again further on in this chapter in the subsection 'Authoritativeness and Credibility' of this chapter.

Fussell makes similar points in *Wartime: Understanding and Behaviour in the Second World War* (1989). He discusses the Second World War by making constant allusions to the Great War, whether to pinpoint similarities or differences. Of course, many people who lived through World War II had already lived through the First World War[8], or had a close relative who had, and therefore their expectations and their whole experience of the new war was shaped by it.[9] Fussell stresses this idea especially in chapter 'The Ideological Vacuum'. Here, the scholar explains that those who fought the Second World War "had access to a lot of profoundly unbellicose literature not available to Rupert Brooke and his enthusiastic fellows. If the troops of the Second World War had not read, they'd at least heard of the general point made by Remarque", and also, Fussell adds, by Henri Barbusse, Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon, Ernest Hemingway and Frederic Manning (130). The outcome of this familiarity with the literature of the Great War was that there was general disillusionment about the Second World War even before it started.

[8] In chapter 'Unread Books on a Shelf', Fussell talks about the great amount of time spent waiting and the feeling of boredom during wartime, and he gives the example of Leonard Woolf: "People his age, he says, already know the feeling from their experience of the Great War, and this is one thing that makes living through the Second one so appalling" (76).

[9] Even some of the language used by Great War soldiers was adopted by Second World War soldiers. The adjective *fucking*, for example, had been often used in the Great War and it featured often too during the Second World War, especially amongst British troops, so much so that, Fussell explains, "it was noticed in an official War Office pamphlet of October, 1941, issued not to reprehend the usage but simply to warn against careless identification of strangers" (94).

2.2. WAR AS A WAR REPORTER

Once the limitations of language to convey such an abstract and complex subject as war have been acknowledged, an exploration of how writers have reported it becomes necessary. In her study of the figure of the war reporter, McLoughlin states that "the first reporter of war is war itself" (23). The scholar explains that war has its own way of voicing itself through noise and commotion. In addition, surviving bodies, physical wounds and any other bodily symptoms communicate war too. All these are signs and proof that conflict and battle have taken place. "The reporting of war", McLoughlin explains, "need not be articulate" (24).

War reports itself in Manning's trilogies too. Describing the noise caused by war and acknowledging surviving bodies and physical wounds in her novels did not only allow Manning to express war and its effects but also to convey the feel of it to its readers. In one scene of *Friends and Heroes*, the last volume of *The Balkan Trilogy*, the air-raid sirens wail when Harriet is returning from the Acropolis in Athens with Charles Warden, an English soldier. They find shelter in the basement of an unfinished office block:

> Though they could see nothing, they could feel the breathing presence of people and, uncertain what was ahead, came to a stop just inside the door. As a precaution against panic, it was forbidden to speak during a raid, but the whole shelter was alive with small noises, as though the floor ran with mice. The traffic had been stopped and the city was still. The noise, when it came, was shocking. One explosion followed another, each uproarious so it seemed that the bombs were bursting overhead. The concrete shuddered and a moan of terror passed over the crowded basement. (832)

In this fragment, Manning does not offer an objective, detailed description of bombs exploding and of the damage they cause in the city but rather the air raid reports itself through

the noises it creates (the shelter was 'alive with small noises', 'the city was still', and 'one explosion followed another, each uproarious so it seemed that the bombs were bursting overhead') and the effects these have on the listeners ('the noise … was shocking' and 'a moan of terror passed over the crowded basement'), and this brings readers closer to the experience of it as lived by the characters.

Similarly, there are descriptions of surviving bodies in the trilogies, and their mere presence reports that the war has taken and is taking place. An example of this can be found again in *Friends and Heroes*, when the German army have taken over much of Greece and the British party know they will have to leave soon. Harriet is out waiting for Guy when she sees Greek soldiers walking along the side of the road:

> Like the British soldiers she had seen on the first lorries to Athens, these men, […] gave an impression of weightlessness. Their flesh had shrunk from want of food, but that had happened to everyone in Greece. With these men, it was as though their bones had become hollow like the bones of birds. Their uniforms, that shredded like worn-out paper, were dented by their gaunt, bone-sharp shoulders and arms. (1015)

The portrayal of these returning soldiers as skinny and 'gaunt' does not match the heroic images of strong, proud soldiers in war propaganda posters but rather unveils the merciless reality of poverty and devastation brought about by the war. The poster in figure 7 exemplifies this (see fig. 7): it shows British RAF soldiers who look healthy and happy, an image which contrasts sharply with Manning's depiction of extremely weak soldiers, which allows readers to see the horrors and consequences of the war on those who fought it and

Fig. 7. *Never Was So Much Owed by So Few*.
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survived.[10] As McLoughlin explains, "those who have experienced war carry its news despite themselves, inescapably and for life: de facto war reporters, living bulletins" (24).

Another example of the presence of surviving bodies that work as living proof that battle is taking place in the trilogies is Simon's. In *The Sum of Things* (1980), the last volume

[10] Rawlinson suggests that airmen were the great heroes of the Second World War. Certainly, at the time Britain had the machines and technology (i.e. the airplanes) but there were not many pilots – hence the 'so few' in the poster, and in a way the country was dependent on these men. In chapter 'The Figure of the Airman', Rawlinson explains that "heroic individualism was at once defined against, and dependent upon, industrial technology and national administration" (39). The scholar adds that these "contradictory figures of the airman as both individualist and disciplinary subject of technology […] are the heroes of seemingly opposed narratives of the Second World War" (44-45). Rawlinson exemplifies this with an analysis of different literary representations of airmen.

of *The Levant Trilogy*, he and his driver Crosby are driving their jeep towards a palm tree to eat their lunch when a booby-trap blows up. Crosby dies, but Simon survives. He is taken to the hospital at Helwan, and then to Burg el Arab. During his stay in both hospitals, Simon does not only see surviving men, "men in wheel-chairs propelling themselves up and down the aisle" (382), but he is a survivor himself. He cannot feel his legs below the knees, so his descriptions of his own body, of the treatment he receives and of his slow recovery function in the novel as reminders that a war is being fought. I talk about physical wounds working as signs of the war and of its effects on those affected by it in the next paragraphs too.

Finally, the description not only of surviving bodies but more specifically of physical wounds caused by the war is a visual sign that a war is being fought which leaves an imprint on those near it. The most striking example of mutilation in Manning's two trilogies can be found in the opening chapter of *The Danger Tree* (1977), the first volume of *The Levant Trilogy*. Simon Boulderstone has just arrived in Cairo and he has joined a group of British people in a visit to the pyramids. Harriet is there too. After some sightseeing, the British party decide to pay a visit to Sir Desmond Hooper, who they think will be able to give them some information on the present military and political situation. When they are all in the Hoopers' house, Angela Hooper arrives with two safragis who carry the Hoopers' son:

> He lay prone and motionless, a thin, small boy of eight or nine with the same delicate features as his mother: only something had happened to them. One eye was missing. There was a hole in the left cheek that extended into the torn wound which had been his mouth. Blood had poured down his chin and was caked on the collar of his open-necked shirt. The other eye, which was open, was lacklustre and blind like the eye of a dead rabbit. (34-35)

They boy has lost one eye and he has an open wound in his cheek from which blood has been pouring. He and his mother had been in the desert when he picked up a bomb which exploded

in his hand. This crude and explicit description of the wounds in the boy's face caused by the explosion of the bomb is not only a clear trace that a war is taking place and that it leaves imprints on bodies, but a very powerful one, since this war is not only leaving marks on the soldiers fighting in it, but also on the civilians who try to live through it: the horror of the war is brought into the home. The fact that the deadly wounds described are those of a child intensifies this effect that World War II is really present in the novel and that it even affects innocent creatures who are completely unrelated to the military or political scene. I shall return to this scene in chapter 'War and Gender in Manning's Trilogies'.

Noise, surviving bodies and wounds, as McLoughlin states, tell a story and register presence, and so they do in Manning's trilogies too: they are inarticulate narrators of war.

2.3. ARTICULATE WAR NARRATOR

2.3.1. THE COMIC TRADITION

In their struggle to overcome war's resistance to literary representation, writers do not only rely on war's own means of self-reporting but also on the figure of an articulate war narrator. This reporting figure, McLoughlin explains, should have certain qualities such as "noticeability, authoritativeness, accountability and credibility" (26). The scholar states that one possible strategy to show singularity and achieve noticeability is to portray war or the war narrator in a comic way (34), and adds that "the satirising of the war reporter figure may reflect weakening public confidence in the possibility of conveying significant information about conflict," and that "one technique of successfully delivering data about war might therefore be to *down*play the skills of the reporter. While incompetence potentially attracts as much attention as mastery, it has the happy side-effect of lowering expectations to a more realistic level" (35). The scholar exemplifies this with W. H. Auden and Isherwood's *Journey*

to a War (1939), in which the writers accidentally adopted the role of war reporters: she explains that "in parodying the professional correspondents they encounter, they are exposing the limitations of the uniformed, temporary observer […] But this raises the awkward question of what the 'real journalists' might be able to achieve" (36).

Manning incorporates this comic tradition in her war trilogies mainly through the character of Yakimov, and she does so at three different levels. On the one hand, in *The Great Fortune* Yakimov becomes a war reporter for a while to substitute McCann, a professional journalist who has been hurt while covering a shooting, and not only are Yakimov's skills as a reporter *downplayed*, to use McLoughlin's term, but they are also questioned. All Yakimov needs to do is follow McCann's orders and in exchange he is given a room in a hotel in Bucharest where he is given unlimited credit to eat and drink. Of course Yakimov is not a journalist himself, so he sees this opportunity as an entertaining adventure, and he explains this to his British acquaintances as such:

> He told the whole story of his meeting with McCann, of the plight of the Poles outside the hotel, of the sleeping girl, the scarf that had been buried with the dead. […] The others, though entertained, were disconcerted that such a story should be told like a funny anecdote, but when he opened his arms and said: 'Think of it! Think of your poor old Yaki become an accredited war correspondent,' his face expressed such comic humility at so unlikely a happening that they were suddenly won to him. (43)

Manning depicts Yakimov as a war reporter comically, and in turn, he perceives and portrays the job to his friends in a comic way too. Even though Yakimov is initially rather amused by his temporary assignment, he does not take it seriously, and he proves to be a terrible war correspondent. And here again, just as it is the case in Auden and Isherwood's *Journey to a War*, Yakimov's ineptitude to report World War II in Bucharest raises the question of how

credible or reliable the information about the war in the media was. In Manning's *The Great Fortune*, Romania's Prime Minister Calinescu has been shot, but Yakimov is completely oblivious about this because when everything happened the previous night and the news spread out, he was at a party drinking heavily, and he only finds out about it the following day when he meets Galpin, another British journalist. Galpin is astonished: "You hadn't heard of the assassination? You didn't know the frontier's closed, the international line is dead, they won't let us send cables, and no one's allowed to leave Bucharest? You don't know, my good chappie, that you're in mortal danger?" (74). Even though he is supposed to be working as a war reporter, Yakimov is completely unaware of the reality around him. Another journalist remarks: "'Fortune favours fools,' he said. 'We were forced to tarry while he slumbered'" (75). It is noteworthy that Yakimov is referred to as a fool here, but what happens next is even more thought-provoking: Galpin starts to tell Yakimov about the assassination and he does so with so much detail that Yakimov thinks Galpin saw it himself:

> 'Filled him full of lead,' Galpin broke in. 'He clung to the car door – little pink hands, striped trousers, little new patent-leather shoes. Then he slid down. Patches of dust on the side of his shoes…'
>
> 'You saw it?' Yakimov opened his eyes in admiration, but Galpin remained disapproving.
>
> 'It was seen,' he added: 'What the heck were you up to? Were you drunk?' (74-75)

Galpin is reporting Calinescu's assassination in great detail, but he has not seen it himself, and therefore he does not know if this is actually true. Stating "it was seen" does not imply the information is reliable, and it can be argued that, as McLoughlin states often happens, here Manning is questioning what 'real journalists' were able to achieve. This is reminiscent of Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop* (1938), which clearly exposes the inefficiency and inaccuracy of war

reporters at the time. In *Scoop*, William Boot, a country-dweller who writes a column about nature in *The Beast*, is mistaken for John Boot, a well-known novelist and history and travel writer, and is sent to cover and report a war in Ishmaelia. On his way there he meets another Englishman called Corker who works as a journalist for a news agency. Neither Corker nor William know who is fighting the war in Ishmaelia or why, but Corker, who is more experienced in the job, is not worried about this. He explains William how journalism works:

> Corker recounted the heroic legends of Fleet Street; he told of the classic scoops and hoaxes; of the confessions wrung from hysterical suspects; of the innuendo and intricate misrepresentations, the luscious, detailed inventions that composed contemporary history; of the positive, daring lies that got a chap a rise of screw; how Wenlock Jakes, highest paid journalist of the United States, scooped the world with an eye-witness story of the sinking of *Lusitania* four hours before she was hit; how Hitchcock, the English Jakes, straddling over his desk in London, had chronicled day by day the horrors of the Messina earthquake. (Waugh 66)

Readers are told about 'hoaxes', 'misrepresentations', 'inventions', 'lies' and 'eye-witness' stories which have not been eye-witnessed at all. And, according to Waugh's character Corker, not only do journalists lie about reality and invent news, but they can even change the course of a country at their convenience:

> 'Why, once Jakes went out to cover a revolution in one of the Balkan capitals. He overslept in his carriage, woke up at the wrong station, didn't know any different, got out, went straight to an hotel, and cabled off a thousand-word story about barricades in the street, flaming churches, machine-guns answering the rattle of his type-writer as he wrote, a dead child, like a broken doll, spreadeagled in the deserted roadway below his window – you know.'

> ‘Well, they were pretty surprised at his office, getting a story like that from the wrong country, but they trusted Jakes and splashed it in six national newspapers. That day every special in Europe got orders to rush to the new revolution. They arrived in shoals. Everything seemed quiet enough, but it was as much as their jobs were worth to say so, with Jakes filing a thousand words of blood and thunder a day. So they chimed in too. Government stocks dropped, financial panic, state of emergency declared, army mobilised, famine, mutiny and in less than a week there was an honest to God revolution under way, just as Jakes had said. There’s the power of the press for you.’ (67)

On the one hand, this fragment exposes the general lack of knowledge about the Balkans. Jakes, the journalist, is in the wrong country, but he does not seem to realise or care about that. He invents and describes a revolution in the wrong Balkan country, yet the press in London decide to publish it anyway, probably assuming their audience will not be able to distinguish one Balkan country from the next. I shall talk about the representation of Balkan countries in British literature again in chapter three. On the other hand, the fragment above discloses how careless and inefficient some journalists could be at the time, falling asleep on the train and waking up at the wrong country, and also how unscrupulous they could be, inventing a whole revolution in a peaceful place just to keep newspapers’ sales high in Britain. The phrase “machine-guns answering the rattle of his type-writer” suggests a parallel between the industrial way of producing and firing arms and an industrial way of producing and printing news. Jakes’s type-writer makes a rattling noise when he types a thousand words just as machine guns do when they fire a thousand bullets. The excerpt above also emphasises the great power of journalism, even over the course of a country: Jakes has to produce news about war, and since there is no war or revolution around him, he invents one, with the result that the economy of the country drops, an “state of emergency [is] declared”, and in a few

days there is an actual revolution going on. Waugh ridicules the blind faith newspapers had in journalists and reporters, he exposes how far the press can go in order to make money and keep the business running, and he uses humour to denounce the extreme power of journalism. Similarly, in Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy*, news about the war was being sent to England, but the trustworthiness of this news seems to be dubious: her reporters write about things they have not seen themselves, and they often go around on the track of news, passing information on to one another.

On the other hand, Yakimov is also portrayed comically as a character and secondary indirect narrating voice in *The Balkan Trilogy*. He seems to fulfil the role of the Fool traditionally found in theatre plays rather than in novels. So what is a Fool exactly? According to Enid Welsford, who is possibly the most renowned expert in the field, a Fool is "a man who falls below the average of human standard, but whose defects have been transformed into a source of delight, a mainspring of comedy, which has always been one of the great recreations of mankind and particularly of civilized mankind" (xi). In her *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (1968), Welsford distinguishes between three types of fool: the Parasite or Buffoon, the Court-Fool, and the Stage-Clown. Parasites or Buffoons are the type of fool who resemble more the normal man, they have a special ability for eluding problems, they entertain the people around them, and, as Welsford explains, "if they have little conscience and no shame they often manage to make a handsome profit out of their supposed irresponsibility" (3). They are different from the Court-Fool because the latter one

> causes amusement not merely by absurd gluttony, merry gossip, or knavish tricks, but by mental deficiencies or physical deformities which deprive him both of rights and responsibilities and put him in the paradoxical position of virtual outlawry combined with utter dependence on the support of the social group to which he belongs. (55)

Finally, Welsford refers to the Stage-Clown and explains that he "is differentiated from the buffoon only by the fact that his comic personality belongs wholly to the fantastic world behind the footlights" (273).

Manning's character Yakimov seems to fall into the category of the Parasite or Buffoon as described by Welsford perfectly. Buffoons are not really stupid or mentally deranged, they simply take advantage of their own weaknesses instead of being abused by others. Still, they are similar to other comic fools because they earn their living "by openly acknowledged failure to attain to the normal standard of human dignity" (3). Towards the end of Manning's *The Great Fortune* readers are shown that Yakimov, like the Parasites or Buffoons Welsford describes, does not suffer from any psychological limitation, but he simply dislikes effort:

> He had always nursed the belief that if he ever tried to exert himself the result would be remarkable. At school, where he had been the droll of the class, one of the masters had said: 'Yakimov is such a fool, he must be a genius.' And Dollie had often said: 'There's more to Yaki than you think.' (275)

Neither does Yakimov suffer from any physical deformity. He does, however, achieve singularity because of his appearance. He is tall and very thin, and he always wears a long sable-lined greatcoat, which, he often explains, was given to him by the Czar. On one occasion he attends a party wearing odd shoes (one black and one brown) with the intention of entertaining people: "At the party someone would be sure to mention the fact that he was wearing odd shoes" (50), and he hopes this costume will give him the chance of making a joke out of it. And even his voice marks him out as a Fool figure: "Yakimov's normal voice was thin, sad and unvarying, the voice of a cultured Punchinello" (43).

Buffoons already proliferated in Ancient Greece, and they were still highly popular in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth century. They wandered about freely, their wit was

appreciated and they had a talent for explaining good stories about themselves. This is precisely what Yakimov does for a living in Manning's trilogies: he frequents bars and restaurants looking for acquaintances who will pay for his food and drink while he entertains them, and as a matter of fact he is precisely known because of this: he is once even introduced to other characters as "'[s]omething of a raconteur and joker'" (Manning, *BT* 40).

If buffoons ran out of stories, Welsford explains, "to increase their repertoire they would play comic and sometimes very dishonest tricks on the various people they met on their journeys, and they would then hasten to the nearest court to tell the story and get a handsome tip as a reward for their roguery" (13). Again, this is reminiscent of Yakimov: when he can no longer afford to live in the Athenee Palace, a hotel in Bucharest, or to pay for a flat or room in a guesthouse, he has nowhere to go and no money, so Guy and Harriet take him in temporarily. During this time, Guy and some of his friends join the "Sheepy's Fighting Force", which is an unofficial secret private army that for a short period of time plans to blow up the German oil wells near the Danube. Yakimov finds out about this, and when he goes to visit his German friend Count Freddi von Flügel, he tells on Guy. Yakimov does not betray Guy with the intention of causing him trouble, but simply because he wants to win his German friend's sympathy and he needs new stories to keep him entertained.

The buffoon, Welford states, "is a comic character who uses his immediate surroundings as both stage and auditorium, and is often a raconteur and extempore poet" (26-27). In this respect, Manning's Yakimov is reminiscent of Shakespeare's Falstaff, who, according to Welsford, "is the typical buffoon, seen, understood and interpreted by Shakespeare" (52). Both characters live mainly from borrowed money, Falstaff leads Prince Hal into trouble just as Yakimov leads Guy and the other members of the "Sheepy's Fighting Force" into trouble, and they both manage to evade the negative consequences of their misdoings on most occasions. In spite of the obvious differences between one and the other,

even their ends are comparably sad and tragic, as they are both abandoned when they are no longer useful or needed: Falstaff is ultimately repudiated when Prince Hal is crowned King, and Yakimov's dead body is left unmourned on the toilet floor of a hotel. I shall analyse Yakimov's death in more depth later.

Finally, not only does Manning incorporate the comic tradition in her trilogies through Yakimov by having him fulfil the role of the terrible war reporter and of the Buffoon, but also by having him fulfil the role of a comedian or amateur actor who entertains audiences in the theatre. In the first volume of *The Balkan Trilogy* he performs the role of Pandarus in a production of *Troilus and Cressida* that Guy organises for the students of the British legation and for the British and Romanian elite in Bucharest, and in *Friends and Heroes*, the last volume of *The Balkan Trilogy*, he also plays the role of Maria Marten for another performance that Guy organises for the RAF in Greece. It is no coincidence that Yakimov plays the part of Pandarus in the performance of *Troilus and Cressida*. Shakespeare's play displays a world with few scruples, in which Pandarus is able to negotiate with both sides at his convenience. Pandarus, like Manning's Yakimov, is a rogue, and they are both funny. Yakimov's performance in the play is a great success: "When the final curtain fell, the actors who received more applause were those who had been most themselves. For Yakimov there was an almost hysterical acclaim" (308). Again, his performance of Maria Marten for the RAF in Greece is outstanding and his success is enhanced by the fact that he plays a female character and he is cross-dressed:

> Maria, played by Yakimov, was met with unbelieving silence. Wearing false eyelashes, a blond wig, a print dress and sun-bonnet, he looked like a wolf disguised as Red Riding Hood's grandmother, but a wolf imitating outrageous, salacious girlhood. When he tripped to the footlights, put forefinger to chin and curtsied, a howl rose from the back of the hangar. The men, who had

> respectfully applauded the real women, were released into a furore of bawdry by the travesty of femininity. Yakimov acknowledged the shouts and whistles by fluttering his eyelashes. The howls were renewed. A full three minutes passed before anyone could speak. […] While Yakimov held the stage, there was a cross-talk of ribaldry between actors and audience. Maria's violent death brought a sense of loss to both. (859-860)

Maria Marten deals with the assassination of a young woman, shot dead by her lover and then buried in a barn. Even though the plot is dramatic, Yakimov's appearance and his interaction with the public provoke entertainment and laughter. The fact that the representation of the violent murder of Maria Marten provokes hilarity may be startling: McLoughlin states that "prima facie, war is agelastic [mirthless]" (165), and in this respect, murder is arguably comparable to war.

Another startling example of laughter in response to a dramatic situation in the trilogies is found in *The Sum of Things*, the third volume of *The Levant Trilogy*, when Simon is in hospital and he cannot feel his legs. After the doctor examines him, Simon asks:

> 'It'll mend, won't it, doc?'
>
> 'It's a question of time,' the doctor said and Simon, taking that to mean his paralysis was temporary, burst out laughing. When the doctor raised his brows, Simon said, 'I was thinking of my driver, Crosbie. He looked so funny going up into the air.'
>
> At Helwan, he was still laughing. Everything about his condition made him laugh. (382 -383)

It is initially shocking that Simon laughs at Crosbie's death and at his own paralysis, for there is nothing funny about either. However, McLoughlin explains that "laughter is not necessarily incompatible with high seriousness", and adds that it can be the result of "an appreciation of

the funny", but it can also express "superiority, relief, a recognition of incongruity, hostility and aggression, embarrassment, pleasure, anxiety, murderous violence […], subversion, camaraderie, sympathy, moral seriousness, sentimentality, absent-mindedness or radical criticism" (166). Therefore, the laughter of Manning's RAF soldiers watching Maria Marten's violent death and of Simon is used as a way of expressing feelings of anxiety and violence. According to McLoughlin, the laughter shown and aroused by war writing is "the risposte to the impression that war makes no sense" (167). This impression "is primarily a result of the vast disparity between the military endeavour and the individual caught up in it" (167). To this, she adds that the "God" of the war zone "is the war machine – the regimen of rules and requirements that runs apparently regardless of human needs and very often counter them. The war machine ensures not only that the war zone makes no sense, but that it makes *more* no sense than does nonsense outside the zone. Accordingly, the laughter it finally evokes is […] mirthless and nihilistic" (168). Of course, the most basic human need and instinct is survival, and being involved in a war poses this at high risk. Being in the war zone opposes this human need, and therefore it makes 'no sense', to use McLoughlin's words. In addition, there are radical differences between the war machine's aspirations and what actually happens, which can create a comic effect. Interestingly enough, Manning refers to this in *Friends and Heroes*:

> The war was, in its way, comic, but no one imagined it would remain comic for long. The Italians had behind them the weight of Axis armour. Beneath all the humour was the fear that the Greek line would break suddenly and the enemy arrive overnight. (721)

The main features of the war zone will be explained in greater depth in chapter three.

As stated, Yakimov offers entertainment and provokes laughter, but he is not only a source of humour in his role of the Fool: there is also a tragicomic irony around him aroused

by the contrast between his aspirations in life and reality, between his past and his present. In the past, Yakimov and his partner Dollie used to enjoy an opulent life and they would often throw big parties to entertain the high society. He had his Hispano-Suiza, a very luxurious car, and he was known as Prince Yakimov. But when Dollie died he was left with only a few possessions and no income, and all he keeps from that glorious past now is his coat. He is penniless and has to rely on mercy of others to get credit for food and alcohol, he only attends parties when someone invites him, and for a period of time he cannot even pay for a room so the Pringles temporarily have to take him in. In exchange, he entertains others with his stories of the better past. He makes a fool of himself and makes people laugh because it is all he has to offer:

> He sighed repeatedly, like a dog kept too long on trust, and at one point told the world: 'Haven't had a bite today.' Placing his elbows on his knees, he buried his face in his hands and his thoughts wandered. There had been a time when he could dress up into an anecdote every incident of his life. Every situation became a comic situation. He had, he supposed, a gift for it. In those days he had entertained for the sake of entertaining. It delighted him to be the centre of attention. When times changed, he had entertained for any reward he could get. He told himself: 'Poor old Yaki has to sing for his supper.' Now he had lost interest in anecdotes. He felt no great inclination to entertain anyone. This working for food and drink was exhausting him. He only wanted sustenance and peace. (Manning, *BT* 80)

The role of the Fool is imposed on him by his sad circumstances: he used to be *Prince* Yakimov, now, ironically enough, he is just a buffoon who "has to sing for his supper". In fact, even his death marks him as a proper Fool. Towards the end of the last volume of *The Balkan Trilogy*, the air-raid sirens sound when Yakimov, the Pringles and other British people

are having dinner at a hotel, and they all go to the terrace and wait for the All Clear. Tandy, one of Guy's acquaintances, decides to exercise himself "marching with a military strut" while smoking a cigarette. Yakimov "felt bound to imitate his companion" (999-1000). So Tandy is impersonating a soldier's march and Yakimov, probably intending to entertain everyone else with the show, decides to mimic him. However, their voices catch the attention of the police:

> As Yakimov drew on his cigarette, they shouted a command which no one but Alan Frewen understood. Yakimov drew again and the command was repeated. Alan raised himself in his chair, saying urgently: 'They're telling you to put out that cigarette,' but he spoke too late. The police were armed. One drew his revolver and fired. Tandy ducked and Yakimov folded slowly. He said in a whisper of puzzled protest: 'Dear boy!' and collapsed to the ground. His face retained the expression of his words. (1000)

Fools often mimic the way authority behaves, which is exactly what Yakimov is doing by imitating a soldier marching when the police shoot him dead by accident (the police officer only wanted to frighten him), and his last words are "Dear boy!", which is his catch phrase throughout the three novels. It seems ironic that he was never a soldier and in fact his attitude was always that of a coward, yet he is killed while imitating a soldier's march. And just as the dead bodies of soldiers are left or abandoned on the battlefield, so does his corpse lie unmourned in a hotel bathroom waiting to be buried:

> One of the police handed back Yakimov's passport and gave a salute and a little bow. The English would be troubled no further. The victim was free to go to his grave. The manager agreed to let the body rest for the night in one of the hotel bathrooms. The four friends followed as it was carried away from the terrace and placed on a bathroom floor. As the door was locked upon it, the all

> clear sounded. The manager, offering his commiserations, shook hands all round and the English party left the hotel. (1002)

Even though they die for completely different reasons, here again Yakimov's death partly echoes Shakespeare's Falstaff's. Falstaff's corpse is not properly mourned and buried, and similarly, because the British group have their own agenda (most of them are leaving Athens the following day), Yakimov's corpse is left alone on the bathroom floor.

It has been shown that, as McLoughlin states, one possible way to show singularity and achieve noticeability in war fiction is to present war and the war narrator in a comic way or following the comic tradition, and, as shocking as it may seem initially, humour and laughter are often part of this, even when laughter is not a reaction to an appreciation of a funny situation. Manning introduces this comic tradition too mainly through the character of Yakimov by presenting him as a Fool-like character in every possible way: he acts as a war reporter but his skills are downplayed and he fails at this job; he is marked physically by his singular appearance and his singular voice; he is an entertainer and a raconteur in exchange for food, alcohol and shelter; he performs in plays on several occasions to entertain the intellectual elite and the army; and he even dies while mimicking authority to entertain others, which is what fools often do.

2.3.2. AUTHORITATIVENESS AND CREDIBILITY

It is important for writers that the war narration or narrator is noticeable if they want their account to be considered. But in addition to these, there are other strategies or qualities which are often present in war writing: authoritativeness and credibility are key too for news about the war to be believed and accepted. According to McLoughlin, "one source of authoritativeness is the data itself, in a complex interplay with the manner of its delivery. The unadorned truth (complex though that is as a concept) delivered frankly and with attention drawn to the frankness conveys a kind of auto-reliability" (38). And this truthful data is

directly related to another of the sources of authority and credibility, perhaps the most obvious and important one, which is first-hand experience: "The eye-witness offers the epistemological guarantee *you can believe it because I saw it happen*" (42). Rawlinson also emphasises the idea that first-hand experience of the conflict seems to be the only way to give the narration authentication and to tackle these difficulties of representing war in literature. The scholar claims that "[o]nly experience can reinstate art's witness when war opens a gap between the world and the representation of that world" (10). Obviously, and as McLoughlin explains, the idea that direct experience of war is a requisite to write about it posed additional difficulties to women writers, who could not know what war was like in the battlefield and who could only gain access to material working as nurses and other similar jobs. The scholar notes that women were often not taken seriously as war writers (3), and claims that war writing should not be identified "as that written by a combatant, produced contemporaneously or related to events on the battlefield" but rather as that which deals with "the extreme experiences (dying, killing, injury, pain, loss, displacement, familial and national upheaval, etc.)" caused by war (10). What is more, McLoughlin states that since war strikes everyone, "the war reporter is potentially everywhere and everyone" (26), and she reinforces this idea by explaining that:

> battle is a unique order of experience, able to confer a particular authority on those who have undergone and seek to represent it. (And, it should be said, experiences such as living as a civilian in a city under bombardment and war-caused bereavement, loss and displacement are also unique experiences, conferring similar authority). (43)

War, therefore, should not be understood as actual fighting isolated from politics, language and society. In relation to this, Rawlinson suggests that one "should recall the plurality of discourses in which war experience is symbolised and note that official agencies of

information, no less than creative writers, must wrestle with both the history and the currency of particular symbols to make their meanings" (21). To this, and referring now to World War II exclusively, he adds:

> [i]f the iconography of the Western Front of 1914-1918 still permits us to envisage the spatial and demographic demarcations of a battlefield, the global extent of the Second World War – in which seemingly everyone was both a target and a belligerent producer – overwhelms the habits of cognitive mapping based on traditional figures for the contest of arms. (23)

One can recall Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who stated in one of his speeches in August 1940 when talking about World War II: "[t]he whole of the warring nations are engaged, not only soldiers, but the entire population, men, women and children. The fronts are everywhere" (qtd. in Rawlinson 31).

This idea of World War II being a global war is aptly summarised on the cover of Beevor's *The Second World War* (2012) with the statement "no human life untouched" (see fig. 8). The war was global not only geographically speaking, but also in terms of the vast number of people involved in it in many different ways, who witnessed its development, and could therefore write about it. As has been stated in the introductory chapter, Manning had direct experience of the Second World War from its outbreak to its end in the Balkan and Levant countries. In relation to this, in a BBC radio programme entitled 'Never a Day without a Line', which was broadcast on November 21st 1981 on Radio 3, the Irish poet Derek Mahon explains how Manning was lucky to find herself in Bucharest, in his words "a peculiar and unlikely spot", when the war started because it gave her a unique advantage as a writer and a lot of first hand experience which no other (British) writer had in that same place. Mahon comments on how she "used this exotic setting … and made the most of it" and adds that Manning's Bucharest "is a world of its own and a unique documentary record": she had

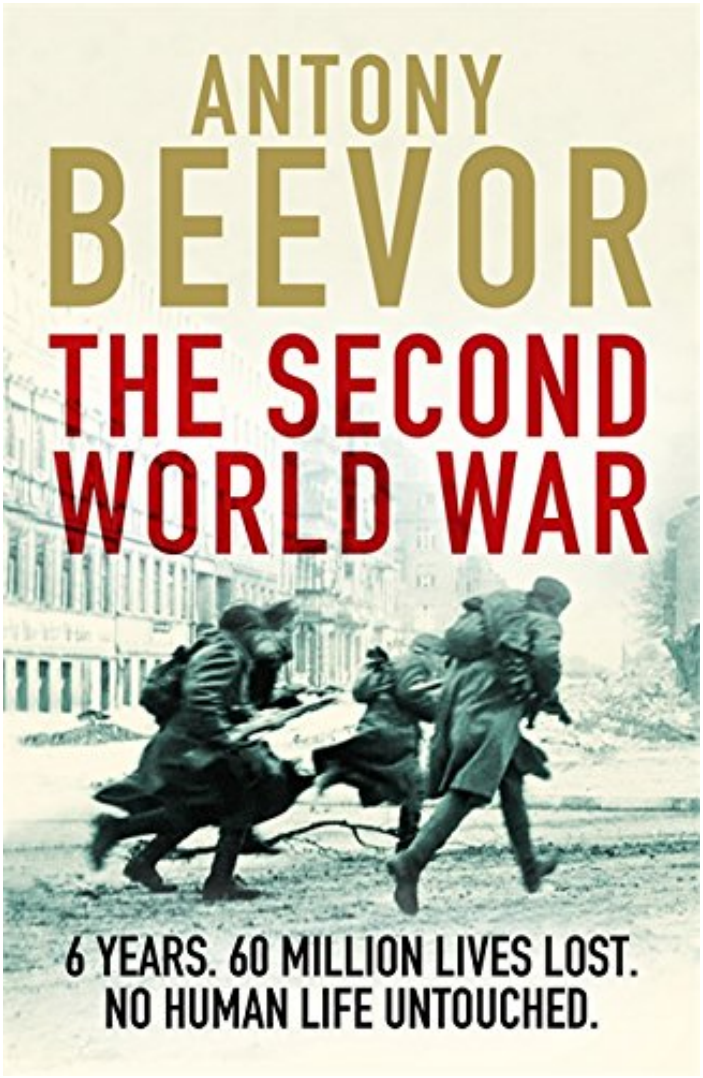

Fig. 8. Book cover of Beevor's *The Second World War.*

the first-hand experience and described this exotic setting, a gallery of extraordinary types, the political upheaval, revolution and invasion. However, it is obvious that Manning, being a woman, could not possibly have had first hand experience of life in the battlefield; thus, the chapters narrated indirectly by the soldier Simon Boulderstone are not based on the writer's experience, but on what the people who fought in Egypt told her. In this same radio programme, Francis King, British writer and close friend of Manning, explained that she had a friend who had fought in the war, and that it must have been him who told her all the details about life in the battlefield.

2.3.3. THE FIGURE OF THE FICTIONAL WITNESS

It is important that writers have direct experience of the war they write about, and it is unquestionable that Manning had it. But Rawlinson and McLoughlin take this a step further and they explain that often the war narrator takes on the role of witness who portrays what they see and experience. As Rawlinson explains:

> [t]he human subject of the twentieth-century war literature is not a hero but a witness, and its archetypal narrative pattern is the exposure of illusions rather than the celebration of deeds of arms. This subject is not exemplary of his culture, but alien to it (though that outsider status became representative). (11)

Rawlinson claims that the traditionally epic discourses which glorified or justified war as the means of re-establishing justice and honour were put into question with some of the poems of the Great War. In particular, Wilfred Owen's 'Strange Meeting' (1918) and to a greater extent Keith Douglas's 'Vergissmeinnicht' (1943) seem to have been key in this new perception of the war poet as a victim who represents the materiality of war in a detached way. Owen's poem demystifies the binary friend-foe by recognising the enemy as victim too: the two characters of the poem meet, both dead, and one recognises the other as his killer, but he still regards him as a friend, someone who, in his words, has gone through "the pity of war" too. He tells him: "'Strange, friend,' I said, 'Here is no cause to mourn. / […] 'I am the enemy you killed, my friend. / […] Let us sleep now…'" (Owen 160). Douglas's poem goes a step further and even dehumanises the dead body of a German soldier, which is presented as meat: the narrator of the poem has found the corpse of a German soldier who carries with him a photograph of his girlfriend, and he reflects on how the girl would be sad to see "how on his skin the swart flies move; / the dust upon the paper eye / and the burst stomach like a cave" (Douglas 111). According to Rawlinson, the cruelty and crudity of war can only be represented in a cold, unemotional way:

> [W]ar writing as documentary and as witness is qualified by acknowledgements of war's resistance to representation. On one argument, the resources of culture lag behind innovative technologies of destruction. Paul Fussell draws on modern war writing's rhetoric of disillusionment when he presents the optimistic inadequacy of contemporaneous images of war as an inverse index of war's abhorrent character. War and culture are posited as antithetical. (9)

In fact, this idea of the war narrator being a witness rather than a hero and the disbelief in violence and war might not be a novelty of twentieth century epic writings as Rawlinson claims. In "Epic and Novel" (1940), Bakhtin traces the origins of the novel in several Classical Greek serio-comical texts and refers to a theory of the novel formulated by Hegel which states that "the hero of a novel should not be 'heroic' in either the epic or the tragic sense of the word" (10). Bakhtin explains that "one of the basic internal themes of the novel is precisely the theme of the hero's inadequacy to his fate or his situation" (37), and he adds that "personal experience and free creative imagination" are central to the novel (39). Therefore the questioning of epic heroism lies at the core of the novel as a genre. Also, in *The Novels of Walter Scott and his Literary Relations: Mary Brunton, Susan Ferrier and Christian Johnstone* (2013), Andrew Monnickendam argues that Scott, who is considered the father of the historical novel, was already sceptic about war and military action: "Military glory is questioned in the first book of *The Iliad*, so Scott is hardly an original in the field, but the oddity resides in such scepticism being located in the foundational historical novel which inspired a large corpus of Victorian epic poems and much European fiction" (171).

Manning, too, questions epic heroism, not only through Harriet's continuous portrayal of the devastating effects of war for soldiers and civilians, but also through Guy's production of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* in *The Great Fortune*. Shakespeare's tragedy narrates

the later years of the Trojan War, and follows the plotline of a part of Homer's *The Iliad*. In Manning's novel, when the rehearsals of the play are taking place, Guy lectures the cast about the character of Achilles, who chose a short life of glory instead of a long life in peaceful obscurity: "[i]n Homer, Guy was saying, Achilles was the ideal of the military hero: but Shakespeare, whose sympathies had been with the Trojans, had depicted him as a fascist whose feats were performed by fascist thugs" (Manning, *BT* 278). Guy links Achilles (and by extension the Greek army he fought in) with fascism, and therefore, if one draws a parallel between the Trojan War fought in the play and the Second World War fought in the novel, it seems Achilles' Greek army represents the Axis powers, and the Trojan army represents the Allied forces.

Jeffrey Meyers also analyses the significance of *Troilus and Cressida* within *The Great Fortune*, and he states that Shakespeare's tragedy

> portrays a bitterly anti-heroic and cynical view of love and war, a world where deeply flawed human beings determine the fate of whole civilizations. The play provides a dramatic analogy to the lives of the fictional characters in the novel and imposes aesthetic order on political chaos. The rehearsals draw all the disparate characters together, allow them to interact, and distract them from their fears about the war in Europe and the impending invasion of Romania. Yet the play also focuses our minds on the destruction and displacement we know is going to happen. (27)

Indeed, as historical events unfold in *The Great Fortune*, the symbolic significance of Guy's production becomes more apparent, yet, as Meyers suggests, the characters who perform in the play are temporarily oblivious of the war. Even Harriet notes how the production of the play has alleviated tension in those who participate in it: "[w]hen they entered the theatre, they entered an atmosphere so removed from the outside tension that it might have been that

of another planet. […] People were hurrying about, all, it seemed, so hypnotised by Guy and his production that reality had lost substance for them" (Manning, *BT* 297). But this play, too, anticipates for readers what is going to happen in the novel. At the end of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* Troy is about to fall to the Greeks, which seems premonitory, as when the evening performance of the tragedy finishes, the English expats learn that Paris has fallen to the German troops. The fall of Paris, in turn, seems presaging and ominous for Bucharest, since the day before the opening performance of Shakespeare's play, Clarence, who is in charge of the English propaganda bureau, describes Bucharest to Harriet as "[t]he Paris of the East" (Manning, *BT* 297). With Paris fallen to the Nazi troops, everything seems to indicate, there is no hope left for Bucharest.

It seems clear, thus, that Manning follows the tradition of presenting war as non-heroic which Bakhtin identifies already in the origins of the novel, Monnickendam recognises in Scott and Rawlinson claims is evident in some of the poems of the Great War. And taking into consideration the importance of the role of the detached witness in war writing, and the importance of first hand experience of conflict, there have been a number of scholars who have also asserted that Manning's first hand experiences on the war give her validity as a witness and who praise her work as outstanding historical fiction. Lassner, for example, states that Manning's World War II novels, such as *Artist Among the Missing*, *School for Love*, *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy*:

> establish her 'as historical witness' not only to Nazi conquest and decisive battles on two continents, but to the war's relationship to the end of Empire (Mooney 1982, 41). Resonant with a complex range of responses and wartime experience in Europe and in the Middle East, these novels represent historical witness as multivocal and dialogic. (*Colonial Strangers* 19)

Following this same idea, Treglown also praised Manning's work:

> The steady rise of Nazism in Romania, the destructive impact of Dunkirk on foreigners' confidence in the British, the antagonists' rapidly changing fortunes in Greece, North Africa and the Middle East, stream after stream of refugees: no other novelist has described these crucial arenas of the war with such scope and immediacy. (151)

And the most recent and outstanding scholar who has given proof that Manning had direct experience of the Second World War and was therefore a reliable witness is David in *Olivia Manning: a Woman at War* (2013). As has been stated in the introductory chapter, David outlines the many parallels between Manning and her work, and pinpoints the similarities between the writer and her husband and Harriet and Guy Pringle. Indeed, Harriet and Guy are clearly based on Olivia Manning herself and her husband Reggie Smith, and many of the scenes reproduced in the novels were actually lived by the real couple. However, it seems to me that it is now necessary to move past these autobiographical connections between Manning's life and her works in order to analyse the writer's skills as a narrator of war and to examine the different fictional witnesses of war in *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy*.

All throughout Manning's two war trilogies, readers learn about the start and development of the Second World War in Romania, Greece, Egypt and in some Levant countries as experienced by the three main characters: Harriet Pringle, an English young wife who follows her husband as the German armies approach them; Guy Pringle, who works as a lecturer for the British Legation; and Simon Boulderstone, a young British soldier who fights the Germans in Egypt. The narrating voice is always limited omniscient third person: it portrays Harriet's viewpoint almost exclusively in *The Balkan Trilogy* (with the exception of a few passages, which expose Yakimov's thoughts), and it shifts from Harriet's point of view to Simon's in *The Levant Trilogy*. Therefore, and even though the narrator never uses the first

person, war is portrayed mainly from the point of view of a female civilian and of a soldier. What is more, even though the narrating voice does not expose Guy's thoughts and ideas directly, readers are shown his standpoint as a male civilian through Harriet's words, thoughts and ideas. The way these three characters live and perceive war is obviously different due to their very different setting and social arena; thus, they need to be examined to see who of the three proves to be a more reliable witness of World War II and a better (fictional) indirect narrator of war. To do this, I will take McLoughlin's statement that "swiftness and reliability […], noticeability, authoritativeness, accountability and credibility" are some of the qualities desired for effective war reporting as a starting point (26).

Harriet Pringle is the protagonist, heroine and main indirect narrator of the two trilogies. She follows her husband to Romania on the eve of the Second World War, and later on they have to flee to Athens, Egypt and the Levant countries; thus, Harriet witnesses the start, development and consequences of the war. Although she has several acquaintances throughout the six novels who are soldiers or women doing paramilitary service, she always remains a civilian and she never experiences armed conflict as such. Through her, readers are not exposed to the development of war in the battlefield, but instead to what World War II meant for many civilians in the Balkans. Already in the first volume of the first trilogy, Meyers notes, Harriet "stresses the prevailing uncertainty and the sense of imminent disaster" (22), and indeed, she soon announces that "the only thing certain is that nothing is certain" (Manning, *BT* 86). In this atmosphere of insecurity, Harriet observes and recounts the destruction of cities and the gradual decay and increase in poverty in the cities she lives in brought about by the war: at the beginning of *The Great Fortune*, Harriet arrives in a Bucharest where food, alcohol and parties are abundant for the rich people in the country and foreigners, especially for the British. However, as the Second World War develops, food and alcohol become scarce:

> There were now four meatless days in a week, but even on the other days meat was hard to find. Despina [the Pringles' housemaid] would be away for two or three hours queuing at market stalls and often, on returning, would hold out, with a dramatic gesture, her empty basket. 'In the market today, no sugar, no coffee, no meat, no fish, no eggs. Nothing, nothing.' Watching the processions, the daily pageantry amid utter confusion, it seemed to Harriet that the whole country had succumbed, without any sort of resistance, to lunatic autocracy. (Manning, *BT* 536)

It is via Harriet too that readers learn about public and political matters such as shifts in the political and international interests of the Balkan countries she stays in. In the first chapter of the second volume of *The Balkan Trilogy*, Russia demands that Romania returns Bessarabia and a segment of the Bukovina, and readers are told about the reception of this ultimatum in Bucharest: "Within minutes of its reception in the hotel, the news reached the crowded streets and passed to restaurants and cafés. Apprehensions quickened at once into ferment, for panic was an incipient condition in the capital. People became possessed by an hysteria of alarm" (322). Many Romanian people seemed to blame the British for their misfortunes and resented that Britain, which had once secured Romania, did nothing to help them now:

> Harriet looked uneasily about her. When, ten months before, she had first arrived in Bucharest, the British here had been respected: now, on the losing side, they were respected no longer. She half feared actual attack – but no attack came. […] Unwilling to show fear by taking themselves off, the Pringles sat still amid a hubbub which suddenly changed its tenor. A man had risen and […] asked if their fears might not be premature. It was true that the British could do nothing for Rumania, but what of Hitler? Hadn't the King recently

> changed his allegiance? He could now call on German aid. When the Führer heard of this ultimatum, he would force Stalin to withdraw it. (323)

This fragment exposes the shifts in international affairs and interests of Romania, how fragile sympathies could be, and how these could affect the British people in the Balkan countries. It also discloses how Romanian people were seeking international protection regardless of where it came from.

As a witness and reporting figure, Harriet achieves noticeability simply by the fact that she is a woman; as McLoughlin explains, "women are immediately singular when they enter the male-dominated war zone but, as carriers of information about conflict, they cannot count on an easy reception" (32). But the scholar adds that the initial dubious acceptance of information (or of the carrier of information) is later annulled by authoritativeness and credibility, which, according to McLoughlin, are key elements to ensure that the information delivered by the reporting figure will be accepted. The scholar adds that "the former guarantees the recipient that the information can be trusted, the latter ensures that it is believed, but the two overlap as reliability itself contributes to believability" (38). As has been explained in the previous subsection, McLoughlin states that truthful data delivered frankly is a source of authoritativeness (38).

Harriet never works as a war reporter as such, but she is well acquainted with people who work at the British Legation and at the British Information Bureau, she keeps herself informed of the military advances of both the Allied and the Axis powers on an almost daily basis, and in fact, she works at the Information Office for a while when they are in Athens. Also, when in Cairo, Harriet works for over a year as Assistant Press Officer for the American Embassy: "by then, she had become […] knowledgeable about the war […]. She was generally held to have inside information and people would stop her in the street to ask for news" (Manning, *LT* 71). In addition to being well informed (as well informed as anyone

not belonging to the top military leadership could ever be, in any case), Harriet is a realist, a good, clever listener, and a very keen and meticulous observer of the world around her. And this is, according to McLoughlin, key too: "First-hand experience or autopsy is indeed the crucial ingredient of authority, legitimacy and credibility in war reporting" (42). Thus, Harriet being a woman does not stop readers from receiving the information she delivers as trustworthy. In fact, it is Harriet who observes the effects of war on the military men who have been in active service. Right before the Pringles and the other British are forced to leave Athens for Egypt (they are in real, impending danger), Harriet reports the humiliation and misery of the Greek soldiers who are now back in Athens:

> She had been told that many of the men had no weapons, yet, like riderless horses in a race, they had gone instinctively into the fight. Starving, frost-bitten, infested with lice, stupefied by cold, and they had endured and suffered simply because their comrades endured and suffered. The enemy had not had much hand in killing them. They had died mostly from frost-bite and cold.
>
> The men she had seen, the survivors, had undergone more than any man should be asked to undergo. They had triumphed and at last, unjustly defeated, here they were wandering back, lost in their own city, begging for bread. (Manning, *BT* 1016)

This reflection Harriet makes on the reality of soldiers who died in the battlefield and of the returning soldiers who survived complements a fragment in the section 'War as a War Reporter', in which Harriet describes soldiers as gaunt, and it is highly reminiscent of the reports the American journalist Marguerite Higgins wrote on the war when she was sent to inspect the European combat zone in 1945. Only twenty-four at the time, Higgins was eager to witness the war directly. However, as Fussell explains in *Wartime*, what she encountered was a

> ‘mosaic of misery’ […] Cities ruined and stinking. Dead bodies everywhere, some mangled or torn apart, […]. ‘More awful were the wounded, many her own age or younger. Some were blinded, others cruelly disfigured. … Many people had lost hands or feet to frostbite.’ The faces of the Allied soldiers which she had expected to register a degree, at least, of satisfaction over their victories were only ‘weary’ and ‘bitter’. (12)

Both Manning’s indirect narrator Harriet and journalist Higgins portray the shocking difference between their expectations and reality, and both mention dead soldiers, the effects of frostbite and the humiliation of the survivors. Whether or not Manning was familiar with Higgins’ reports on the war when she wrote *The Balkan Trilogy* is unknown, but in any case the fact that her Harriet describes the fighting men similarly to actual journalists who had seen them gives her, to use McLoughlin’s terms, authoritativeness and credibility.

What is more, it can be argued that Harriet’s qualities as a witness and credible reporting figure are enhanced whenever her husband, Guy Pringle, is present. Guy is not a narrating voice neither in *The Balkan Trilogy* nor in *The Levant Trilogy*, but through Harriet and most importantly due to an extensive presence of dialogue in the novels, readers are exposed to his vision and reflections on war. Guy is a young communist at heart, and he believes World War II is being fought for a fair cause. He cannot join the army because he is short-sighted, so in an unconscious attempt to making up for this, he engages in all sorts of apparently ridiculous activities which make him feel he is contributing to the war effort: for example, he organises and directs a production of Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* for the intellectual elite in Romania, and he arranges a production of *Maria Marten* and several sketches of other plays that the British elite in Athens perform for the R.A.F.

Guy Pringle fits perfectly into the stereotype of the prototypical left-wing intellectual of the 1930s: he builds his life around his books and his acquaintances, whom he meets to

discuss philosophical and political ideas, and he sees the world around him through rose-tinted glasses. He is an idealist and an optimist at heart, and this often prevents him from seeing and understanding what the war really is about. Guy lives immersed in his own intellectual world, whereas Harriet is much more aware and critical of the world around her, and this opposition enhances her authoritativeness as a reporting figure. At one point, when the Pringles are still in Athens, an anti-aircraft gun is placed behind the villa where they live. When Guy arrives to the villa he finds Harriet, who had been in the bath when the new gun opened up, crouching naked under the stairs in utter fear. They realise they need to leave Athens because they are in danger, so they start packing their things:

> "Harriet mended clothes while Guy sat over his books, contemplating a lecture on the thesis: 'A work of art must contain in itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise.'
>
> 'Who said that?' Harriet asked.
>
> 'Coleridge.'
>
> 'Does life contain in itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise?'
>
> 'If it doesn't, nothing does.'
>
> 'But you think it does?'
>
> 'It must do.'
>
> 'You're becoming a mystic,' she said and after a long pause, added: 'There are so many dead bodies in the ruins of Belgrade, people have stopped trying to bury them. They just cover them with flowers.'" (Manning, *BT* 976)

This fragment shows the very different responses to war of Guy and his wife Harriet. Right after they have just been in direct and real danger, in the middle of a devastating war that is bringing death, poverty and hunger to many, Guy goes back to his own intellectual world, thinking of a possible lecture inspired by a quotation by Coleridge, while Harriet is thinking

of the dead in Belgrade while she packs their things to take a refugee boat to Egypt. Guy's attitude is reminiscent of that fostered by the government and by many intellectuals in Britain during the war. In *Wartime*, Fussell explains that during the war, the BBC broadcast programmes with speakers such as George Orwell, Forster, T. S. Eliot, Cyril Connolly or Louise MacNeice, as well as well-known authors. The idea behind this was that the war should not be allowed to eradicate the intellectual and artistic worlds, so for example, Fussell explains, "on September 17, 1942, while Russians and Germans were fighting hand-to-hand at Stalingrad and Japanese soldiers were being massacred on New Guinea and Guadalcanal, the Home Service brought listeners a talk on James Boswell by William Beattie" (184). It seems that the British intelligentsia, represented by Guy in Manning's trilogies, chose to remain alien to the war to focus on their intellectual world as in an attempt to preserve it. This self-alienation, it can be argued, invalidates Guy as a trustworthy war narrator.

Probably with the intention of showing a completely different experience of the war to Harriet's or Guy's, Manning also made Simon Boulderstone one of the main characters and narrating voices in *The Levant Trilogy* (he is not a character in *The Balkan Trilogy*). He is a young Briton who, following his brother's steps, has joined the British army to fight the Germans in Egypt. He meets Harriet and Guy upon his arrival in El Cairo, before he actually joins the other soldiers, and their paths intertwine on several occasions all throughout the trilogy.

It has already been stated in the section 'War's Resistance to Literary Representation' that the First World War and the literature it produced was an important reference point for most twentieth-century war writing. It is not surprising, then, that the experience of Simon as a soldier seems to follow almost exactly that of most soldiers in World War I as described by Walter. Walter summarises the experience of the Great War Soldier Poets in five major stages: firstly, there is the "response to the outbreak of the war and the experiences of those

ordinary men who 'answered the call' and quickly found themselves in khaki" (xxxvii). Secondly, Soldier Poets explored some central aspects of ordinary life on the front. The third stage is a realisation of "the harsh realities of armed conflict", of death and suffering (xxxviii). Then, there is usually a period of inner tension between life before and during or after the war. Many soldiers thought of their pre-war lives and personal relationships as belonging to a distant past, while at the same time they were well aware of the horrors of their present life too. The final stage is that of assimilating peace, the end of the war and its aftermath (xxxix).

Likewise, Simon is a young man, inexperienced in life and war, who sees himself fighting in Egypt for the British cause. At first he explores Egypt and life as a soldier with curiosity. Of course, the day before he actually joins the war he feels anxious: "[he] asked himself what on earth he was doing, going off like this into the unknown? Then, it came to him that, though he was vulnerable, he was not alone. He was a man among other men who, if they had to act, would act together" (Manning, *LT* 46) Despite the fact that he feels apprehension about not knowing what awaits him, he is appeased by the thought he will belong to a group, and he relies on their spirit of camaraderie. Simon seems to regard war as heroic and epic, he feels the excitement of the war, and the desire to be in the front line where there is action.

But soon he faces the second stage of experience as a soldier as described by Walter and he faces the reality of war; in addition, he discovers the routines of ordinary life for soldiers in the desert. He realises, for example, the great amount of time soldiers spent waiting, often with nothing to do: "Simon [ordered the men] to get spades from the lorries and dig slit trenches.[…] The trenches were completed in an hour and their occupants, again with nothing to do, stood deep in them, resting their arms on the sand, bored by their own inactivity and envious of the activity of others" (85). Sleep, he learns, "could be bliss. […]

Sleep devoured boredom. Sleep devoured time" (119). Soon, the reality of war becomes his only reality, and he forgets about his previous civilian life: "the people he had met seemed to him beings of an unreal world. He now knew the real world was the fighting world where his companions had a substance and significance that set them apart from the rest of mankind" (123).

Simon also sees death and destruction around him (which corresponds with Walter's explanation of the third stage). The first time some of his friends die in the battlefield, he wonders "how he could live without them" (158). But he soon realises death is all around him, and he learns to detach himself from other fellow soldiers: "[Fielding] and Simon, being concomitants, should have been friends but Simon was becoming wary of friendship. His instinct was to avoid any relationship that could again inflict on him the desolation of loss" (195). He even loses his own brother, Hugo, in the battlefield.

Soon after that Simon is promoted in military rank and he is appointed liaison officer. He is seriously wounded when a land mine explodes under his jeep in El Alamain (see fig. 9).

Fig. 9. Chetwyn (Sgt). *The Campaign in North Africa 1940 – 1943: El Alamain 1942*. This picture shows a column of sand raised by a near miss near a British heavy tank, and it is reminiscent of Simon's description of how the ground, the sand, rises under his jeep in the explosion of the land mine.
© IWM ([MOI] FLM 1251)

He is forced to spend some months on leave at a hospital. This halt in his life on the front causes tension and anxiety in him, he feels alienated from everyone and everything he has ever known, he knows this war has destroyed his life, but at the same time he is eager to go back to action. This tension between life before and during or after the war parallels Walter's description of the fourth stage lived by First World War poets. When still on recovery, Simon is informed of some advances of the war: "Simon had to realize that while he had been lying there disabled, the fighting had moved a long way west. He felt resentful that he had been left behind and he was eager to be back in the desert" (441). Simon feels war is his only reality, and when Guy suggests that he starts studying to be prepared for his future civilian life (Simon had been accepted at a teacher's training college before the war started), Simon refuses: "'But I don't want to return to civilian life. The army's my life. All I want now is to get back into the fight. Out there no one thinks of the future because, well, there may not be any future'" (443).

The fifth and final stage that Walter defines is that of assimilating peace, but *The Sum of Things* ends with the war unfinished, and the last thing we read about Simon is that he is declared fit for active service again, and as a full lieutenant he is sent to Leros, a Greek island. Bearing in mind the trilogies were published long after the war had finished, Manning's readers could therefore surmise Simon would not probably have had a chance of 'assimilating peace', as the British were badly defeated at Leros and suffered heavy losses – the feeling, therefore, is that Simon probably died there.

Walter explains that after Rupert Brooke's death, "the fact of whether or not the author had seen active service became" as important as whether the poem "expressed the right kind of sentiment" (xvi), and as mentioned previously, McLoughlin also claims that personal experience provides the war reporter with authoritativeness and credibility. If having seen

active service is what determines who is a reliable narrator of war, then Simon Boulderstone certainly is one. The following excerpt shows his reflections on the war as a soldier:

> As the sun topped the horizon, the first, subtle light of day swept like a wave over the desert and about him, and passed on, lighting desert and more desert, miles of desert that had once been no-man's-land. He was not sure now whether the division's objective had been Kidney Ridge or the Miteiriya but it was in no-man's-land that Hugo had died. He had bled to death like the dead left behind by the battle and perhaps he had lain here, on this barren ground that was now the field of victory.
>
> Walking back among tanks as useless as the sand they stood on, stepping over the bodies of lost young men, Simon asked, 'Is this what Hugo died for? And am I to die for this?' There was no one to answer him and as he realised how hungry he was, he forgot his own questions and started to run. (Manning, *LT* 281)

This description of Simon's return to the camp after a battle is particularly powerful, as it contrasts Simon's almost unconscious questioning of the war ("Is this [a desert full of broken tanks and dead bodies] what Hugo died for? And am I to die for this?") with his realisation of a real, physical need for food, which makes him forget about war and the dead and rush to the camp. I shall examine the way Simon relates to the desert and to his surroundings in more depth in the next chapter.

It is also through Simon that Manning shows the way the army works and the difficulties and lack of resources they have to deal with. Upon his arrival in Cairo, Simon meets Major Perry. He asks about the current situation of the army, and the major confesses there is a scarcity of supplies: "There's a shortage of every bloody thing the army's ever heard of. You name it: we haven't got it. Except men. Plenty of men but no equipment for them. No

rifles, no tanks, no field guns. And the men are exhausted. Damn well had it" (13). The situation seems ironic: there were, thus, a lot of men recruited and sent out to war, but when they reached their destinations, they had no weapons to fight with.

As an actual soldier, Simon eyewitnesses and participates in the military conflict, so his reliability, authoritativeness and credibility as a reporting figure are guaranteed. However, precisely because he is a soldier on active service for most of the trilogy, his experience of the war is limited, and therefore he cannot report what the war meant for all the civilians affected by it.

2.4. CONCLUSIONS

As stated, war is so complex it defies narration, and writers have always struggled to find ways to convey real war in their literary works. Previous studies of Manning's trilogies have already established and justified why both *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy* qualify as successful narrations of the Second World War, and the emphasis has been put mainly on Manning's personal experience of the war, and on the countless autobiographical connections between the author's life and acquaintances and the events and characters in the novels.

Examining the novels regardless of Manning's life, and applying the findings of McLoughlin and Rawlinson to the trilogies, however, presents an alternative, more convincing reading than the autobiographical ones, as it offers a study of the different ways in which war as a theme is portrayed in Manning's novels. It introduces an analysis of the way war reports itself in the novels, and it also permits to analyse the narration of war of some characters such as Simon's, even if Manning herself did not experience life in the battlefield. More importantly, analysing Manning's narrating voices taking McLoughlin and Rawlinson's

ideas as a starting point explains why Harriet, a woman and a civilian, proves to be the most reliable war narrator.

War is an inarticulate narrator in the trilogies, and it portrays itself though noise and commotion, and also through the descriptions of surviving bodies, physical wounds and other bodily symptoms which are signs and proof that conflict and battle are taking place. In addition, war is also represented through articulate (indirect) narrators: Harriet and Simon mainly, but also Yakimov and Guy to a lesser extent. Yakimov is presented comically as a character, and this gives his account of the war singularity and noticeability. This humour entertains readers, but at the same time it exposes more 'serious' matters, such as the economic and moral decline of the old imperial aristocracy and the untrustworthiness of some journalists at the time. Similarly, it is this comicality around the character of Yakimov too that puts into question his credibility and authoritativeness as a reliable war narrator.

As a male soldier in active service for most of the time, Simon is undeniably a noticeable and reliable narrator of war. However, his role as a soldier inevitably limits his experience of the war to the military zone exclusively. Consequently, and considering that the Second World War was a 'total' war, his account of war offers too limited a view.

Guy and Harriet are both civilians. Because she is a woman, Harriet immediately achieves noticeability as a narrator of war, and because she is always well informed and has first-hand experience of the war, she is accepted as a credible, accountable and authoritative narrator of war. Guy is not a narrating voice in the trilogies, but through Harriet and through the dialogues present in the novels readers are shown his viewpoint too. Guy fits perfectly into the stereotype of the prototypical left-wing intellectual of the 1930s, he is an idealist and he lives immersed in his own intellectual world. This often prevents him from noticing the reality of the war around him, and therefore he cannot be considered a reliable war narrator. This is a major point in Manning's narration of war: the trilogies challenge the traditional

assumption that war is a male domain. Simon's view of things as a soldier and Guy's as a male civilian are presented as limited and not as the most reliable in terms of gender and politics. Instead, it is Harriet's viewpoint, that of a female civilian, which offers the most thorough and credible account of World War II.

Guy and Harriet's outlook on life is completely different, and in fact, their contrasting attitudes to war and to public events are already revealed in the first chapter of the first volume of the trilogies, when they are on the train on their way to Bucharest. Harriet observes the changing landscape all throughout the journey, but in contrast, Manning writes: "Guy was too short-sighted to make much of the passing landscape, and he had to prepare his lectures" (6). Guy's short-sightedness can be claimed to be symbolic of his inability to be aware of his surroundings, while Harriet's role as a passenger on the train observing the changing landscape is indicative of her role as a witness all throughout the trilogies. As Mooney claims, "[i]t is Harriet's intelligent mind, antic but dependable, which orders, often if only by perception, the diverse experience of the novels, and Harriet's mind is the mind of spirit" (51). What is more, this passage exposes another feature of Harriet as a reporting figure: it can be argued that her somehow passive position as a passenger watching the changing landscape through the window announces the distant attitude Harriet has throughout the trilogies. On myriad occasions she witnesses and recounts suffering, misery, injustice and hardship but she does so as an outsider, and she does not seem to be distraught for long; instead, her thoughts move on to something else which usually concerns her personal life only. Even though she too goes through adversity during the war, Harriet's position as a British citizen is somehow privileged and she almost only establishes direct relationships with other British or European citizens. This often distances her from the suffering of others, but this distance does not prevent her from noticing what is happening around her. Her aloofness and lack of action respond to with the prototypical war narrator of the first half of the twentieth century that

Rawlinson describes, who, as has been explained previously at the beginning of this subsection, remains distant from the events around them.

CHAPTER 3: "A GLOBAL WAR. A WAR OF GLOBE-TROTTERS. A TRAVELER'S WAR"[11]: THE BALKAN AND LEVANT COUNTRIES IN OLIVIA MANNING'S *FORTUNES OF WAR*

3.1. TRAVEL BOOKS AND WAR BOOKS

Fig. 10. *Join the Army and See the World*. This is a recruiting poster from the interwar period which invites men to join the army so that they can travel around the world. Travel is thus presented as being part of the military world.
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While it is unquestionable that war is the main theme of Manning's *Fortunes of War*, travel inevitably plays a prominent part too. In fact, it seems travel has always been intrinsic to the military world (see fig. 10). Manning's main characters Guy and Harriet Pringle are

[11] Jacobs 1944 qtd. in Fussell, *Abroad* 218.

forced to travel from Britain to Romania, later to Greece and then to Egypt because of the war, and therefore the narration of place and travel is central in the trilogies. Mooney explains that "place is paramount in the novels of *The Balkan Trilogy*; […] we understand the experience of the characters to be altogether inseparable from the two cities in which they find themselves. And those places come to constitute, as we read, a time, a period, a history" (40). Similarly, Goldsworthy affirms that "the most memorable characters of [Manning's Balkan] novels are not the stray British figures, but the two Balkan cities, Bucharest and Athens, portrayed in the cold light of the war which was about to change them beyond recognition" (203). Indeed, the depiction of landscape and recreation of cities is an important part of the novels, and in fact the scholar Treglown affirms that "Manning too often lets travel writing take over" (154). Scholar Patten also comments on Manning's portrait of Bucharest and on her detailed descriptions; in fact she recalls contemporary reviews of *The Balkan Trilogy* which claimed that the colourful depiction of Bucharest was its most distinctive characteristic (49). Patten also states that the closeness of Manning's fiction to travel writing

> is more than apparent too in the Romanian novels, where she clearly echoes images and phrases from Sitwell's *Roumanian Journey* [… first published in 1938] as elements of background material, and perhaps refers also to Derek Patmore's travelogue *Invitation to Roumania,* published in 1939. (58)

What exactly is travel writing, then? According to Fussell in *Abroad* (1980), it was a very popular genre in the interwar period, and it remained so until the second half of the 30s, when the Spanish Civil War started and the menace of an oncoming war in Europe was gradually more and more evident. Fussell distinguishes travel books from guide books, and he describes travel books as a "sub-species of memoir in which the autobiographical narrative arises from the speaker's encounter with distant or unfamiliar data, and in which the narrative – unlike that in a novel or a romance – claims literal validity by constant reference to

actuality" (203). Real travel and movement to unfamiliar places are of course ever present in travel books, but romance is also an important element in the sense that "as in a romance, the modern traveler leaves the familiar and predictable to wander, episodically, into the unfamiliar and unknown, encouraging strange adventures, and finally, after travail and ordeals, returns safely"[12] (208). Fussell also identifies the pastoral as another powerful element in many travel books, and he bases this claim on William Empson's definition of the traditional pastoral "as a mode of presentation implying 'a beautiful relation between rich and poor'" (Empson qtd. in Fussell, *Abroad* 209-210). Similarly, Fussell explains, "the traveler is almost always richer and freer than those he's among. He's both a plutocrat pro term and the sort of plutocrat the natives don't mind having around" (210).

Even though Manning did not start writing the trilogies until 1960, it seems clear to me that, as Patten suggests and Treglown expresses in his criticism, travel writing had a powerful influence on both *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy*. All the places and settings of the novels are described in the realist tradition. They are actual places, and there are numerous references to real names of villages, accurate descriptions of real streets and even bars and restaurants, which would be familiar to anyone who had been in the Balkan and Levant countries at the time.[13] This gives the books, to use McLoughlin's terms, authoritativeness and credibility. In fact, Manning had a great sense of place, and one of her best skills was her ability to describe setting and portray place. Mahon even labelled her as "a

[12] Fussell uses the term 'romance' in its traditional sense. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, a romance is "a fictional story in verse or prose that relates improbable adventures of idealized characters in some remote or enchanted setting" (291).

[13] The references to (and descriptions of) real places in Manning's war trilogies are countless. When the Pringles are in Bucharest, we are told about places like the Chicken Market, the Calea Victorei, the Athénée Palace and the famous Pavel's restaurant; when they arrive in Athens there are references to the Parthenon, Omonia Square, Stadium Street, the café Zonar and the hotel Grande Bretagne; when in Cairo, we are told about the Pyramids, the restaurant Continental Savoy and Mohammad Ali's mosque; and when Harriet is in Damascus, she visits the Souk el Tamill, El Azem Palace and Ummayad mosque. There are also references to specific places in other cities they visit, like Alexandria, Baalbek and Jerusalem.

writer with a painter's eye" in a BBC radio programme on Olivia Manning called "Never a Day without a Line" (1981). He said of Manning's war trilogies that "atmospheres and qualities of light are brought to live with a painter's skill".

Romance, which Fussell identifies as an important element in travel writing, is also present in Manning's trilogies. Fussell explains that, as in a romance, the traveller goes into the unknown to live adventures. Manning's trilogies explore how Harriet, Guy Pringle and Simon Boulderstone, together with other British personalities, travel around the Balkan countries and the Middle East as they face challenging and even life-threatening experiences. While it is true that most of their trips are compelled by the advance of the German troops, sightseeing and the idea of adventure are present in all the novels, and the protagonists try to visit the main tourist attractions of every city they visit (the Parthenon in Athens and the Pyramids in Cairo amongst others). Of course, these experiences of travel are just background to others which are more challenging or dangerous, like the war itself (especially in the case of Simon, who is even injured on the battlefront), lack of food, evacuation in a refugee boat and illness. The following excerpt from *Friends and Heroes*, the last volume of *The Balkan Trilogy*, is an example of this:

> 'This is exciting, isn't it? We're going to be evacuated.'
>
> 'Surely you don't want to go?' Harriet said.
>
> 'Of course not. Percy's grave is here; naturally I want to stay; but, still, it's exciting to see the world. And we're going to Egypt where the news is good. We keep capturing places in Egypt.' (1019)

The protagonist characters and the entire British group are just about to be evacuated to Egypt because the Axis powers are attacking Athens and it is too dangerous for them to stay there. But the excitement of travelling and seeing the world is still present. In his description of travel books, Fussell adds that like in a romance, "a travel book isn't wholly satisfying unless

the traveler returns to his starting point: the action, as in a quest romance, must be completed" (Fussell, *Abroad* 208). Admittedly, the Pringles and the rest of British characters do not go back to England, but they survive, they go back to Cairo and they are all safe at the end of the six novels. Therefore, one could argue that Manning's trilogies follow the pattern of romance as described by Fussell very closely.

Furthermore, the pastoral element that Fussell pinpoints as important in travel writing too is also present in Manning's trilogies, as it can be argued that, being British, most of the protagonists (not Yakimov, who is penniless for most of *The Balkan Trilogy*) enjoy a certain social and privileged economic position, especially at the beginning of the first trilogy, when they are still in Bucharest, and Britain and Romania are on good political terms. They stay in a hotel for a while, they can afford to drink in fashionable bars and eat out daily in fancy restaurants. The following short fragment shows the Pringles in a restaurant shortly after they have arrived in Bucharest, and it exemplifies their financial situation:

> 'Choose,' said Guy.
>
> 'What can we afford?'
>
> 'Oh, anything. The chicken is good here.' He pointed in to the grill, where spitted birds were changing from gold to deeper gold. (Manning, *BT* 29)

They are in a luxurious and popular restaurant in Bucharest, and because Guy works for the British Legation, they do not need to worry about the money they spend. Indeed, this is a scene from the beginning of the trilogies and the war has just started: Romania has not been invaded yet and the Allies are confident they are going to win the war soon. Their economic situation becomes worse as time passes by, the war continues, and money, resources and food become scarce for everyone, especially when they are in Greece. But even then, in the most critical moments of the war, they never lack shelter, and once in Cairo their financial situation becomes stable again.

In addition, the Pringles and the rest of the British expatriates can be considered "the sort of plutocrat the natives don't mind having around" that Fussell describes as characteristic of the pastoral mode, which he argues features in travel books (Fussell, *Abroad* 210). Guy Pringle and the rest of the British expatriates go to these Balkan and Levant countries, arguably, to share British culture with the natives of these countries and they are welcomed mostly by the intellectual and wealthy families of the different cities they live in. The following passage illustrates this:

> When Guy emerged with the passports, one of the women recognised him as the *professor* who taught her son English. He answered her in Rumanian and the women crowded about him admiring his fluency and his pronunciation.
>
> 'But you are perfect,' said one woman.
>
> Guy, flushed by the attention he was receiving, made a reply in Rumanian that set them all squealing again. (Manning, *BT* 8)

This is one of the first scenes in *The Balkan Trilogy*, and it shows how this group of women are delighted to have met their sons' *professor*, who is in Romania to educate and bring British culture to their children and who, in addition, can speak their language. Similarly, the British group are generally welcomed in public places and private businesses of the cities they stay in, such as bars and restaurants. Hence, they can be argued to follow the pattern of the powerful or rich foreigners who, according to Fussell, the natives readily accept in travel books. In any case, it seems to me that Manning's literary representation of the relationship between the British and the natives of the Balkan and Levant countries is complex and it deserves further attention. I shall examine this more thoroughly in the section 'The "Other" in Manning's Second World War Trilogies' of this chapter.

From 1936 onwards, travel books were gradually replaced by war books. As Fussell notes, "in the late 30's travel books [were] replaced on publisher's lists by works of political

and military analysis, written by people who a few years before could pass for travelers but who now [were] identified as 'foreign correspondents'" (217). The scholar notes how this transition from the comic travel book to the war book can already be seen in Evelyn Waugh's *Waugh in Abyssinia* (1936), and states that "what made the war a constant source of wry irony for former travelers was its being, as journalism never tired of insisting, a "global war" - one had to "travel" to witness it" (217). And again, as the journalist Alaric Jacobs claimed, World War II was "a global war. A war of globe-trotters. A traveler's war" (qtd. in Fussell 219), and, as Fussell adds, "sometimes the war resembled real traveling, or did until you thought about it" (219) (see fig. 11) .

Fig. 11. Tanner, A. R. *The British Army in Athens, Greece, in 1944*. This picture shows a sergeant making a photo of a fellow soldier on the Erectheum during a tour of the Acropolis in Athens in 1944, and it illustrates Fussell's idea that on occasions the war resembled travelling. © IWM (TR 2510)

This leads us to question if war alters the literary representation of travel, or of place, and in what ways. Despite the fact that McLoughlin does not focus on travel caused by war in

Authoring War, her chapter 'Zones' is especially interesting when trying to examine the representation of place and space in war writing. Here, she analyses the complex relationship there is between war and space in war narrations:

> war is fought over and in space, it alters irrevocably the space on and within which it occurs. But it also brings into being a unique situation, unclassifiable as either neutral 'space' or significant 'place', vital and intense yet temporary […] and arbitrary, as much a product of experience as of geographical factors, transformative, requiring special consciousness […] from those within it. This is the war zone. (83)

The war zone is full of intricacies and, as McLoughlin claims, "the challenge for war writing is to convey this charged space, to communicate the complex situation – part psycho-physiological, part geographical – that is conflict" (84). The scholar states that war literature reproduces the exceptional topographical knowledge of those in the war zone and she argues that the pastoral too is an important element. Identifying the pastoral mode in war writing may seem initially surprising, as it directly contradicts Fussell's idea that "the opposite of experiencing moments of war is proposing moments of pastoral. Since war takes place outdoors and always within nature, its symbolic status is that of the ultimate anti-pastoral" (Fussell, *Great War* 231). As traditionally understood, the pastoral place is a locus amoenus, an idyllic place of safety and tranquillity, as opposed to the war zone, which is a horrible space of death and suffering. But, interestingly enough, McLoughlin takes Fussell's idea as a starting point to develop her argument, and asserts that

> conceived of as a space of isolation and exceptional cognition, pastoral's rural retreat has surprising affinities with the psycho-geographical experience of the war zone. The zone emerges, not so much as anti-pastoral, as inverted pastoral:

> it requires proactive entry instead of withdrawal but still demands and produces a special consciousness. (84)

With regard to this special consciousness that the war zone requires, the scholar recreates the dichotomy neutral space versus significant place and positions the war zone as "somewhere between place and space" (105). This is because those fighting are cognitively and emotionally attached to the war zone, but at the same time this attachment is usually viewed as negative and temporary.

Similarly, the war zone "may be understood as a *situation*, a word that incorporates both terrain and experience: the horizontal and vertical axes, so to speak, of the locative" (McLoughlin 86). There seems to be a strong connection between war and land, as well as between bodies and land. Soldiers live in the warzone and they are camouflaged to look like it. In addition, McLoughlin explains, the land "is both surface and substance on which the most primarily body functions are discharged. Soldiers eat and sleep, piss and shit, bleed and die on the soil" (87). Again, this terrain upon which battle takes places becomes significant and requires specialised knowledge and awareness of it, but only temporarily.

What McLoughlin stresses about the war zone is this need for extra watchfulness: "going into war is going into the 'Unknown' – another phrase might be 'going out of one's comfort zone' – and there is a consequent need for extra vigilance or 'heightened alertness'"(92). So just as the pastoral oasis demands and produces a special consciousness, so does the war zone. And just as the pastoral oasis is a venue where characters are not only freed from social constraints, but also a venue where they can criticise, challenge and even reverse these social constraints, the war zone too is "a specially charged space, a place apart, a demarcated area subject to its own laws where things are different" (McLoughlin 99).

Moreover, McLoughlin argues that just as the pastoral place calls for "focused reflection in isolation [and also] concentration, contemplation, meditation, view-formation,

[and] creativity" (100), the war zone too demands that the soldier "acquire[s] similar mental focus, blocking out distractions, focusing, visualising what lies ahead, preparing and motivating the self, achieving and maintaining a hyper-vigilant outlook, experiencing and managing extreme physical and emotional feelings. In this sense, the war zone *is itself a version of pastoral*" (100). In fact, war and the pastoral venue are more connected than it may initially seem, and McLoughlin describes how war is a frequent intruder in the pastoral setting as traditionally understood: "the pastoral setting is never as blissful, or as innocent of horror, as it appears to be, and war is a frequent intruder. Indeed, it is possible to say that, in many instances, pastoral – or the pastoral life – is funded on, or enabled by, war" (96-97).

In addition, both the pastoral oasis and the war zone are transformative: those in the pastoral venue gain intellectual sophistication, and those in the war zone acquire "topographical hyper-awareness and the understanding gained from unique experience (including proximity to mass death and destruction)" (McLoughlin 101-102). As McLoughlin explains, "the individual who enters [the war zone] is transformed permanently by its sights, experiences and demands" (105).

In her analysis of the warzone, McLoughlin reduces it to the battlefield, and in fact she acknowledges this at the end of her chapter 'Zones'. Therefore, one could initially think that in the case of Manning's war trilogies only Simon Boulderstone can possibly experience life in the warzone as described by McLoughlin. When Simon arrives in Cairo to join the British army, he is only a young boy inexperienced in life. When he enters the warzone (the desert in his case) he has to learn everything about life in the army, he faces death, desolation and isolation in the battlefield and he learns that keeping a 'hyper-vigilant outlook', to use McLoughlin's terms, is essential for survival. The desert is the place they are fighting for, but it is also the place where his brother and some of his friends died, and it is also the place where they sleep, eat and wait for orders. Throughout the three novels of *The Levant Trilogy*,

Simon matures and he is forever transformed: his direct experience of war and the warzone changes him from innocent boy to experienced soldier. I shall refer to this figure of the innocent boy turned into a soldier again in chapter four.

However, McLoughlin insists that her examination of the experience of warzone can be extended to any other experiences of war which also involve going into the "Unknown" (105). Thus, her analysis can be applied to the other protagonists of Manning's trilogies, who also undergo extreme situations caused by the war which are "a unique order of experience, too, and can also give rise to special consciousness" (McLoughlin 106). The case of Guy Pringle is peculiar: although he never experiences life in the battlefield, his life, like that of the rest of the British group, is directly affected by the war, and they even have to move to different countries as they escape the German army. According to McLoughlin, "the individual in war is hyper-aware (both optically and haptically) of his environs; constantly alert to 'sign-stimuli indicative of environmental conditions favourable to survival'" (92), yet Guy appears to be deeply unaware of peril and of adverse situations. He sometimes even insists on staying in places of danger because he feels he has to continue teaching a few remaining students or he has to finish some work. This happens, for example, when most of the British expatriates, including Harriet, leave Bucharest because the Iron Guard is in control and the entry of the German army is impending. In addition, he is in a particularly dangerous situation as he, together with Inchcape, who works at the English Propaganda Bureau, have been named on the German radio. Inchcape has just been attacked and beaten up inside the Propaganda Bureau, and Guy knows that both Inchcape and himself "were the natural prey not only of the Iron Guard but of the Gestapo, rumoured to be on its way here" (Manning, *BT* 609). Still, Guy decides to stay:

> 'Harriet's off to Athens this morning. I have to stay.'
>
> 'Stay? What for? A bullet in the back of the neck?'

> A rare and peculiar look of obstinacy came over Guy's face. 'I have a job to do,' he said. (Manning, *BT* 646)

Guy clearly prioritises his academic job and intellectual life over anything else, and he even appears to lack the instinct for self-preservation, which is usually heightened in the warzone. Nevertheless, despite his apparently inept behaviour in wartime and despite the fact that he is sometimes even oblivious of war, he manages to remain safe and sound all throughout the trilogies and he is considerably unaffected by the war at an emotional and personal level.

As opposed to Guy's unawareness of the warzone, Harriet comes out as being hyper-vigilant. And even he acknowledges this, reluctantly, in *The Spoilt City*: "His means of living with a situation was to put its dangers behind him. [Harriet's] method was to keep them in view so they might not come on her unawares. She lived in a state of preparedness that brought undue stress" (Manning, *BT* 609). In Guy's view, the fact that Harriet keeps a watchful eye at all times is excessive, yet, in any case, she fits McLoughlin's description of the natural behaviour in the warzone perfectly: she is always observant of her surroundings, always alert to any advances of the war, or to any situation that might put her or her most beloved ones in danger. Besides, her experience of war and in the warzone proves to be transformative: when she arrives in Bucharest at the beginning of the trilogies she is a naive English girl who has had a very limited experience in life, but throughout the trilogies she lives through war, illness, temporal scarcity of food, she meets a lot of people, witnesses death and desolation, and she feels loss, and all these experiences cause her to mature and evolve. I believe, though, that the most significant psychological changes in her are related to her view of her own role as woman and wife. I shall develop this idea in detail in the next chapter 'War and Gender in Manning's Trilogies'.

The way Harriet relates to place, to the warzone, follows the pattern described by McLoughlin to perfection, but interestingly enough, it is also reminiscent of the travellers

Fussell describes in *Abroad* in the sense that she is eager to see new places, to go sightseeing. In fact, at the very end of *The Battle Lost and Won* and in *The Sum of Things* she even goes on a trip on her own to explore the Levant, which is not always as ideal as she hoped it would be but which, in any case, turns out to be an enriching experience for her. It is precisely this combination of excitement about travelling and seeing the world and awareness of the warzone and its reality that makes Harriet such a fascinating character and, going back to the conclusions of chapter two, such a successful narrator.

3.2. STEREOTYPE VS WAR-SHAPED REALISM: MANNING'S ROMANIA, GREECE AND EGYPT

The different ways in which the protagonists of *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy* relate to place in times of war, to the warzone, has already been described, but the representation of these Balkan and Levant countries in Manning's war trilogies deserves, it seems to me, special attention. The aim of this section is to analyse the ways in which Manning's portrayal of Romania, Greece and Egypt is tainted by previous stereotyped descriptions of the countries, and to examine whether the development of war in the novels alters these representations and how. To do this, I will first define and contextualise Balkanism and Orientalism, stereotyped discourses on the Balkans and the Orient which have historically influenced most Western representations of these territories, to then analyse individually Manning's portrayal of her Balkan and Middle-East settings.

However truthful and accurate Manning's portrayal of historical fact is in the trilogies, her representation of Romania, Greece and Egypt owes as much to the author's actual experience of these countries as to a whole literary tradition of stereotyping the Balkans and the Middle East and depicting them as alien. In *Imagining the Balkans* (1997), the historian Maria Todorova offers a study of the history of the Balkan countries, and of the different

ways these have been perceived and represented, mostly in European and American works. In the introduction, Todorova explains that already at the beginning of the twentieth century the term 'Balkanization' was understood as a "reversion to the tribal, the backward, the primitive, the barbarian" (3), and she argues that the tradition of reductionism and stereotyping of the Balkans has emphasised too an idea that its citizens "do not care to conform to the standards of behaviour devised as normative by and for the civilised world" (3). In her definition of 'Balkanism' as a category, Todorova differentiates it to Orientalism.[14] The first question is, then: what is Orientalism? Edward Said claims that it can be understood "as a system of thought [which] approaches a heterogeneous, dynamic, and complex human reality from an uncritically essentialist standpoint" (333). He adds that this standpoint "suggests both an enduring Oriental reality and an opposing but no less enduring Western essence, which observes the Orient from afar and, so to speak, from above" (333). This definition, one could argue, could well be applied to Balkanism too, and therefore Todorova suggests some features which are exclusive of the latter. To start with, the Balkans have "a concrete historical existence" (Todorova 12), as opposed to what the scholar calls "the intangible nature of the Orient" (13). Todorova identifies two crucial historical legacies: one is the Byzantine Empire and the other, and most important one, is the Ottoman Empire. According to Todorova, it is the Ottoman elements "that have mostly invoked the current stereotypes" of the Balkans (12).

Secondly, the scholar explains that "the role of the oriental image served as escape from civilization": the East was constructed as an "exotic and imaginary realm, […] it epitomized longing and offered option, […it] became Utopia" (13). Then, after the Napoleonic wars, the Orient "became a symbol of freedom and wealth" (Germaner and

[14] Todorova recalls Edward Said's definition of Orientalism, and while she acknowledges Said's well-deserved success, she also exposes some of the weaknesses of his theory and justifies some of the criticism he has received (she is especially critical of his lack of historical rigour). Her main aim, however, is not to examine Orientalist discourses but to differentiate them from Balkanist ones.

Inankur qtd. in Todorova 13). Wealth and, according to Todorova "inseparable from it, excess" were thus associated too with the imagined Orient, which became "a refuge from the alienation of a rapidly industrialising West [and] a metaphor for the forbidden" (13). The scholar adds that besides "eastern cruelty," which was a predominant motif in Orientalist descriptions and painting, "came also another component with a strong appeal, lust" (14). By contrast, the Balkans, "with their unimaginative concreteness, and almost total lack of wealth," motivated an unambiguous attitude, "usually negative, but rarely nuanced" (14).

Furthermore, Todorova explains that while the Orient is usually connected with the feminine, the "balkanist discourse is singularly male"[15] (15). And the Balkan male is usually presented as "uncivilised, primitive, crude, cruel, and, without exception, disheveled" (14). In *British Literature and the Balkans: Themes and Contexts*, Andrew Hammond also explains how south-east Europe was "persistently viewed as a male space" (52), but he disagrees with Todorova in her claim that Balkan maleness has usually been presented as negative (he argues that there are many positive accounts of Balkan maleness in British writings on Albania, for example).

Another defining characteristic of the Balkans, according to Todorova, "was their transitionary status, [… they] have always evoked the image of a bridge or a crossroads" between East and West, Europe and Asia (15). They are also perceived as a "bridge between stages of growth," and therefore they have been labelled "semideveloped, semicolonial, semicivilised, semioriental" (16). The scholar explains that "[u]nlike orientalism, which is a discourse about an imputed opposition [between East and West], balkanism is a discourse about an imputed ambiguity" (17).

[15] Todorova suggests that this relationship between the Orient and the feminine is a result of Western desire and imagination: the Arabs wore banyans and robes, "a sumptuous wardrobe and an even more extravagant nudity" (13). Moreover, the scholar explains that oriental discourses contain a theory of sexuality and sensuality "in the disguise of a theory of asceticism" (13).

Todorova sums up that Balkanism developed considerably independently from Orientalism for several reasons: the Balkans are geographically separate to the Near and Middle East, they are part of Europe, they do not have a real colonial legacy,[16] they are white and predominantly Christian, and, finally, the various idiosyncratic "Balkan self-identities" were constructed "against an 'oriental' other" (their neighbouring Ottoman Empire, Turkey or even they own historical past as part of the Ottoman Empire) (20).

Having distinguished Balkanism from Orientalism, the next point is to define more specifically the main features of the Balkan stereotype. Todorova explains that many of the clichés attributed to the Balkans were developed around the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, when there were guerrillas and irredentist movements fighting the Ottoman authorities and each other, and more specifically at the time of the Balkan wars (1912-1913), when the news of these wars challenged the peace movements that were becoming popular in the rest of Europe and were beginning to be institutionalised (3). According to Todorova, the category 'Balkan' was used

> to denote general regional characteristics [:] hospitality, clichés about peasants and mountaineers, people close to nature, backwardness, uncleanliness, and so on […] It was used alongside other generalizing catchwords, of which 'Oriental' was most often employed, to stand for filth, passivity, unreliability, misogyny, propensity for intrigue, insincerity, opportunism, laziness, supersticiousness, lethargy, sluggishness, inefficiency, incompetent bureaucracy. 'Balkan', while overlapping with 'Oriental', had additional characteristics as cruelty, boorishness, instability, and unpredictability. (119)

[16] Todorova argues that the Balkan countries have a "semicolonial, quasi-colonial" past, but that they do not have a purely colonial status. (16) For one thing, she explains that the Balkans *are* Europe, even if "admittedly, for the past several centuries its provincial part or periphery." (17) Furthermore, Todorova argues that "despite howling Balkan conspiracy theories and the propensity to blame one or the other or all great powers for their fate," there is always the awareness of "a certain degree of autonomy." (17)

All these negative connotations were posited as contrary to the concept of (Western) Europe, which was understood to symbolise "the culturally higher stage of development which also ennobles human behaviour" (Golczewski qtd. in Todorova 119).

After World War II, and thus with the beginning of the Cold War, anti-Sovietic propaganda was spread in Britain, and Hammond explains that "it was this anti-Sovietism that profoundly influenced the way that the Balkans were conceptualised in British discourse after 1945" (234). The new Cold War Balkanism, Hammond argues, "was at all times coloured by older conceptual traditions: specifically, the classic stereotypes of the savage Balkans, that imagined maelstrom of violence, discord and backwardness" (234).

3.2.1. ROMANIA

Having defined and contextualised the Balkanist discourse, it seems clear that Manning followed this literary tradition of stereotyping the Balkans in her portrayal of Romania in the two first novels of *The Balkan Trilogy*, *The Great Fortune* and *The Spoilt City*. In fact, most readings of the novels published in the last decade acknowledge this: David claims the novels are a "narrative of survival in a Balkan country riven by political conflict and ripe for fascist rule" (70), and Meyers comments on how "Harriet finds Romania a thoroughly corrupt and barbarous society, which persecutes the Jews, oppresses the peasants, and grinds down the swarms of beggars, left to die in the freezing streets" (23). Meyer adds that Manning's Romania "still reeks of the Orient and suffers from Oriental languor" (23). Hammond too states that "it was traditional balkanism that dominated […] *The Balkan Trilogy*" (235). The scholar adds that Bucharest is presented as a "diseased and 'disintegrating' presence, whose wretched streets are rife with poverty, corruption and political violence" (235-236). Similarly, Pia Brinzeau also believes that Manning portrays the "repellent" exoticism of the Balkans and associates her with Foster and Conrad as "writers of imperial culture dash" (Brinzeau qtd. in Patten 57).

Already in the first chapter of *The Balkan Trilogy*, when the Pringles are on the train to Romania, Harriet admits: "[i]n France they were among friends. Italy, which they crossed the next day, seemed the end of the known world" (Manning, *BT* 6). The Balkans, were they are heading to, are perceived as different, as an unknown land and culture. Yakimov too, upon his arrival in Bucharest, looks about him and reflects that "he had now reached the edge of Europe, a region in which he already smelt the Orient" (11). Indeed, these initial thoughts on Romania evoke the image of the country being a *bridge* or *crossroads*, to use Todorova's terms, between Europe and Asia, the Orient.

Trying to find the British legation on his first day in Bucharest, Yakimov wanders through the streets of the city and observes buildings, or parts of buildings, which reflect different architectural influences: "[h]ere and there he saw windows masked with the harem grilles of the receded Ottoman Empire" (13), but he also sees concrete buildings which he says represent "beacons of civilisation" (16), and modern buildings as for example the Athénée Palace Hotel, which is surrounded with the ruins of what had been pretty buildings bestowed on Bucharest by Austria, and which the King had recently ordered demolished. The architecture of the city, thus, also suggests this sense of change and transition that Todorova explains is identified with the Balkans.

The country is almost immediately presented to Harriet as a place of savagery too. During her first days in the city, she and Guy take a trăsură (a carriage) to see part of the city, and their coachman is a "*Skopit*" (27).[17] As Guy explains to Harriet, "[t]hey believe that to find grace we must all be completely flat in front, women as well as men. So, after they've reproduced themselves, the young people hold tremendous orgies, working themselves into frenzies in which they mutilate themselves" (27-28). The country is therefore associated with

[17] According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the Skoptsi were "an ascetic Russian Christian sect, known since the eighteenth century and now forbidden, given to self-mutilation." The entry in the Encyclopædia Britannica adds that after 1876, and to escape prosecution, some Skoptsis emigrated to Romania.

secret religious sects, with wild orgies and with mutilations: "[a] barbarous country," in Harriet's words (28).

Romania is also portrayed as suffering from social inequality: Harriet observes "the new bourgeoisie, risen from the peasantry and pretty pleased with itself for having done so" when they go out for their evening promenade, and she notices how they wear expensive clothes and "such pearls, diamonds and silver fox furs as they could afford" (23); but she also sees countless beggars, gypsies who try to sell flowers, and numerous peasants who go to town everyday in hope of selling fruit or other goods or of finding a job. Economic wealth is presented as scarce and unevenly distributed, but the Jewish banker Drucker justifies this: "'There is room for all here: there is food and work for all. The Rumanians are content to do nothing but eat, sleep and make love. Such is their nature. The Jews and the foreigners, they run the country. Those who do the work, make the money. Isn't it so?'" (108) His words reinforce the stereotype of Balkan people being passive and lazy. Guy, who sees things from his Marxist point of view, agrees that there is plenty of food in Romania for all – in fact, food seems to be inexhaustible in Manning's Romania and extremely cheap, until the war advances and there is a worrying shortage. But Guy blames this social inequality not to 'the nature' of the Romanians, but to the economic system: "'[t]here is no country in the world where food is so cheap. At the same time, factory-made articles are priced out of all proportion to their value. So you get the wretched peasants labouring for a pittance and paying an absurd price for every article they buy'" (110).

Harriet too reflects on the hardship of the country for most of its native inhabitants, who are mainly peasants:

> Before she left England, she had read books written by travellers in Rumania who had given a picture of a rollicking, open-hearted, happy, healthy peasantry, full of music and generous hospitality. They were, it was true, mad

> about music. […] As for the rest, she had seen nothing of it. The peasants in this city were starved, frightened figures, scrawny with pellagra, wandering about in search for work or making a half-hearted attempt to beg. (132)

Before she arrived in Bucharest, Harriet had a stereotyped image of Romanian peasants as cheerful and hospitable mountain people that nineteenth and twentieth century travelogues portrayed, but her experience proved they were none of that, but simply poverty-stricken.[18] This is not to say, however, that she pities them or that her view on peasants deviates from Balkanist stereotypes. I shall analyse Manning's portrayal of peasants again in the subsection 'Romanian Women, Beggars and Peasants in *The Balkan Trilogy'*.

Manning depicts the Romanians as morally flawed and hypocritical, and Romania as a sexualised place where extramarital relationships are normal. Inchcape, the director of the British Legation in Bucharest, tells Harriet how married men often have affairs, and their wives, even though they know all about it, pretend to be unaware: "'Rumanian convention requires [their] apparent unawareness. Morality here is based not on not doing, but on recognising what is being done. […] Take, for instance, the behaviour of these women in company. If anyone makes an improper joke, they simply pretend not to understand. […] It's ridiculous to watch. '" (36) This 'convention', based on an imposition on women to feign they are ignorant of reality, allows men to say and do as they please. Romanian men are thus

[18] Goldsworthy also comments on how Manning's descriptions of Bucharest are not "the nostalgia-laden evocations of a lost aristocratic world, the 'last corner of real Europe' of Sitwell's *Roumanian Journey*" (211), but rather "bittersweet descriptions" which convey the city's "cruelties as well as its charm" (212). Goldsworthy adds that Manning's "[s]cenes of turbulence and political violence, such as the assassination of Prime Minister Armand Călinescu" would be "unthinkable in Sitwell's quaint Balkan landscapes" (212). Similarly, Patten points out that Harriet's view of the country changes, and the effect of this, Patten explains, is "an inconsistency of perspective, which switches from glimpses of exotic excess in [Romania] to Harriet's focus on what is visible, rather than projected: the country's economic and social degradation" (62). In addition, Patten explains, "the physical instability" of Romania is constantly accentuated, and the continuous border insecurities are shown: "The constant threat of erupting minoritarian and ethnic conflict across the country as a whole combines with a physical landscape simultaneously subject to constant shifts, transitions and disturbance (64).

presented as unfaithful, insincere and insensitive to their wives' feelings, but this does not imply Romanian women are presented as victims of this misogynist behaviour. Instead, they are portrayed as accomplices of it, and they benefit from it too:

> these Rumanian homes are hot-beds of scandal and gossip. It's all very Oriental. The pretence of innocence is to keep their price up. They develop early and they're married off early, usually to some rich old lecher whose only interest is in the girl's virginity. When that's over and done with, they divorce. The girl sets up her own establishment, and, having the status of divorcée, she is free to do what she chooses. (37)

There is "a quota of normal marriages, of course" (37), Inchcape admits, but in general, Manning's English characters describe Romanian men as lustful and Romanian women as opportunistic.

This 'Oriental' behaviour, together with most of the flaws the British characters identify in Romania, seem to be a legacy from the times when the country was part of the Ottoman Empire (which emphasises again this idea of the Balkans being part of Europe geographically speaking, but Oriental culturally speaking). As Clarence states, "'[i]f Rumania had been as long under the Austrians as she was under the Turks, she might be civilised by now'" (92). Harriet also defines parts of Bucharest as "primitive, bug-ridden and brutal" (131), and the city as a whole as a "strange, half-Oriental capital" (335).

In her *Imperial Refugee: Olivia Manning's Fictions of War* (2011), Patten analyses Manning's portrayal of the Balkans, and she recognises in *The Great Fortune* and in *The Spoilt City* features of different literary genres, the most interesting being Manning's use of tropes of Gothic convention already in the first chapter of *The Great Fortune* and all throughout the trilogy. The Pringles travel across France and Italy by train, the Orient Express, on their way to Bucharest. As they cross Slovenia and get nearer Romania, they

abandon familiar landscapes and Harriet describes the darkness outside, and little lights in the forest which she realises are the eyes of beasts (presumably wolves), which the scholar understands as a reference to Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897).[19] And already in Bucharest, Harriet continues to describe the country as "animalistic and predatory" (59).

According to Patten, Manning does not limit the use of Gothic conventions to her representation of place. The scholar draws a parallelism between the Romanian vampire legend (prolonged by Bram Stoker and Sheridan Le Fanu) and Manning's depiction of the Romanian Iron Guard: "Just as Dracula's minions slowly infiltrated in England, the Guardists […] begin to emerge, discreetly, in the streets of the Romanian capital" (66). As the Iron Guard secure their presence in Bucharest, public anxiety intensifies. And when the Guardists start to revive the memory of their 'Martyrs', they are directly associated to the "undead of Transylvanian legend" (66): Patten here recalls Guy's remark that "the Iron Guard is called the 'legion of ghosts'" (Manning qtd. in Patten 66). Thus, the scholar states, Manning successfully creates "an atmosphere of deep suspicion, paranoia, anxiety and insecurity in the two Romanian novels" (67).

Similarly, Patten explains that Manning also uses a Gothic metaphor in her representation of Romania as a "prime territory, prey to the 'devouring' instincts of both Hitler and Stalin", and the scholar even extends this metaphor to Manning's treatment of the Allies and of the British Institute: there is, it seems, "an external parasitism, a will to drain the country's precious domestic resources. […] Romania is rendered Gothic and abject by its own desperate position as victim, relentlessly haggled over and exploited." (68). In the end, and as Patten also notices, Manning portrays how the Nazi conquest of Romania only brings

[19] Hammond also refers to Gothicism in his *British Literature and the Balkans*, and he describes Bram Stoker's *Dracula* as "the most famous balkanist text of the period and one that has remained in print ever since" (71). Hammond explains that Stoker's novel "was also kept alive by a new generation of travel writers who, during the 1920s and 1930s, drew upon its legends, characterisations and nightmarish landscapes for their portraits of south-east Europe" (76).

darkness to the country: Harriet reckons that "the victory of Nazi Germany would be a victory of darkness. Cut off from Western Europe, Rumania would be open to persecution, bigotry, cruelty, superstition and tyranny" (Manning qtd. in Patten 77). Patten admits that the use of Gothic tropes perpetuates some clichés of Balkanism, but she justifies that Manning used these as "a deliberate means of raising contemporary anxieties about Eastern Europe's riven and repressed identities" (60).

Another possible explanation for Manning's representation of Romania as almost completely non-European could be Hammond's theory that Balkanism is "a binaristic framework of diction, imagery and evaluation predicated on the strict opposition between the domestic and foreign culture" (121): "[e]ager to establish themselves as civil, moral and rational, and keen to set off those qualities for their readerships, travellers and expatriates have used negative images of the indigenous other as a gauge of self-worth" (122). According to the scholar, even though Manning's portrayal of Romania focuses on the Second World War period, its publication during the 1960s "helped to reinstall the traditionalist modes of Balkanism during the Cold War period" and to maintain them until the end of the 1980s (236). Hammond states that Manning's work on Romania is "littered with references to the Red Army's gradual encroachment on Romania, the implications of which a contemporary readership would not have missed" (236-7). As the war advances and the Russian army recovers long lost territories, Hammond explains, Soviet communism is perceived as a threat by the Romanians and also by some of the British characters (237). Guy of course has faith in Communism and in fact he claims that "'You wait and see. Russia will win this war for us yet'", but he is contradicted by almost everyone else (Manning, *BT* 329). Mortimer Tufton, an acquaintance of the Pringles who is a journalist and a noted figure in the Balkans, explains them that "only Allied influences had prevented Russia from devouring the Balkans long ago"

(329), and he adds that "'the friendship of Russia has been more disastrous to Rumania than the enmity of the rest of the world'" (330).

Regardless of Manning's intentions by depicting Romania mostly following Balkanist clichés and discourses, it seems undeniable that she managed to recreate an atmosphere of ambiguity, tension and discomfort in a country which is completely alien to the protagonist Harriet. And this atmosphere, in turn, suits the general mood and worries caused by the war in its first year as lived by Harriet and the rest of the characters.

3.2.2. GREECE

Harriet Pringle's departure from Bucharest on the eve of the German occupation of Romania is quite hurried, only a few hours after their flat has been raided, and even though the thought of having left Guy behind distresses her, she feels quite optimistic about settling in Athens: "Seeing the marble façades and the surrounding hills luminous in the rose-violet light of evening, she was thankful to come to rest in so beautiful a place" (Manning, *BT* 651). Harriet never really felt relaxed or comfortable in Bucharest, it was too alien a place for her, but she seems to feel quite differently about Athens – there, she thinks, she will be able to rest. Goldsworthy explains Harriet's shift in attitude towards her surroundings:

> If Manning's descriptions of Romania reflect a sense of the discovery of an unknown world, Greece is […] dreamed of, already known and locked into the imagery of 'returning home.' For Manning, as for so many other English writers, descriptions of Greece consist of defining the terms of that 'recognition' – the ways of finding a long-lost home. (212)

Admittedly, Greece had been the setting of numerous (canonical) literary works, and then, during the Romantic period, poets such as Byron rediscovered Balkan countries (particularly

Greece and Albania) and made them the setting of their works.[20] Greece, as Goldsworthy notes, was well-known to the British cultured population after Romanticism and therefore it "could never fully function as an alien Other" (216). Thus, and as the scholar explains, even though *Friends and Heroes*, set in Athens, is part of *The Balkan Trilogy*, it portrays Greece "as a Mediterranean rather than a Balkan country" (216).

Patten also notes that, in the last volume of *The Balkan Trilogy*, Manning recovers deep-rooted British Romantic treatments of Greece (80). Indeed, certain Romantic poets were wary of the intellectual currents of the Enlightment (they disliked its faith in science and progress and they despised the corrupt values of the new urban modernity), thus, they turned to an idealised rural world. Hammond explains that in the 1920s and 1930s, Romanticism experienced a powerful revival, particularly "in the autobiographical journeys of the travelogue" about the Balkans (174): "[e]arly twentieth-century commentators discerned in the region's archaic social structures and primordial stretches of countryside, not backwardness and savagery, but a beauty, vibrancy and 'fascinating touch of romance' that aroused their admiration" (175). This British Hellenism that Manning recovers, scholar Patten argues, is mostly seen in the character of Alan Frewen, who is the director of the British Information Service in Athens. Admittedly, Alan arrived in Athens before the war as a photographer: he visited places like Mycenae, Nauplia, Delphi and Olympus, he tried to record what he saw and took pictures. He has totally assimilated the country as his second homeland: he feels attached to Athens, he has learnt the Greek language and he has read and translated Greek classics. As he acknowledges, he is a "Grecophil" (Manning, *BT* 729). Alan knows Athens well, so he takes Harriet and the British group for walks into the hills

[20] Goldsworthy explains that during his tour around the Balkans, Byron intended to visit the classical sites of Greece, but he discovered that "he was equally attracted to the much less known Balkan Greece" (18). The scholar adds that Byron's "international fame, which rested as much on his lifestyle – in particular on his legendary support for the cause of Greek independence […] – as on his work, made him by far the most important figure in the Romantic discovery of the Balkans in English literature" (20).

surrounding the city and he takes the Pringles to small taverns and restaurants run by Greek families. He often expresses his admiration for the country and its people:

> 'You love Greece, don't you?'
>
> 'Yes. I love the country and I love the people. They have a wonderful vitality and friendliness. They want to be liked, of course: but that does not detract from their individuality and independence. […]
>
> Alan talked for some time about the Greeks and the countryside: 'an idyllic, unspoilt countryside'. (736)

Alan regards Greece as a pastoral setting, but this view is challenged by Guy, who suggests that rather than 'idyllic' and 'unspoilt', Greek life is "underdeveloped" and in "conditions that had not changed since the days of the Ottoman Empire" (736). Guy believes Greece should be modernised and industrialised, but Alan hopes it will not:

> 'You prefer the peasants to remain in picturesque poverty, I suppose?'
>
> 'I prefer that they remain as they are: courteous, generous, honourable and courageous. […] The great tradition of *philoxenia* – of friendship towards a stranger – still exists in the country and on the islands. […] A noble people! Why should anyone wish to change them?'
>
> Guy nodded appreciatively. 'A noble people, yes. They deserve something better than subsistence at starvation level.' (737-8)

Guy strongly believes modern industrial socialism would align Greece with other European countries, but Alan holds a more classical and conservative view of the country and fears that industrialisation will make the country lose its Hellenic essence.

Harriet shares Frewen's admiration of the Greeks. As Goldsworthy points out, just as Harriet's impressions of Athens are "coloured by perceptions of its classical past, so the inhabitants of the city preserve much of the heroic Hellenic ideal" (213). Harriet describes all

Greeks as dignified people: men and women, young and old, rich and poor.[21] The scholar adds:

> The notion of the Greeks as a race of noble warriors permeates Manning's descriptions of their dignified dances and their love of music, her portraits of evzones in their fustanellas, and even the accounts of Harriet's encounters with old men who regret their age because it does not allow them to join the battle. The imagery Manning uses is quintessentially Romanticist: the Greeks are, for her, born soldiers. (214)

However, Harriet does not echo the classical myths of heroism permanently, and her perspective on Greece changes as the war progresses. As Patten points out, "in the course of the Athens-set narrative, Harriet's impressions of a romantic and heroic culture are undermined by a wartime actuality and the country's less than heroic slide from petty dictatorship into humiliating occupation" (82). Harriet's ambivalent attitude, according to Patten, shows Manning's decision to interweave "the tropes of epic and romantic history with the responsibilities of contemporary political and realist commentary" (87). Indeed, Harriet portrays the Greek (both men and women) as strong, honourable and fearless people when they initially join the war and they defeat the Italians battle after battle. But soon the reality of war and its consequences becomes evident and the atmosphere in the city is one of anxiety. Idealism, Patten explains, "fragments under the combined pressures of wartime disenchantment and actual physical hardship in the Greek capital" (90). And unlike what happened in Bucharest, this time the British expats suffer from lack of food and are exposed to real dangers of physical injury and bombardment, just as the ordinary Greek civilians do.

[21] Even Greek street vendors are portrayed positively – they are polite people who do not insist in people buying from them, who do not beg for more money and who do not get angry – unlike the "terrible beggars of Bucharest" who Harriet despises greatly. (Manning, *BT* 677).

Just as in Manning's Bucharest-set novels, Patten also identifies Gothic tropes in *Friends and Heroes*, but this time it is the expatriate British community who are represented as 'vampiric'. The people who run the British Legation and the 'Organization' in Athens are presented as parasites who represent "a culture of self-promotion and sycophancy at the expense of a communal effort" (Patten 92). Mooney also notes that the English in Manning's Athens are "a morally enfeebled lot, overtaken by pettiness, calculation, and, above all, failure of nerve" (54). The result of this, Patten states, is that "[i]n parallel with the actual fall of a heroic Greece, a mock heroic line is traced in the activities of a tangential British presence fast deteriorating into histrionics and bathos" (92).

Towards the end of *The Balkan Trilogy* German troops approach Athens and the Pringles have to flee to Egypt. Even though the reality of war has made Harriet partly abandon her stereotyped Hellenic view of Greece, she feels sad to leave a country which she perceives as noble and which has felt like home.

3.2.3. EGYPT

As Patten points out, the Pringles' trip from Athens to Cairo "marks a transition from the reassuringly familiar environment of Athens to a city that is in so many ways beyond their comprehension" (120). Indeed, whereas Greece is presented as a familiar, Mediterranean country, Egypt is portrayed as almost totally non-European, almost completely alien: "They reached Alexandria still mourning for Greece and their memories of Greece, and Egypt evoked in them disgust and a fear of its strangeness" (Manning, *LT* 55-56).

Manning does not present Egypt following the Orientalist discourse as described by Todorova in the sense that the country is not a utopian location that offers freedom and wealth to the British protagonists, but rather a highly unpleasant place for most of their stay. Harriet soon realises that the real Egypt has little to do with the image of the country shown in old posters used to bring rich travellers there (see fig. 12): "Egypt was not only the Sphinx, the

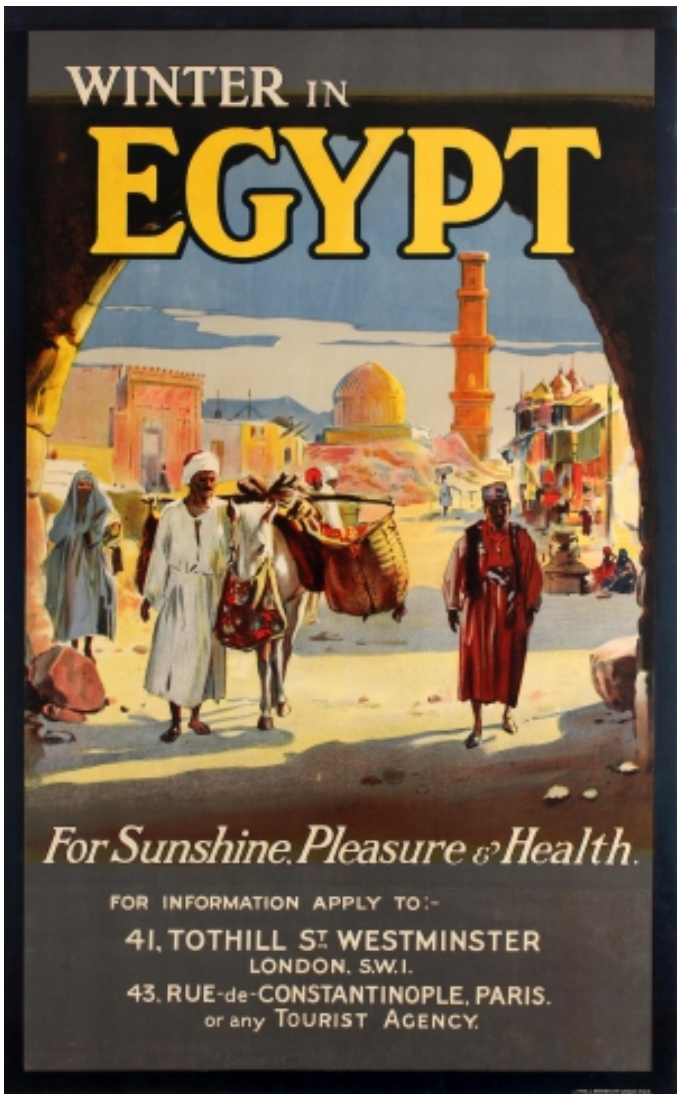

Fig. 12. *Winter in Egypt Sunshine Pleasure Health*. This poster from the 1920s presents Egypt as a place to enjoy good weather and health, and it contrasts sharply with Harriet's experience of the country as a place of 'discomfort and sickness'.

lotus columns, the soft flow of the Nile, it was also the deadening discomfort and sickness that blurred these sights so, in the end, one cared for none of them" (82).

Manning does, however, resort to various negative clichés and stereotypes that Todorova, as explained in the previous section, claims to have been usually associated with 'Oriental'. The opening scene of *The Danger Tree* narrates Simon's arrival to Suez: he is confused – he does not know what awaits him even in the next few hours, and he feels terribly lonely because he has lost his two friends as they have left on a truck to cover an emergency while Simon was substituting an officer. His description of his surroundings is not much more positive: "he had never before seen such a wilderness or known such loneliness" (Manning,

LT 10). The houses he can see are small and "packed between dry, enclosing hills," it is hot and the earth is dusty. He takes a train to Cairo and, when he arrives there at night, he finds the air is "hot and heavy" too, the atmosphere of the city is "spicy" and "flaccid", and the district "look[s] seedy and [is] probably dirty" (10). Everything around him seems dirty, wild, claustrophobic, overwhelming, and strange.

Simon soon leaves Cairo for the desert, but his initial impressions of the Egyptian capital are the same as the ones the Pringles have upon their arrival. Harriet too portrays Cairo as malodorous and dirty: "Cairo was full of waste lots; dusty, brick-strewn, hillocky sites where a building had collapsed from age and neglect. The smell that came from them was […] rancid and sweet like some sort of weed or first war gas. Harriet thought of phosgene, though she did not know what it was like" (77). The fact that she associates the smells of the city with a poisonous gas seems premonitory: the smell, of course, is not poisonous, but in fact, Harriet feels unwell for most of her stay in Egypt. She frequently suffers from attacks of "Gyppy tummy", as she calls them, and she believes that "in this country one [eats] sickness" (81). She actually loses a lot of weight and becomes physically fragile, she realises she is "usually more ill than well" since she has arrived in Egypt, and even Guy notices: "'This place doesn't agree with you. You're too thin, you look peaky.'" (193) The country is presented as the cause for her malaise, and as Harriet reckons, "[h]ere she was not only unwell, but at risk from all the diseases known to mankind" (194). Eventually, Harriet is diagnosed with amoebic dysentery (according to Edwina, one of the English characters in Cairo, this is a common disease there, "*condition du pays*" as she calls it) and she has to spend some time in hospital while she recovers (340). After her recovery, she decides, she will go back to England.

In addition to being presented as a place of illness, there is, as Patten notes, a prevailing sense of death in Egypt and all throughout Manning's *The Levant Trilogy* (Patten

121). Cairo is presented as vulnerable because some of the battles fought in the desert take place very near it. At the same time, the scholar adds, the pyramids, ruins and cemeteries are always visible on the horizon, reminiscent of the death of the ancient Egyptian civilisation (113). Of course, Simon witnesses and narrates life at the battlefront, which is inevitably loaded with death. Simultaneously, there are numerous deaths of civilians too in the novels: Aidan Pratt commits suicide; Pinkrose is assassinated; Castlebar dies suddenly from illness; when the boat Queen of Sparta sinks, many evacuee wives and children drown; and, when there is a plague in Luxor, Harriet sees countless bodies being taken for burial. Thus, death predominates both in the military and civilian world, and, as Patten notes, "British and Egyptian [people are] ironically united in mortality" too (123). To this, Patten adds:

> Manning's focus on death in the trilogy maps the historical and mythological apparatus of Cairo on to the morbidity of a generation experiencing the cataclysm of war and the death on a vast scale of young men like Hugo Boulderstone. As with the army tanks decorated with the eye of the god Horus, […] there is a constant crossover from ancient culture into modern trauma, symbolised by the presence of the pyramids but also by repeated reference to Cairo's Muslim cemetery, the City of the Dead, where the Pringles join a mourning ceremony for one of Guy's students. (123)

Cairo is therefore presented as a death zone, from the references to its ancient culture to the references to the war being currently fought. It is also portrayed as a place of instability: there's tension in the city, the future of Egypt as a country is in fact not clear, and equally, the future of the European expats and refugees in the country is uncertain. Cairo is, thus, a city of alienation and enervation (125).

During the Second World War Cairo was the centre of Middle-Eastern operations for Britain and the Allies. It was also the place where numerous people (refugees, expatriates and

European Jews amongst others) went to find refuge. At the same time, signs of discontent with the European domination of the country were beginning to emerge, and there was an atmosphere of native unrest which could easily lead to rebellion. Manning tried to portray this historical context in her novel, and Patten points out how Manning positions Cairo "as the nub of a soured imperialism: a volatile, intemperate city disturbed not only by the pitched battles staged in the outlying desert but by mounting pressures for nationalist revolution within the country's borders" (111). According to Patten, Manning portrays an ironic divided outlook with regards to the possible Egyptian rebellion. On the one hand, "[t]he ordinary Egyptian civilian is presented as a vaguely disaffected subordinate lacking the initiative to take up arms" (Patten 116). Patten recalls how Iqal, an Egyptian clerk who works as Harriet's translator in the American Embassy, admits the Egyptians do not know how to govern themselves. I will refer to this scene again in the subsection 'Colonised Others in *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy*'. Patten also refers to another scene in which we see some students who threaten everyone who opposes to freedom for Egypt, but then they immediately take their words back.

On the other hand, Patten believes that "Egyptian nationalism is afforded intellectual credibility and recognition through the character of Dr Shafik," Harriet's physician when she is at the American Hospital (116). Dr Shafik is described as "violently anti-British" (Manning, *LT* 340), and he is a member of the Nationalist party, which, according to Edwina, is "worse than the Wafd" (341).[22] He uses irony to express his dislike of the British Empire and its subjugation of Egypt, and he is even unpleasant to Harriet because he recognises her as a member of this Empire: when she asks if she will be cured, he replies: "'Why, certainly.

[22] The Wafd was a nationalist liberal political party which was very influential and also instrumental in gaining Egyptian independence from Britain. It was formed after World War I and it was not dissolved until 1952.

Did you come here to die?' […] 'Could we let a member of your great empire die here, in our poor country?' (337). Harriet reminds him that many British are dying in Egypt because there is a war on, but Dr Shafik questions this again: "'Call that a war? Two armies going backwards and forwards in the desert, chasing each other like fools!'" (337).

Dr Shafik feels contempt about this war, and he dislikes that the Allied and Axis armies are fighting in the Egyptian desert while ignoring the needs of the Egyptians. What is more, he disapproves too the fact that Britain neglects its own needy civilians here, and that the British community in Cairo do not take care of one another. Miss Copeland, an old English lady, is being treated at the American Hospital too, and Dr Shafik accuses Harriet and the rest of the British group in Cairo of having ignored her: "'An old, harmless lady, living here among other ladies of her own country – and yet she nearly starved to death. She lay in bed, too ill to move, and no one called to see how she was. It was a poor shop-keeper, where she bought bread, who asked himself, "Where is the old English lady? Can she need help?" – and so she was found'" (339). Harriet tries to justify herself by explaining that Miss Copeland was independent and had never asked for help, but Dr Shafik rebukes her again: "'So you left her alone and it was an Egyptian peasant who showed pity! You see, here in Egypt, we live together. We look after our old people'" (339). Harriet is made uncomfortable by his sharp criticism, yet even though Dr Shafik comes across as an arrogant person to Harriet, he manages to express his discontent about British imperialism in Egypt, and also to suggest that the Egyptians have a stronger sense of community and solidarity than the British.

It is noteworthy, though, that Dr Shafik's attitude towards Harriet changes drastically when he realises she is Guy's wife: "Having discovered that Harriet was the wife of a professor who was a lover of Egypt, Dr Shafik changed towards Harriet. Whenever he had nothing else to do, he would stroll into her room and entertain her with flippant and flirtatious

talk" (347-348). Knowing Guy would support freedom for Egypt, Dr Shafik ceases to provoke Harriet with his ironic reprobation.

In addition to acknowledging this desire for freedom that was starting to make itself visible in Egypt at the time, Manning also portrays signs that Cairo is gradually becoming a more 'European' city. Patten also identifies in Harriet's descriptions of the city that she "notes the ways in which a modern city is beginning to emerge in the confused chronological space between subjugation and independence" (Patten 120). Certainly, we read about Egyptians who wear "European dress, the women as well as the men" and work in offices (Manning, *LT* 14-15), but I would argue that overall, Manning emphasises the more traditionally *Oriental* features of the country: for example, both Harriet and Simon (during his short stays in Cairo) notice often the men and women who wear the traditional clothes - men in white robes, women dressed in black, all wearing slippers. In addition, Manning confirms the stereotype of Oriental men having a sexist mentality: even cultivated and educated men such as Dr Shafik believe women to be intellectually inferior to men. When Harriet is ill, Dr Shafik describes the dangers of amoebic infection to Guy instead of explaining them to Harriet, who is the one who is at risk: these dangers are "comprehensible by a male brain but not, of course, by a female" (343). On another occasion Dr Shafik and Harriet are talking and she says something Dr Shafik disagrees with: "'Miss Pringle, I am much relieved. You are, after all, a true woman.' 'Why "after all"?' 'I wondered. I thought you were too clever for your sex'" (349).

All in all, and even though Manning makes reference to clubs, hotels and other touristic landmarks of Cairo which had been important places in the glory days of the British Empire and which were familiar to all in England, her portrayal of the city is far from idyllic, and on occasions she resorts to negative clichés about the Orient. Still, Manning's strong sense of history is visible in her representation of Egypt too, and she includes in her narrative the pressures in the country for national revolution as well as the tensions of a war which is

geographically close and which often intrudes in the civilian arena. I shall analyse the interference of the military into the domestic world and of how this alters civilian behaviour in the next chapter 'Gender and Sexuality and Manning's war trilogies'.

3.3. THE 'OTHER' IN MANNING'S SECOND WORLD WAR TRILOGIES

Having already analysed Manning's representation of Romania, Greece and Egypt, it seems necessary now to discuss in greater depth the writer's portrayal of the (native) people who live in these countries and who are often regarded as 'others'. To do this, I will take Lassner's work as a starting point. Lassner has written, amongst others, two book chapters devoted to Manning's work, one in *British Women Writers of World War II: Battlegrounds of their Own* (1998) and another in *Colonial Strangers: Women Writing the End of the British Empire* (2004), and her work on Manning has been referential for other critics who have also analysed the author's writing (including Patten).

3.3.1. THE JEWS IN MANNING'S BUCHAREST

In *British Women Writers of World War II: Battlegrounds of their Own* (1998), Lassner argues that Manning writes "a political critique that links British foreign policy and domestic ideology to the fates of aliens and women" (16). The scholar explains that after the Great War, the domestic sphere was celebrated again, and women and the home were put at the heart of national life (12). Then, during the Second World War, England proclaimed that they were fighting for freedom and for a future shared humanity, but reality was that the country refused the refugees entry or considered them potential threats (17).

According to Lassner, this rejection of refugees reminded women writers such as Manning of their own marginality as women. While England promoted feelings of national

unity and national solidarity, women and refugees were seen as alien, as 'Others', and therefore they could not be part of this national identity (17). Just as Nazism was an oppressing force in Europe, women were also oppressed at home (18). Lassner believes that the women writers she considers recognised the similarities and differences between themselves and Others like "evacuees, refugees and victims" (19). At this point, the scholar recalls Emmanuel Levinas' concept of the Other and says that "[d]escribing the Other as 'a face looking at me as absolutely foreign', Levinas establishes that 'the absolutely other is the Other'" (19). Therefore, Lassner claims, women writers such as Manning saw themselves as Other, but at the same time they were aware of the differences between themselves and the 'absolutely Other' they also represent in their writings (19). In the case of Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy,* this 'absolutely Other' Lassner refers to is Sasha Drucker, a Jewish student of Guy, son of Emmanuel Drucker, an important banker. Harriet and Guy Pringle temporarily hide Sasha in a little shed on the roof of their Bucharest flat in order to protect him from the Iron Guard after his father has been arrested and the rest of his family has dissolved. In Lassner's view, Manning represents Harriet Pringle as 'Other' – to use Levinas' terms, and she claims that Harriet's war odyssey is interweaved with the fate of the 'absolutely Other' Sasha Drucker (Lassner, *British Women Writers* 232). Because the war zone is male-dominated, Harriet doesn't have a space in which to construct her identity. Instead, Lassner claims, "Manning builds Harriet's character throughout the six volumes of *The Balkan and Levant Trilogies* as dependant on her identification with the fate of another marginalized Other, the Jew" (233). Harriet can identify with the Jew (Sasha) as another marginalised Other because just as the domestic space infantilises the woman by overprotecting her, the ghetto feminises the Jew by keeping him powerless (234).

Indeed, Harriet initially sees herself as 'Other' in the male-dominated war zone and one could argue that she is able to identify differences between herself as a woman and Sasha

as a Jew, and therefore she can regard Sasha as an 'absolutely Other'. And while it is undeniable that Harriet is sympathetic and affectionate towards Sasha, I believe claiming that Harriet's character is dependant on her identification with Sasha reads as too forced an argument. Sasha is introduced in the first novel of *The Balkan Trilogy*, but he only becomes an important character in *The Spoilt City*, the second novel of the trilogy. This is when Guy finds him (nobody knew where he had been since his father had been arrested) and they decide to take him in. At the very end of this novel the Pringles' flat is raided and Sasha is nowhere to be found. Nobody knows what has happened or even whether he is alive. He only appears again very briefly at the end of the last volume of *The Balkan Trilogy* to disappear from the narrative again and for good. Certainly, Sasha is a key character in *The Spoilt City*, but Harriet's role as protagonist of the six novels in Manning's trilogies is undoubtedly much greater than his, and therefore, it would seem that stating that her war odyssey is intertwined with the fate of the 'absolutely Other' Sasha Drucker is excessive. Scholar Patten also reckons "Lassner overemphasises their similarity": certainly, Patten states, both Harriet and Sasha enact the role of refugee in an atmosphere of angst and rejection, but she remarks that "it is Sasha who claims protection and Sasha whose life is in actual danger following his desertion from the Romanian army" (75).

This is not to downplay the importance of Sasha and his family in Manning's Second World War novels: in fact, they are the only Jewish characters who really have a voice in the two trilogies. Harriet Pringle first meets the Drucker family at their home, where she and Guy have been invited for lunch. While they eat, they discuss the war, and readers are exposed to what was the ironic reality for most rich Jews. Emmanuel Drucker admits: "'Because of the war, we make much business: but still, it is a bad thing'" (Manning, *BT* 101). When Guy suggests that there will be a financial collapse in Germany that may shorten the war, the Druckers are alarmed and Doamna Flöhr, Drucker's sister, explains "'It would be terrible,

such a collapse! It would ruin us'" (106). And Drucker himself explains: "'It is true our business is much dependent on German prosperity. But we made our connections long ago. We do not love the Germans any more than you, but we did not cause the war. We must live'" (107). The conversation continues and Harriet raises an uncomfortable question: "'Supposing the Nazis come here?'", to which one of Drucker's brothers-in-law replies: "'They would not interfere with us,' Flöhr said with a swaggering air. 'It would not be in their interests to do so. They do not want a financial debacle. Already, if it were not for us, Rumania would be on her knees'" (107). It seems Flöhr wants to convince the Pringles (and maybe himself and the rest of his family too) that they are important and safe, that they will not be hurt. Manning's readers, though, know better than this. The war had been long finished when the novel was first published, and thus readers know what terrible fate awaited the Jews. But as the characters continue talking Flöhr's wife lets her worries show:

> 'We work, we save,' she said, 'we bring here prosperity, and yet they persecute us.' She leant across the table to fix Harriet with her reddish-brown eyes. 'In Germany my husband was a clever lawyer. He had a big office. He comes here – and he is forbidden to practise. Why? Because he is a Jew. He must work for my brother. Why do they hate us? Even the trãsurã driver when angry with his horse will shout: "Go on, you Jew." Why is it? Why is it so? (107)

It is clear the Druckers feel they are unjustly treated, and in an attempt to challenge them all, Harriet questions whether they are in some way to be held responsible for their situation as a race: "'Perhaps that is the trouble,' said Harriet, 'that [Jews] live apart. Your first loyalty is to your own race. And you all grow rich. The Rumanians may feel you take from the country and give nothing back'" (108). Here one could argue that Harriet identifies herself as superior to the Jews, who she identifies as, to use Levinas' (and Lassner's) term, Other. Harriet does not have a Nazi or anti-Semitic ideology, but her comment clearly reflects her imperialistic

education: blaming the oppressed for their fate is an argument that oppressors typically use to justify or rationalise the cruelty of their actions. Harriet's observation is not shared by the Jewish family, and Drucker's brother-in-law Teitelbaum explains that the Jews are generous and that they give money when asked: "'When the Iron Guard was powerful in 1937, the green-shirt boys came to the offices collecting for party funds. The Jewish firms gave twice, even three times, more than the Rumanians, and what was the gratitude? The Iron Guard made laws against us. Only last year there was a pogrom'" (109). After this Hassolel, another of Drucker's brothers-in-law, explains that his children have suffered greatly just because they are Jews: "'At the University our boy was thrown from a window. His spine was broken. Now he is in a sanatorium in Switzerland. Our daughter was medical student. In the laboratory the young men took off her clothes and beat her. She went to America. She is ashamed to come back. So, you see, we have lost our two children'" (109). Thus, the tragic irony of their situation is exposed: their wealth and economic well-being depends on German prosperity, and they make more money thanks to the war. But of course it is Germany who leads the war against the Jews, so it is Germany and the Iron Guard (who many Jews gave money to) who threaten their survival as a race with their anti-Semitic policies and discourse. In fact, it is the Iron Guard that imprisons Emmanuel Drucker days after this lunch party, forces the dissolution of all his family, despoils them of their goods and money, and eventually murders him.

According to Lassner, the representation of some of these Jewish characters is problematic. Harriet's first impression of Emmanuel Drucker is positive, and her portrayal of Sasha is positive and sensitive, but she seems to be more critical in her description of the three Drucker sisters. For example, Doamna Hassolel is described as "a small, stout, worn-faced woman with a decided manner", Doamna Teitelbaum is said to have "a worried thinness" (99), and "cheeks [that] hung like curtains on either side of the drooping arc of her

mouth" (105), and Harriet thinks that Doamna Flöhr is the most beautiful of all three, but she adds that she "was plump and would, in time, be as stout as the eldest sister" (99). In Lassner's view, "their grossly stereotypical representation reflects only too painfully the process of dehumanization which made the Jews the irremedial alien" (Lassner, *British Women Writers* 237). She adds that the aunts are "[p]ortrayed as caricatures of both bourgeois consumerism and feminine excess and uselessness", and that they "present a serious critical problem in an otherwise masterly epic of the war". Lassner states that "[s]uch lack of literary sympathy casts ironic shadows over the otherwise empathetic portrait of Sasha" (237).

Undeniably, the representation of the Drucker sisters is not affable and in fact, when the Pringles discover Emmanuel Drucker has been arrested, they worry about Sasha, but they show no concern for the sisters, and Harriet never even tries to phone them. Lassner explains that Emmanuel Drucker is a victim of history (as happened to many Jews, he is taken and murdered by the Iron Guard), and that Sasha and his aunts are "victims of a literary plot: they disappear from a text that marks itself as historical epic" (238), that is, Manning simply removes them from the narration without apparent justification.

In an attempt at explaining Harriet's attitude towards the Drucker sisters, Lassner suggests that it may be the result of Harriet's animosity at the ideologies that identify them and herself as necessary Others. The scholar adds that "[t]he narrator's view of the Drucker sisters is, after all, only an exaggeration and conflation of Harriet's role of hostess to Guy's parasitic cronies. […] Harriet's disgusted response to the sisters could therefore be seen as the projection of loathing towards both herself and those traditional social and cultural roles she feels unable to resist" (238).

As opposed to Lassner's view, I will propose that the portrayal of the Drucker sisters does not necessarily pose a problem in Manning's novels. After all, Harriet is presented as a character with strong opinions, a strong personality and a sharp tongue. Most characters in the

novels are presented through her, and whether she likes them or not is always clear from the very beginning. In her first description of Sasha, for example, she says that "[h]is eyes were too close together, his nose too big for his face, but because of his extraordinary gentleness of manner Harriet felt drawn to him", which suggests that if she had only had his appearance to judge, she would have disliked him (Manning, *BT* 102). Thus, she may have presented Emmanuel Drucker and Sasha amiably because, for some reason or other, she likes them, and the Drucker sisters in a more judgemental tone simply because she dislikes them. The question, then, is: why does Harriet dislike them so much? Undoubtedly, and as Lassner says, Harriet identifies the Drucker women as Other. In fact Harriet and the Jewish sisters have very little in common: they have different backgrounds, education, and expectations, and it may be precisely this difference between them and herself that Harriet dislikes. Another explanation for Harriet's dislike of the Drucker women may be jealousy. The Drucker sisters have a family and they have a role in it: they support each other and they maintain the family united. Harriet notices how they belong together. She, on the contrary, has no family or family role: she is of course married to Guy but she has already realised, much to her regret, Guy is very independent and often even oblivious of her. Therefore it may be this difference between them and her which she envies the most, and which can explain her dislike of them, at least partly. I shall analyse the importance of the notion of family in the trilogies in greater depth in chapter four.

Lassner concludes that for writers such as Manning, "the English are omnipresent but impotent in the impossible and misguided task motivated by their self-appointed moral responsibility as empire builders. Ultimately, they are always hindered from moral resolution by their combined attraction and revulsion to Others" (240). Along similar lines, Patten also examines Manning's ambivalent representation of the Jews and more specifically, Harriet's disquiet "at the perceived vulgarity of the Jewish Drucker family" (26). Patten concludes that

through this uneasiness, Manning indicates the avoidance of a British response, "a failure to confront the fundamental truths of Jewish persecution during the progress of the war" (26). Therefore, and regardless of the reasons for Harriet's different tone and attitude in her depiction of different Jewish characters, it seems Harriet's ambivalent treatment of Jews is symbolic of the British lack of action to deal with the Jewish problem during the war.

3.3.2. COLONIZED OTHERS IN *THE BALKAN TRILOGY* AND *THE LEVANT TRILOGY*

In 2004 Lassner published *Colonial Strangers: Women Writing the End of the British Empire*, where she applies colonial and postcolonial discourses to Manning's war trilogies as well as to other works of fiction by women writers. Lassner argues that "[f]or many British women writers who witnessed the Hitlerian translation of imperial racism into mass extermination, no further evidence was needed to prove that all empires must end" (6), and she claims that as these writers include their anti-imperialist ideas in their novels, "they create a "moral friction" between their imagined colonial landscapes and historical reality" (6). This friction, the scholar explains, helps them see similarities and differences between the Third Reich and their own Empire, and it also allows them to question the way they relate to imperialism as well as "their own status as colonial strangers" (6). Lassner believes the Nazi conquest of territories modified the meanings of indigenous inhabitant, settler, occupier, and also of colonizer and colonized, and she asserts that British women writers such as Manning outline how these modified meanings "help us understand differences in colonial relations and identities as they were felt and enacted across the British Empire" (7). Lassner's main claim is that Manning and the other women writers she analyses denounced in their novels that racism and oppression are the basis of the Third Reich, as well as the (concealed) basis of all other Empires, including of course, the British. These writers, Lassner adds, supported and endured the war against Nazism, they represented the struggle of the colonized "to become

their own political agents", and they also represented their own conflicts "about the place of British subjects in colonial and postcolonial worlds" (7).

In addition, Lassner introduces the concept of Other that she had already defined in *British Women Writers of World War II*: "writers such as Manning, Godden, and Huxley satirize the fears and attractions both colonizer and colonized project onto each other and how this ambivalence constructs each as the objectified Other" (*Colonial Strangers* 15). If applied to Manning's trilogies, one can infer that Lassner identifies the Pringles and the rest of the British gang as *colonizers*, and the natives of the countries they live in as *colonized*, and she explains that colonizers and colonized see one another as different, as Other. Of course, most of the British group are on a mission in these countries, they enjoy certain privileges simply for being British, and they identify the natives as Other. At the same time, I would add, they are well aware of their own otherness (most of them know very little of the language and cultures of these countries). It seems doubtful, however, that Lassner's statement that in Manning's trilogies colonizers and colonized project fears and attractions onto each other is very accurate, as almost all of the characters in the trilogies are either British or connected to the British mission, there are very few native characters, and only some of these are actually given a voice, so this supposedly mutual projection of attraction and repulsion Lassner refers to cannot really be bidirectional or proportionate. Instead, the process is on most occasions one-sided: it is almost exclusively the colonizers (the British characters) who can express their feelings and thoughts towards the colonized.

Referring to Manning specifically, Lassner explains that her position as an outsider to the native cultures around her and to the British imperialist cause allowed her to feel empathy for the oppressed by any empire: "[n]owhere did this become clearer than in the Middle East, where refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe found themselves competing for safe ground with those who could barely remember when the land was not colonized" (18). In my view,

however, this statement needs clarification. While Manning might have felt empathy for the oppressed (she shows empathy for Sasha Drucker in Romania, for example, and she also acknowledges that the British mission has done little good in Egypt), and even though very occasionally she includes a native character giving their view on their situation or on the war, or even denouncing that European imperialist policies have kept them oppressed (as stated in the previous section, Dr. Shafik expresses his wish for freedom for his country), the reality is that this never becomes central to any passage in the novels. Patten also refers to this:

> Characteristically, Manning simply gestures towards Egyptian resistance and revolution on a distant horizon as the background to her close-range Tolstoyan study of an expatriate, military and diplomatic community failing to recognise (or choosing to ignore) that narrative and its implications. In this respect her prevailing theme is simply imperial vanity and the decadence that accompanied it. (118)

In any case, Lassner claims that through her fiction of World War II, Manning portrays the political scene as ambivalent, as the British fight against the growing Nazi empire and for "humanistic freedom", but in doing so they exert their colonial right "to elevate the lives of those it radicalizes as inferior Others, even as it exploits them" (*Colonial Strangers* 34). The scholar concludes that for Manning, "British ambivalence becomes the prison house of Others" (34): they supposedly want to defeat fascism in the name of freedom, but their colonial influence over countries such as Egypt keeps its inhabitants dominated and subjugated.

In her analysis of the narrative voices in Manning's trilogies, Lassner defines Harriet and Simon's perspectives as depressed, and she claims that this depression stimulates the critical consciousness of the trilogies (34). In the scholar's opinion, Harriet's depression begins in Bucharest, and it is caused by the war and her own feeling of powerlessness, while

Simon's disorientation and depression begin at El Alamein, where he is a signal carrier. It must be noted that neither Harriet nor Simon are ever diagnosed with clinical depression in the novels, and I don't think there is enough textual evidence to conclude that they suffer from it. However, and as Lassner claims, their perspectives are undeniably despondent. Lassner explains that

> Harriet's response to the war provides a realist method through which we can understand history as a process that is dramatized as political effects on the psychological depiction of character. Harriet's depression not only serves to register the war's immediate emotional and life-threatening urgencies, but figures Manning's deep concerns about victory. (34)

Even though the trilogies are narrated indirectly through highly subjective characters, realism is ever present and dominating. Directly connected to the concepts of credibility and authoritativeness defined in chapter two, realism too can be achieved by the incorporation of names of real places, real people and by offering historically truthful data. And as Lassner states in the excerpt above, the depressed response of Harriet to the war can also be a realist method to help readers understand how a historical and political event can affect the people who live through it.

In the fragment above Lassner also states that Harriet's depression depicts Manning's unease about victory: the defeat of Nazism is "politically compromised" as it does not really imply a regime change and it perpetuates the domination of the colonized (34). In my view, however, this statement is questionable, as Lassner does not explain how Harriet's depressed perspective is linked to the author's concerns about victory, and she does not provide any evidence from the trilogies to support it. In any case, it is undeniable that Harriet never celebrates war, and as stated in the previous paragraph, through her response to the events around her, readers get a realist view of war.

Focusing on the representation of place and space in Manning's trilogies, Lassner analyses the importance of the desert in *The Levant Trilogy*. The scholar believes that "the desert outpost becomes its own resisting center and thus instrumental in the decentering of imperial power" (*Colonial Strangers* 35), and argues that for Manning, the "disorienting winds and sands of El Alamein" challenge and undercut all imperial demands and includes them "into their own symbolic battle against occupation" (35). Whether Lassner gives too metaphorical a meaning to a sand storm in the desert seems debatable. Sand storms are not rare in deserts, so associating them to such a charged symbolic meaning could be a bit forced. The scholar adds that even though the Allies won the battle of El Alamein, the novels also portray the fear of the Allies at the thought of a different outcome, as "they would have become the colonized Other of the Third Reich" (35). Patten also refers to this idea and recalls Harriet's provocation to Simon when she asks him what would happen if "the gyppos turned on us" (Manning qtd. in Patten 119). Lassner explains that "[i]t is this fear that drives the Allies across the desert and produces the anxiety that accompanies its victory and defines Manning's narrative voice" (35).

According to Lassner, the desert also gives presence to another Other in Manning's novels, the Egyptians, who "claim subjectivity for their land and for themselves" (36). As explained in the previous section, Patten also comments on how Manning portrays the internal pressures for nationalist revolution within Egypt. Certainly, in *The Danger Tree* Manning introduces Iqal, a secondary character, who questions the rightfulness of the fear of the British: "What do you British do with my country, Mrs. Pringle? You come here to rule yet when the enemy is at the gate, you run away" (Manning, *LT* 73). Lassner also states that Iqal expresses the idea that all colonizers, including the British and the Germans, have similar colonial policies in Egypt (Lassner, *Colonial Strangers* 36). Indeed, Iqal complains about this to Harriet:

> ‘What do these Germans promise us? – they promise freedom and national sovereignty. What are those things? And what are these Germans? They are invaders like all the invaders that have come here for one thousand four hundred year. They come, they go, the English no worse than others. But to govern ourselves! —that we have forgotten, so how do we do it? And why should we believe these Germans, eh? For myself, I am brushing up my German to be on the safe side, but all the time I am asking myself, 'Better the devil we know'.’ (Manning, *LT* 74)

It seems clear that Iqal denounces the situation of Egypt as an eternally colonized land, and he also exposes that for the colonized, all colonizers are the same, as they all have the same discourse, they promise the same things, and, ultimately, they all have the same imperialist goals. And the Egyptians, he complains, do not know how to govern themselves anymore. He seems to distrust Germans – he prefers the British, “the devil [they] know”, but following his instinct for survival (which is particularly acute in times of war, as explained in the section ‘Travel Books and War Books’) he has started to refresh his German. In a later scene, Iqal challenges Harriet again by openly suggesting the British are oppressors here in Egypt:

> ‘See here, Mrs Pringle, they exhort us, “Rise against your oppressors,” they say “Kill them and be free.”’
>
> ‘You don’t think the English are oppressors, do you?’
>
> Iqal raised his great shoulders. ‘Sometimes, yes. Sometimes, no. When they break through the palace gates and tell my king what to do, what would you call them? Are they not oppressors?’ (131-132)

The tone of their conversation is friendly and relaxed, and they do not expand on this topic any further, but in any case it allows Iqal to express his discontent with the political situation of Egypt.

When Harriet analyses Iqal's ideas in relation to the "oppressors" in his country, however, she seems to suggest that the Egyptians may be partly responsible for their eternal position as colonized:

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

Harriet seems to think Egyptians are too tolerant with all conquerors, even with "the losers", the ones who have failed to protect them from wars and from other invaders. And they are, she suggests, too welcoming to new colonizers, in this case the Germans. One could argue Harriet hints at the fact that the Egyptians need to actively stop welcoming conquerors if they want to gain control over their own country. Lassner refers to this passage and to this question too, but she concludes that despite Harriet's comment in the excerpt above, she is always sympathetic towards the Egyptians and critical of the British Empire. The scholar adds that

> [i]f the natives are given very little presence or voice in the trilogy, their subjectivity is asserted in the responses of both Pringles to the vexed relationship between their own status as colonial exiles and that of the colonized. And in turn, the perennially colonized Egyptians represent a critical bridge between the Allies and Axis armies. (*Colonial Strangers* 37)

I take issue with Lassner on this idea: while it is clear that neither Harriet nor Guy are defenders of the British Empire, I do not think they can possibly represent the subjectivity of native Egyptians. The Pringles may not always feel comfortable with their own position as colonial subjects, they may be critical of imperialism, they may empathize with the Other, and they may be aware of their own otherness in the Balkan and Levant countries, but they are,

after all, British subjects who, in the case of Guy and the rest of the staff of the British Legation, have come to these countries to spread British culture and teach English literature and language. It could easily be argued they are there on a colonizing mission. It is true that Harriet does not work for the British Legation herself, but she is granted the same privileges as Guy and his colleagues because she is Guy's wife. Hence, one can argue that the way Guy and Harriet relate and respond to imperialism partly exposes some of the problems it generates for the natives of the countries they stay in, but this does not counterbalance the scarcity of native characters who actually speak for themselves in the novels.

Focusing again on Harriet's characterisation, Lassner states that she is an intricate character partly because her depression is presented sympathetically (37): "Harriet's depression is presented as registering the anxieties of others. Hers is a self-effacing perspective that allows her to observe others with a combination of empathy and emotional detachment" (38). It must be noted, though, that Harriet is only empathetic with people she likes or with situations she considers unfair, but she can be quite harsh with those she dislikes (her description of the Drucker sisters examined earlier is an example of this). Lassner adds that "[m]ost of Harriet's criticism is registered as unexpressed thoughts, as though her analyses must remain secret and therefore uncontaminated by the self-absorption of her comrades. When she does rouse herself to comment, it is in the interest of political critique" (38). Certainly, Harriet does not share most of her thoughts. Firstly, she spends a great deal of time alone or with people she does not really care about. In addition, she is aware that Guy and some of his friends have a totally different outlook on life, politics, the war and on people to hers, so she may not share many of her thoughts with them to avoid being corrected or contradicted. She does, however, have a strong personality and she is not afraid of expressing her opinion with a short, sharp comment when she disagrees strongly with what is being said.

3.3.2.1. ROMANIAN WOMEN, BEGGARS AND PEASANTS IN *THE BALKAN TRILOGY*

All throughout her analysis of Manning's trilogies, both in *British Women Writers of World War II* and in *Colonial Strangers*, Lassner highlights Manning's (or rather her protagonist Harriet's) anti-imperialist outlook and her empathy towards those she identifies as Other, whether it be Jews in Romania in *The Balkan Trilogy* or native Egyptians in *The Levant Trilogy*. However, the scholar does not examine Harriet's representation of the natives of the rest of the countries the Pringles live in. In particular, her portraits of Romanian women, beggars, and peasants deserve special attention.

From the first pages of *The Great Fortune*, Harriet sets herself as different from Romanians, and in fact she learns about them and their lifestyle with a critical eye. On one occasion, a few days after their arrival in Bucharest, she and Guy go out for an evening promenade, and Harriet observes the other people walking: they are the new bourgeoisie, and unlike the Pringles, Harriet immediately notices, they are all very well dressed. The pavement is very crowded, and Harriet describes the determination of the Romanians to keep on it:

> Only peasants or servants could be seen walking in the road. The men might, under pressure, yield an inch or two, but the women were as implacable as steam-rollers. Short and strong, they remained bland-faced while wielding buttocks and breasts as heavy as bladders of lard. The position most fiercely held was the inner pavement […]. Guy, too temperate, and Harriet, too light-boned, for the fray, were easily thrust out to the kerb [… Harriet said]: 'I'll walk in the road. I'm not a Rumanian. I can do what I like.' (Manning, *BT* 24)

Harriet objectifies the women she encounters by comparing them to steamrollers, and when she describes them physically, she brings attention to their buttocks and breasts (body parts which are generally associated with femininity and sexuality) in a spiteful tone: she compares them to "heavy bladders of lard." In addition, the language used to describe the scene is

bellicose: steamrollers are vehicles that crush everything they encounter, the women "wield" their buttocks and breasts, positions are "fiercely" held, and even the word "fray" is used. Admittedly, Harriet and these women have nothing in common: they are natives, wealthy, well-dressed, and they are strong, while she is an oddly-dressed outsider, she is light-boned and thin. One can infer from the excerpt above that upon noticing these differences, Harriet feels threatened and even endangered by the presence and attitude of these women, and, in an attempt at self-defence, her reaction is to despise them, firstly, and then, to mark herself as freer than them: since she is a foreigner, she is free from social constraints, she does not have to worry about classist customs of Romania and therefore she can walk in the road with the peasants and servants; in short, she "can do what [she] like[s]". In a way, Harriet's spiteful tone in her portrayal of these women is reminiscent of the tone she uses when she describes the Drucker sisters. At this point, and if we recall Lassner's statement that the English feel both attraction and revulsion to Others (already explained in section 'The Jews in Manning's Bucharest), it can be concluded that in this case too, Harriet may feel revulsion to the Romanian women who walk on the pavement because she identifies them as 'Other'.

Also shortly after their arrival in Bucharest, the Pringles go out and encounter a group of Romanian beggars. It seems it is the first time Harriet is surrounded by beggars, and she narrates the encounter and her impressions of it:

> These were professional beggars, blinded or maimed by beggar parents in infancy. Guy, during his apprentice year, had grown accustomed, if not inured, to the sight of white eyeballs and running sores, to have stumps and withered arms and the breasts of nursing mothers thrust into his face. The Rumanians accepted all this as part of life and donated coins so small that a beggar might spend his day collecting the price of a meal. (Manning, *BT* 22)

These beggars seem to be presented as a species apart: we are told they have been born and raised to be beggars, and they are identified by their body parts ('eyeballs', 'stumps', 'arms", and 'breasts') rather than as complete human beings. Interestingly enough, they are deprived of nationality too: presumably, they have been born in Romania (some of the beggars are only children), but in the fragment above we can see how the narrator distinguishes them from "the Rumanians". They are, thus, dehumanised.

Realising Guy and Harriet are foreigners, the beggars surround them in the hope of getting a considerable amount of money, and they are quite insistent:

> [The Pringles] were hemmed in by a stench of sweat, garlic and putrid wounds. The beggars took what Guy distributed among them, then whined for more. […] 'Do they want to annoy one?' she asked, and realised there might be revenge for all this abasement in provoking some stranger like herself to the break-down of pure hatred. (22-23)

Undoubtedly, these beggars put the Pringles in an uncomfortable situation, but the fact that Harriet nearly feels "pure hatred" towards them is noteworthy. She does not seem to consider the fact that they beg for money to eat and survive, after all. Rather, one could infer from this fragment and the previous one that she believes they have chosen begging as a lifestyle. She understands their behaviour as a provocation that could even lead to revenge, which implies that if some sort of reprisal for their annoying manners was to take place, they would have earned it.

Patten does not analyse in great detail Harriet's stereotyped representation of the outrageous Romanian beggars, but she does state that this responds to Manning's use of Gothic conventions (as explained in the previous section). Another possible explanation for Harriet's harsh representation of beggars is classism. Certainly, Harriet is aware of class all throughout the trilogies and she observes and narrates how different social ranks are expected

to act in the countries they live in. For example, and as the excerpt on page 116 shows, Harriet narrates how only peasants and servants walked in the road while the new bourgeoisie walked on the pavement. However, and for her own comfort, she decides to walk in the road too, as she is a foreigner and she does not need to worry about these socially imposed classist rules.

This is not to say she actively reacts against the marginalisation of peasants or that she shows any sympathy for them. In another instance when the Pringles head for a lake café in the park, they walk among peasants: "Guy and Harriet smiled to reassure them, but their smiles grew strained as they breathed-in the peasant stench. Harriet thought: 'The trouble with prejudice is, there's usually a reason for it,' but she now knew better than to say this to Guy" (Manning, *BT* 66). Harriet thinks prejudice against peasants is justified, as they smell bad ('peasant stench', she calls it), but she prefers not to share her thought with Guy because she knows he will correct her. When they arrive in the café, which is situated on a pier, they see a notice that says that people wearing "peasant dress" will not be served, but this discriminatory notice does not bother them (they do not even comment on it) or stop them from having lunch there, which makes them both accomplices of this segregation. Harriet explains: "The peasants outside, whether they could read or not, made no attempt to cross on the pier. With the humility of dogs, they knew it was no place for them" (67). By comparing the peasants' decision not to enter the café to the humility of dogs, Harriet is and animalising them. Doamna Drucker too animalises peasants in her descriptions of them: "'They are beasts,' she said. 'What can one do for such creatures? They are hopeless.'" (110) It must be noted, again, that on several occasions Guy claims peasants are not to blame for their situation: "'The peasants are primitive,' said Guy, 'and under present conditions, they will remain primitive. For one thing, they receive almost no education: they cannot afford to buy agricultural machinery'" (110). His view, however, is challenged by Harriet:

> The situation would have been simplified for her could she, like Guy, have seen the peasants not only as victims, but as blameless victims. The truth was, the more she learnt about them, the more she was inclined to share Doamna Drucker's loathing of them; but she would not call them beasts. They had not the beauty or dignity of beasts. They treated their animals and their women with the simple brutality of savages." (133)

Harriet feels animosity towards peasants, and her portrayal of them reinforces the Balkanist stereotype as defined by Todorova: they seem to be backward, primitive, lazy, misogynist, and cruel. In fact she goes a step beyond and presents them as inferior to beasts.

Whether Manning's representation of Romanian beggars and peasants responds to an intentional use of Gothic conventions or to a latent classism on Harriet's side remains unclear, yet the fact that she despises them and dehumanises them seems unquestionable.

3.4. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has shown that travel and movement are strongly linked to the military world, and that, as McLoughlin states, the individual at war acquires a special awareness of his surroundings. The protagonists of Manning's trilogies live World War II abroad, and therefore their view on these foreign places and on the native people inhabiting them is an important part of the trilogies.

The first section of this chapter, "Travel Books and War Books", argues that although *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy* were not written until the second half of the twentieth century, they were highly influenced by the travel writing of the interwar period as described by Fussell in *Abroad*. Manning's novels describe travelling to real places and there is a constant reference to actuality with detailed descriptions of real streets, restaurants or

public buildings. In addition, romance is also an important element in the sense that the travellers (the Pringles) leave home, explore new places, and after numerous adventures, they remain safe. Similarly, one can argue that the pastoral element is also present, as the Pringles are generally welcome in all the countries they stay in and they are richer and freer than most of the native inhabitants.

Furthermore, applying McLoughlin's analysis of the natural behaviour of the individual at war to Manning's protagonists Simon, Guy and Harriet has confirmed that the war zone is not limited to the battlefield, and that ordinary civilians can also be affected by this special consciousness that the war zone demands. Whereas Guy's relation to place, to his surroundings, does not seem to be much altered by the fact that there is a war taking place, Simon, a soldier, and Harriet, a female civilian, respond similarly to the war and acquire the special consciousness of place it demands.

The second section of the chapter, "Stereotype vs. War-Shaped Realism: Romania, Greece and Egypt", has focused on Manning's representation of these Balkan and Middle-East countries. Undeniably, Manning's portrayal of these places was influenced by previous literary descriptions of them. In the case of Romania, Manning partly followed a long literary tradition of depicting the region using negative Balkanist stereotypes. Manning's portrayal of Greece was influenced by the numerous Romantic Hellenist descriptions of the country in British literature. Finally, her representation of Egypt is also influenced by abundant Orientalist clichés traditionally associated with Middle East countries. However, and as proved in this chapter, these stereotyped views of the three countries are interweaved with realist political and social descriptions. In the case of Romania, Balkanist clichés are intertwined with realist and historically accurate descriptions of what Harriet observes, mainly, the social and economic degradation of the country. Likewise, Harriet's idealised view of Greece is gradually undermined by frequent political commentary that exposes the

destruction that war is bringing to the country. In a similar way, the negative Orientalist clichés that present Egypt as wild, dirty, and alien are interlaced with descriptions of the emerging pressures in the country for national revolution as well as with descriptions of the tensions arisen by the proximity of war to the civilian arena.

Finally, the section "The 'Other' in Manning's Second World War Trilogies" has proved that, contrary to Lassner's claims in *British Women Writers of World War II* and in *Colonial Strangers*, Manning cannot be labelled an anti-imperialist writer. Admittedly, Manning gives visibility to the plight of some who Harriet identifies as 'Other': the Jews in *The Balkan Trilogy* or the nationalist Egyptians in *The Levant Trilogy*. However, these issues are only exposed, never central to any of the novels, and in fact there is a very reduced presence of native characters in the two trilogies who are given a voice. In addition, Lassner's claim that Harriet sympathises and identifies with those she recognises as other is discredited by the analysis of Harriet's portrayal of Romanian women, beggars and peasants. Admittedly, Guy, who has a strong faith in communism, argues that the peasants are victims of a system which gives them no education and which keeps them working all day for too small a pay that does not allow them to buy any advanced agricultural machinery and prosper. However, his Marxist view is discredited by Harriet, who has no faith in politics and who, as suggested in the previous chapter, is presented as a more realistic and reliable witness and narrating voice.

CHAPTER 4: WAR AND GENDER IN MANNING'S TRILOGIES

While, as stated in the previous chapters, it is undeniable that the Second World War and the travel it compelled are major themes in *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy*, it is also a fact that these are presented and developed in parallel to (or rather in connection to) the evolution of the relationship between the two main protagonists, Harriet and Guy Pringle. In fact, a number of scholars have acknowledged this. Roy Foster stated in a BBC radio programme about Manning that her work is "about the way people behave under pressure […], about historical fortunes and personal fortunes becoming intertwined" ("Never a Day without a Line"). Similarly, Steinberg argues that the problems between Guy and Harriet "are the microcosmic version of what is happening in the macrocosm of Europe – and beyond. The Pringles' crises, like those of numerous other characters, mirror the national crises that surround and subsume them, focusing on the war, on imperialism (particularly British imperialism), and the dissolution of the British Empire" (100). And Patten too points out that Manning characteristically "dovetail[s] individual relationships with overarching political themes" (82). To illustrate this idea, Patten explains how, in *Friends and Heroes*, "Harriet's change of perspective with regard to her husband reflects the parallel political transitions charted in the novel from idealism to crippling disillusionment." (82)

Considering that Manning interweaves the narration of private events in the Pringles' marriage with the narration of public events connected to the war, this chapter aims at examining the different ways in which the war interferes in the private and domestic spheres. Firstly, I shall take Gilbert's theory on how war affects men and women differently (both in terms of gender roles and also in terms of sexuality) as a starting point to analyse whether it can be applied to Manning's newly married couple. Then, I will focus on the different public

and domestic duties expected of men and women to analyse whether Manning's protagonists Simon, Guy and Harriet can fulfil them successfully in spite of living in times of war. To do this, I shall examine the notions of sexuality, marriage, home, and motherhood in detail to see how these are affected by the war in Manning's trilogies.

4.1. WAR AND THE BATTLE OF SEXES

When trying to examine the way public and private spheres intermingle in a time of war one necessarily has to review Gilbert's article 'Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War', for it is possibly the most influential piece of academic writing on desire in times of war of the twentieth century. Gilbert explains that World War I, with all its violence and modernity, completed the process of dehumanizing men, therefore creating "No Men", "*un*men", who not only suffered from physical wounds but also sexual ones (423). After the horrors of the war many men felt "publically powerless" and "privately impotent" (423), and this feeling may have paralysed their sexual desires. However, the author argues, while the Great War and its trenches alienated the soldiers into some sort of No Man's Land, it also opened up the possibility for women to actively enter the public arena. Most of the young men in the country had left their homes to join the war, and women were left alone in charge of practically everything that was to be done. They occupied positions in the public sphere that had never been available for them before, and they were granted the right to vote in 1918. The war offered a new world full of possibilities for many of these women, which apparently aroused in them a feeling of excitement and adventure. As well as this, Gilbert states that there was a great release of female desire. It seems, then, that while many '*un*men' underwent a period of "sexual gloom" many women experienced "sexual glee", a fact which was to create misogynist resentment on the part of some men and profound feelings of guilt on the part of many women (426). Hence, the Great War was an international conflict and

also a battle of sexes which, according to Gilbert, was to break away from the late Victorian idea that "passionlessness" in women was a virtue. This, she explains, was represented in many texts of the time: "[a] number of texts by men and women alike suggest that the revolutionary socioeconomic transformations wrought by the war's "topsy turvy" role reversals did bring about a release of female libidinal energies, as well as a liberation of female anger, which men usually found anxiety-inducing and women often found exhilarating" (436). This idea is reinforced by Eric Leed's affirmation that "women in particular 'reacted to the war experience with a powerful increase of libido'" (Leed qtd. in Gilbert 436-437), and Gilbert shows evidence that in many texts by male writers the female characters "are set sexually free by the war", a fact which adds up to the impotence and anxiety of the male characters (438).[23]

In the end, Gilbert explains, when the war finished and men went back home, most of the women had to abandon their jobs and go back to "guilt-stricken domesticity" (449). In spite of this, she believes the Great War had changed many things and that "Nothing would ever be the same again" (449).

In her essay "'Battle Dress to Sports Suit; Overalls to Frocks' American and British Veterans Confront Demobilisation, 1945-51", Schofield focuses on the aftermath of the Second World War, and she demonstrates that there was also a before and after World War II for couples and the role each of the partners performed. After the war men and women had "come to speak widely different languages that [could] not easily be reconciled" (79), and the scholar quotes Howard's piece of advice for married couples reunited after the war: "[t]he first stage of reunion, like that of marriage itself, is the stage of the honeymoon. ... [The couple] should have a period in which to satisfy each other, to discharge the sexual tension, to renew their knowledge of each other and to see what changes have occurred" (Howard qtd. in

[23] Gilbert cites as examples writings by Ernest Hemingway and D. H. Lawrence.

Schofield 80). After a period of separation forced by the war, couples should re-live, then, the stage of the honeymoon and release their sexual tension and desires. This quotation is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it implies that war changes men and women differently, and that therefore reunited couples need to rediscover one another in order to re-establish the basis of their relationship. And secondly, it is formulated on the assumption that the honeymoon period is a passionate stage in which the newlyweds explore one another sexually. I will return to this subject in section 'Sexuality in Manning's Trilogies'.

Despite the fact that the idea that war brings about a reversal of gender roles and, consequently, a release of female sexual desire has been widely accepted among scholars, can it actually be applied to all literary texts that deal with personal (or amorous) relationships in times of war? Manning's *Fortunes of War* describes the relationship of Guy and Harriet Pringle in the first years of their marriage, which coincide with the years during which World War II was being fought, however, it is my initial impression that their relationship does not respond to Gilbert's theory on gender roles and sexuality during wartime.

4.2. WAR MARRIAGES

Already in the first pages of *The Balkan Trilogy* we read that the Pringles have met during Guy's summer holidays, and that they have been married less than a week when they have to leave England for Bucharest. This kind of hurried weddings was very common in times of war. In a way, Harriet can be considered a 'war bride' who actually had to leave her homeland just after she had married to follow her husband wherever he was asked to go. Most of these war brides were content enough to move to new places because they were looking forward all the excitement and adventure they thought their lives would have. Harriet herself admits "[s]he married for adventure" (Manning, *BT* 750), and again when they have been in

Cairo for some time, she recalls that she "married and travelled to the other side of Europe with someone she barely knew" in a quest for "excitement" (Manning, *LT* 286).

However, it has been recorded as a common experience that "[a]s these brides approach[ed] their final destinations, they suddenly realize[d] that they ha[d] placed their lives in the hands of near-strangers, that they [were] entering their husband's social environments, and that they may thus have little control over their futures" (Coates 258). Harriet is no exception to this rule and already on their way to Rumania she starts having her doubts: "The Pringles had been married less than a week. Though she would have claimed to know about him everything there was to be known, she was now beginning to wonder if she really knew anything" (Manning, *BT* 8). And after they have settled in Bucharest she continues to hesitate: "They had slipped into marriage […] Yet - supposing she had known him better? Supposing she had known him for a year and during that time observed him in all his other relationships? She would have hesitated, thinking the net of his affections too widely spread to hold the weighty accompaniment of marriage" (44-45). The excerpt makes it clear that Harriet doubts whether she should have married as quickly as she did. Actually, the fact that she uses the expression "slip into marriage" is quite revealing: it seems to suggest that she regards her marriage something she did involuntarily or inadvertently. As time and events develop, Harriet seems to openly regret having married at all: "[r]eflecting on the process of involvement and disenchantment which was marriage, she thought that one entered it unsuspecting and, unsuspecting, found one was trapped in it" (591). The use of the word 'unsuspecting' reinforces this idea that she married almost unintentionally, without considering all the negative consequences of it. Similarly, the use of the word 'trapped' suggests marriage now feels like a prison cell for her. The irony of the situation is thus exposed: the imminent start of World War II rushed her marriage, which she thought would bring a thrill to her life, yet far from being a liberating experience, she has found it confining.

That Harriet feels 'trapped' in spite of the fact that she has travelled from one country to the next since she married Guy may be initially surprising. After all, already in the Victorian age, when women were trained to fulfil the role of the angel in the house, and thus to devote themselves to the domestic sphere, travel offered women "an alternative model of identity, … [and] patterns of mobility and adventure traditionally viewed as male preserves" (Hammond 145). This, therefore, raises several questions: why is marriage an incarcerating experience for Harriet (and by extension, as one can infer from Coates' quotation above, for many war brides) despite the war and all the travelling? In addition to having accelerated their wedding, does war interfere in the Pringles' private life? Are Guy and Harriet affected by the gender role reversal that Gilbert describes as typical of wartime? In an attempt at finding an answer to these questions, I will first examine the role that Harriet and Guy occupy in their life as a married couple, and how these roles are affected by the development of World War II.

4.3. PUBLIC AND DOMESTIC DUTIES

Men have traditionally been expected to devote themselves to the public world, and even more so during wartime, when they were called to join the army and fight for their country and for a better world. Manning's character Simon fulfils this role to perfection: he travels to Egypt to fight with the British army, and even when he is wounded in hospital and has seen the reality of war for himself, he is still eager to get back to action. That he risks his own life and devotes himself to the public sphere seems undeniable, yet his narration of his ordinary life as a soldier shows how the domestic life often intrudes in the battlefield. Simon describes his routines in the desert in detail, and he narrates how soldiers constantly spend time making fires, boiling water and drinking tea, and organising the camp: "[a]t dawn […] the service units were out sweeping and tidying their areas as though attempting to make a

habitat of a bit of desert" (Manning, *LT* 86). Patten also comments on how through Simon's perspective, Manning manages to undercut "this mobile masculine war narrative, marked out in episodes of action, fire and combat, with a subtext aligning the desert soldier […] to what might be considered a feminised sensibility" (134). The scholar argues that "the sense of the officer's role as essentially maternal and domestic is emphasised, and the need for an actual female physical presence diminished" (135). In fact, Simon himself reflects on the fact that on the battlefield men organise themselves and therefore women are not needed: "[h]e belonged now to a world of men; a contained, self-sufficient world where life was organized from dawn till sunset (Manning, *LT* 197). Soldiers, thus, devote themselves to the public arena and to the war effort fully, yet as Simon proves, domestic life is part of their world too.

Guy Pringle, the other male protagonist of the trilogies, is short sighted, so against this wartime ethos of manliness, honour and self-sacrifice, he cannot join the military. Hence, and in an attempt at making up for this, he devotes his life to his job and to discuss politics with his friends. In addition, he organises theatre and music performances for the intellectual elite and for soldiers in all of the countries they inhabit, and when they still live in Bucharest he even joins the "Sheepy's Fighting Force", which is a secret private army made up of "young, robust, patriotic Englishmen who ought to be on active service and for one reason or other are not" (Manning, *BT* 197). When the Pringles arrive in Cairo, Guy has no job or friends waiting for him, and this disturbs him greatly: "he wanted employment most. He was ashamed to be idle while other men were at war. He tried to outwit his workless state by planning lectures, concerts for troops, productions of Shaw or Shakespeare, but could do none of these things. He was without status, acquaintances and the means to carry out his plans" (Manning, *LT* 68). Guy is not unemployed for long, but the fact that he feels 'ashamed' of being jobless while the war is going on evidences the fact that he assumes the public sphere as the one he naturally belongs to. Throughout the six novels, Guy "keep[s] himself occupied morning,

noon and night" with his job and extensive social circle (421), which means he has barely no time to devote to his wife and to their private married life.

Women, on the contrary, were traditionally expected to commit themselves to domesticity, to be loving housewives and caring mothers. Despite the fact that, as Gilbert explains, the Great War allowed women to enter the public sphere, after the war women were confined to the home again. Lassner explains that "women's independence and self-esteem were spurred by wartime paid work but also undercut by prevailing domestic ideology" (Lassner, *British Women Writers* 9). In addition, Lassner states, "[a]s women's fiction of the twenties and thirties reveals, the English middle classes retreated to traditional attitudes that celebrated the domestic sphere and its relations" (12), and as a consequence "women and the home [… were put] at the centre of national life" (Light 2).

Being a young, married woman, therefore, Harriet's place in society seems to be the domestic sphere, where she is traditionally expected to fulfil three different roles: firstly, she should naturally be Guy's sexual partner – after all, the Pringles are in their honeymoon period when *The Balkan Trilogy* starts. Furthermore, Harriet should focus on creating a home and should become a good housewife for Guy. Lastly, she is expected to become a loving mother who takes good care of her family.

The aim of this section is to examine the different ways in which war interferes in this domestic sphere traditionally allotted to women. To do this, I shall focus on Manning's representation of the role of lover, housewife and mother in *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy* through the character of Harriet.

4.3.1. SEXUALITY IN MANNING'S TRILOGIES

If one recalls Howard's piece of advice for married couples reunited after the war (in section 'War and the Battle of Sexes'), he suggests that couples should re-live the stage of the honeymoon. Howard's quotation is relevant because it is formulated on the supposition that

the honeymoon is a period in which the newlyweds satisfy each other and explore each other sexually. Considering, in addition, Gilbert's claim that war fostered a release of female libido, one can only expect the Pringles to share many moments of privacy and intimacy. After all, they are a young couple who have just married when they move to exotic countries.

Therefore, it is striking that the Pringles do not seem to share any moment of passion in any of the novels. In his essay "Olivia Manning and her Masculine Outfit", Treglown asks himself "Do Harriet and Guy have any sex life? […] as far as the Pringles – though not other characters – are concerned, the sequence is much more reticent about such matters than Manning's previous books had been" (151). Similarly, David observes that "[e]xtravagantly packed with precisely observed detail, [the trilogies] offer virtually no evidence of a sexual relationship between Harriet and Guy Pringle" (63). Alan Munton also comments on this: "Manning has less to say about desire in marriage than many novelists of the nineteenth century" (189).

This total absence of sex between the Pringles cannot be attributed to the possibility that Manning could have felt uncomfortable when writing about sexuality. For one thing, Manning does write about sexual encounters between secondary characters in the two trilogies. In addition, and as Treglown notes, "[i]n fiction, […] Manning's generally forthright approach to sexual behaviour is among her distinctive strengths" (147), and David explains too that in the unpublished typescript of a novel entitled 'Guests at a Marriage' (composed in 1943-1944), Manning writes openly about the sexual attraction between the two recently married protagonists (David 63). It is worth pointing out too that in fact, Manning wrote about sexuality openly all throughout her life: already in her short story "A Scantling of Foxes" published in 1934, she narrated the story of Father Sheenan, a priest who is "ridden by sexual lust" (340), who looks at the nuns in Kilderg "with his blind eyes and, looking, stripped off them their concealing robes and saw their women's bodies" (340). Also, in *The Wind*

Changes, Manning's first novel published in 1937, she wrote about two men and one woman united in an erotic trio. Elizabeth, the female protagonist, sleeps with both Sean and Arion, and her sexual encounters with Arion, for example, are openly described: they were "thrown together, body to body, in a sensual transport that was like the lust of combat" (70). Later on in her career, Manning also described passionate sexual encounters in her short story "The Banana House" (1971). Bert, the protagonist, has an erotic dream in which he visits the Banana House, a botanic garden, where he runs into his workmate Miss Linnet:

> She leant towards him, enticing him with her eyes and mouth, so as he stretched out his arms and fell upon her, he was near to fainting with excitement. Wrapped about her, he could not have said whether he entered her or she absorbed him into her. They seemed to dissolve, each into the other, with such pleasure that his feet left the stair and they rose, floating together in an ecstasy so poignantly sweet that he cried out in rapture and began to wake. […] Next morning, looking at his pyjama trousers, he thought it as well that he and not his mother would be taking them to the laundrette. (111)

In some texts Manning simply hinted at sexual encounters, while in others, such as the excerpt above shows, she was more explicit about carnal passion and desire. What seems unquestionable is that she had no qualms about including sex in her works.

In addition, that the protagonists of the trilogies do not seem to have any (marital) sex life is made to stand out by the constant references to sex in the six novels. For one thing, the setting seems to favour passion and eroticism. When the Pringles are in Romania, there are references to performances by passionate gipsy dancers, the Romanians are said to be very active sexually and extramarital affairs seem to be common in the country, and there are even references to sex parties and orgies held by Phanariot princes: not long after their arrival in Bucharest, Yakimov attends a party organised by Prince Hadjimoscos in which they undress

and play "a delicious game called Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" (Manning, *BT* 55). After eating and drinking heavily at this party, Yakimov falls asleep, only to be awakened by half a dozen people who rip off his clothes: "Bewildered, frightened and still half-asleep, he saw – scarcely believing what he saw – that all the guests were naked and shunting each other in a circle around the room" (61).

Similarly, Egypt is presented as a suitable place to release sexual desire. According to Harriet, "[t]he [Egyptian] climate changed people: it preserved ancient remains but it disrupted the living" (Manning, *LT* 336). It is noteworthy, though, that in contrast to Romania, in Egypt it is not the locals who are presented as lustful, but the British residents in the city. There are numerous references to extramarital affairs, especially, though not exclusively, starred by British men in Cairo who have sent their wives to England for their safety. The most noteworthy of these is the relationship between Bill Castlebar and Angela Hooper: although they are both married to other people, they live their relationship openly and publically. British sexual extravagance is also developed in another scene in which Angela takes Castlebar, Jackman, Simon and Harriet to visit the Berka, Cairo's red-light district, and they decide to go into a brothel. Castlebar convinces an Egyptian man who is queuing to participate in a live sex show for them. Harriet only goes in because she does not feel safe waiting outside alone, and when the performance is over, Simon feels ashamed. It turns out that the Egyptian man who has performed is one of Castlebar's students, who has only accepted to do it to please his professor. As he explains to the British voyeurs: "'You see, we Egyptians are not like you Europeans. We like to do such things in private'" (232).

Indeed, it is the British characters in *The Levant Trilogy,* and not the Egyptians, who bring intimacy into the public arena. Edwina Little, one of the lodgers in Dobson's house in Cairo, is heard by everyone in the house while having sex with her boyfriend Peter Lisdonvarna, and later they are actually seen being intimate inside the Serapeum, an ancient

burial place of sacred bulls, when they are on a trip to Saqqara. Harriet narrates that when she went in the site too,

> she could see no sign of Peter and Edwina, but then she came on them, obscure in the shadows, their bodies pressed together as though each sought to merge into the other. […] Edwina, giving a scream, broke away from Peter and he pursued her round the huge sarcophagi then, seizing her, he pushed her down onto a slab of black granite and threw himself on top of her. (289)

But Edwina is not the only relevant character in the trilogy who exposes private affairs publically. On one occasion, shortly after Angela Hooper has moved to Dobson's flat too, they hear a glass breaking in Angela's room when she is there with Castlebar. Later, Angela explains to Harriet: "'Bill knocked down a dish of water. He keeps it by the bed because he's inclined to come too soon so, when he's over excited, he dips his wrist in the water and it cools him down'. This explanation, unblushing and matter-of-fact, took for granted Harriet's acceptance of the situation and she could only say, 'I see'" (265).

The narration of scenes of passion and of explicit details about sexual encounters between British characters makes it clear that sexual extravagance is not rare among the British community Egypt. Indeed, and as Patten notes, "[t]he British expatriate element expresses itself […] through a behavioural excess, a recklessness and self-indulgence generated by the pressures of their compacted position" (125). The scholar argues that the expatriate community in Cairo is presented as a damaged, disintegrated and dislocated society because they have "lost [their] grip on any securities of national identity", and this has fostered a "behavioural transformation" characterised by "self-dramatisation and theatricality" (126). Whether, as Harriet suggests, it is the climate that changes people, or, as Patten argues, it is the lack of a strong national identity and security, reality is that most British characters

are presented as vulgar, inconsistent, unfaithful and given to sexual voyeurism and exhibitionism.

As one can expect, Harriet is generally critical of this licentiousness:

> She had seen common-place English couples who, at home, would have tolerated each other for a lifetime, here turning into self-dramatizing figures of tragedy, bored, lax, unmoral, complaining and, in the end, abandoning the partner in hand for another who was neither better nor worse than the first. Inconsistency was so much the rule among the British residents in Cairo, the place, she thought, was like a bureau of sexual exchange. (Manning, *LT* 336-337)

Harriet takes pride in the fact that she and Guy have not given themselves into this fashion of sexual anarchy and marital infidelity, and this can be easily explained by her belief in amorous and sexual monogamy. I shall return to this subject later on in this chapter. What still remains unclear is why the Pringles do not seem to be affected by this atmosphere that fosters the release of sexual desire, and why there is no reference in any of the six novels of the Pringles being intimate in spite of them being young, attractive, newly married, and living in countries which seem to favour libidinal release.

4.3.2. MARRIAGE AND HOME IN FORTUNES OF WAR

Being a young wife, Harriet's natural place in society would traditionally be the domestic sphere, yet as shown in the previous subsection, Harriet does not carry out the first role associated with this: that of being her husband's lover and sexual partner. The second role that Harriet would conventionally be expected to fulfil is that of creating a home and becoming a housewife.

Admittedly, Harriet tries hard to make a home for Guy and her everywhere they go, but of course, the war and their circumstances as travellers first and exiles later on do no make

this task an easy one to accomplish. When they arrive in Bucharest they stay in a hotel room, until Harriet alone manages to find a flat for them. It is the first home the Pringles will share, and for Harriet this is important: "[f]or the first time she felt her life becoming involved with the permanent life of the place. […] They might even be allowed a year of settled existence – perhaps longer. With so much time, one ceased to be a visitor" (Manning, *BT* 123-124). The flat, Harriet feels, will allow them to feel they somehow belong here, in spite of them being foreigners and in spite of the war. Hartley also comments on this: "In this climate of 'alert unease' and imminent crisis, Harriet hopes to establish her marriage and home as solid bulkwards. […] Her own words to Guy when they leave their hotel for their own flat assert her faith in domesticity: '"Tonight we are going to eat at home"' (184).

In addition, the flat is on the top floor of a block in the square, and when they first move in and they go to the balcony, Harriet feels satisfied: "'[w]e could have done worse. Here we are at the centre of things'" (Manning, *BT* 124). They are, indeed, at the centre of public life, and in fact Harriet often watches the square from the balcony of their flat or from the servant's room they have on top of their kitchen, which Sasha Drucker inhabits for a while. The following fragment illustrates this: "As [Sasha] talked, she looked over the parapet and saw Guy crossing the square on his way home. In the early days of their marriage, she would have sped down the stairs; now she leant still and watched him, thinking of Sasha's theory that Guardism had grown […] from the credulity of [its founder's] followers" (440). Visually, this excerpt is interesting because it shows three separated spatial levels: the square, their flat, and the room on the roof of the building. This room works as a place of refuge, mainly for Sasha but also for Harriet, as it becomes a place where she finds company and feels comfortable. It is, indeed, as a home within the home: it is a place where Harriet can both think about her private life and talk about the public, political situation of the moment, and it is the place from which both Harriet and Sasha observe the square, where public life is

and where, symbolically, Guy belongs. Between the roof and the square lies the Pringle's flat, the place where Guy and Harriet supposedly share their lives as a married couple. This is the level she would like to belong to. However, the excerpt clearly suggests that this is not the case, and she has lost all hope that the flat will actually become a home for two: in the past, she says, she would have run downstairs to Guy. Now she waits with disenchantment for him to go up home. When Harriet married Guy, "[s]he had, in all innocence, been prepared to possess him and be possessed, to envelop and be enveloped, in a relationship that excluded the enemy world. Soon she discovered that Guy was not playing his part" (45). Indeed, Guy lives publicly, and he has no interest in developing deep personal relationships. In addition, the advances of the war allow them little permanence wherever they are. As Hartley argues: "Harriet's private world is part of the public world; this is the first of many homes which she attempts to found and has to abandon" (184-185). Certainly, as stated earlier, just before Bucharest is taken over by the German army, the Pringles' flat is raided, Sasha is nowhere to be found, and Harriet is forced to flee to Athens, only to be joined by Guy two days later.

Upon their arrival in Athens, they, again, stay in a hotel. Guy has no job and they do not have much money for a while, so Guy avoids going out to bars and restaurants. Instead, he spends time in the hotel room focusing on his books and considering the possibility of going to Cairo, where he was due to have gone from Bucharest. This upsets Harriet:

> She had hoped that, alone here, dependent upon each other, they would be closer than they had ever been. […] He had only to arrive to take a step away from her. He was not to be shut up in intimacy. The world was his chief relationship and she wondered whether he really understood any other. […] And here they were with leisure and freedom – things they had not had before in the year of marriage – and Guy was closeted with his dilemma while she went for walks with a stranger. (Manning, *BT* 732)

This stranger Harriet mentions is their friend Alan Frewen, and Guy does not think he is a stranger at all. The fragment exposes the abysmal difference in their aspirations: she wants to be a housewife and be close to her husband, whereas, again, he shows no interest in the private world and simply longs for a job or an occupation in the public sphere.

This difference between them arises again when they are shown a villa which is to be let. Harriet is eager to take it, but Guy simply asks: "'Why not stay where we are?'" For Guy, the hotel room is enough; as he regards it simply as a place to sleep. But Harriet replies: "'Because we can have a house of our own. A home. In fact, our first home'" (788). Guy is surprised and asks whether their flat in Bucharest was not a home, to which Harriet replies: "'That was different. A house is a home, a flat isn't. […] A house is good for the soul'" (788). Guy agrees to take it to please Harriet, but it is not until months later, when spring comes, with its green grass, trees and flowers, that Harriet feels it a home: "The villa was at last beginning to seem a home, but a disturbed, precarious home" (970). Unfortunately, they do not stay there much longer, as the villa is near a harbour that is constantly being air-raided, and it becomes too dangerous a place.

Soon after they move out of the villa they are forced to leave for Egypt in a refugee boat, and thus Harriet's quest for a home has to begin again. But, in Cairo, the Pringles never have a place of their own. They stay a room in Madame Wilk's pension for a time, but Harriet is not satisfied with it: "Harriet longed for a home more spacious than the small, cluttered room at the pension" (Manning, *LT* 68). Guy is given a job in Alexandria, and Harriet starts working at the American Embassy in Cairo, which means they are temporarily separated during the working week, but soon their old friend Dobbie Dobson offers Guy a better job in Cairo as well as a room in City Garden, a flat that belongs to the Embassy. Dobson shares this flat with other British people, and even though their room gets rather hot, Harriet is delighted: "[t]he heat muffled her but, entranced by the thought of living here with Guy among

congenial people, she did not mind the heat" (138). Harriet feels very optimistic about their stay in the house, and one can guess this is mainly because she thinks here, living with other friendly, British people, she will not spend so much time alone: "Harriet felt the world would change for her" (141). In truth, they are comfortable and content to be in City Garden for all their stay, but still, as Hartley notes, "[d]espite Harriet's efforts, her temporary job terminates abruptly, and Cairo provides 'no real home and little enough to do'" (193).

Guy's indifference towards domesticity makes it hard for Harriet to set up a home and become a housewife, and the constant travelling caused by the war does not favour this either. Whether in Bucharest, Athens or Cairo, Harriet is, as Lassner claims, "an exile who has no opportunity to make a home, traditional or otherwise" (*Colonial Strangers*, 21).

4.3.3. MOTHERHOOD IN MANNING'S WORLD WAR II NOVELS

As already suggested, during the interwar period women were again considered to be the essence of domesticity, which was celebrated as central to national life. Unquestionably, women's most important role was that of being selfless, caregiving mothers.

Harriet, young and married, would traditionally be expected to become a mother too, but the war and the instability it brings to them, being abroad, do not facilitate this. As Harriet explains to the Drucker sisters on the day they meet, not long after her arrival in Bucharest, she and Guy "shall probably wait until after the war" to have children (Manning, *BT* 112). This statement confirms that Harriet expects to have children at some point, and also that she and Guy have considered when the right time for this will be.

However, as the war advances and reveals no signs of coming to an end soon, Harriet starts to show signs that she longs for a family and that she has frustrated maternal instincts, which she tries to satisfy in different ways. Harriet has a great love for animals, especially cats, and when they are in Bucharest she owns a kitten, which she adores. She becomes so attached to the kitten that when it dies, she is tremendously upset: "Harriet wept. The loss

seemed to her unendurable. She stood crouched together, weeping with intent bitterness, in agony, as though the foundations of her life had been taken from her. Guy watched her helplessly, amazed at so much grief" (245). Weeks after the loss, she still feels devastated: "'My kitten. My poor kitten,' feeling she had loved it as she could never love anything or anybody. Guy, after all, did not permit himself to be loved in this way" (390). Harriet longs for a loving husband who gives her attention, and she longs for a child, for family, she can take care of. She has none of these, so one could argue she transfers her frustrated maternal love to her pet.

Guy, who expresses no paternal desire, cannot understand why she is so sad about an animal, and in fact he recalls this scene reproachfully when they are living in Athens: "'The trouble is, you cling too much to things. You cried your eyes out when that kitten died. You couldn't have made more fuss if it'd been a baby'", to which Harriet replies bitterly, "'Well, it wasn't a baby'" (769). This excerpt is significant for two reasons: it confirms that Harriet held maternal-like feelings for the cat and it also reinforces the fact that Harriet is resentful about them not having any children.

Similarly, not long before the Pringles have to abandon their villa in Athens, Harriet finds a wild cat in the forest surrounding the house and again she worries about it as one would worry for a child in need: "Harriet had the cat in mind. It gave her some sort of attachment to life. […] She felt love for it, and began to fear that in her absence some harm could have come to it" (971). In fact, when they have to leave the villa for good, Harriet looks for the wild cat desperately but cannot find it, and at Guy's suggestion that she has to give up the wild cat, Harriet replies "'I can't,' she said. 'You see, this cat is all I have'" (980). Harriet has not found in Guy the husband she had hoped for, and she does not have any child she can love and take care of, so she transfers all her love to the kitten in Bucharest and the wild cat in Athens.

Harriet's love for animals is not the only clue in the trilogies that she longs for a family. On one occasion in Athens, when there is an air raid and everyone goes in a basement to protect themselves, Harriet sees a woman and a small boy on the stair, and she notices how the woman is focused on protecting the child tenderly with her whole body: "[n]ot wishing to intrude on their intimacy, Harriet turned away, but her gaze was drawn back to them. Transported by the sight of these two human creatures wrapped in love, she caught her breath and her eyes filled with tears" (832). Harriet is touched by the sight of this mother and child together and by the love they share, which she seems to miss greatly in her life.

In fact, Harriet manages to transfer her frustrated maternal instincts not only to animals, but also, temporarily, to Sasha Drucker. Some time after the Drucker family has been dissolved, and Emmanuel Drucker has been imprisoned, Sasha asks Guy for help. He has run away from the army and he needs to be hidden somewhere, so the Pringles take him in the servant's room on the roof. Sasha cannot leave the room under any circumstances, and therefore he is totally dependent on the Pringles. As stated in the previous chapter, Lassner argues that Harriet identifies with Sasha. In addition, Lassner explains that "[p]laying games and teasing form the activities defining the childlike nature of their relationship, marked as distinctly nonsexual from beginning to end" (*British Women Writers*, 234). It seems undeniable that Harriet and Sasha's relationship is nonsexual, but, as argued in chapter three, I do not think the trilogies are built on Harriet's identification with Sasha, as Lassner claims. Instead, I would suggest that Harriet adopts a motherly attitude towards Sasha from the very beginning: she shows herself very protective towards him, she worries about him, she brings him food and water, she keeps him company and she makes sure he has books or instruments to entertain himself.

Admittedly, Sasha is not a lot younger than Harriet, and she could not possibly be his biological mother, but because of the circumstances and his total dependency on her, he can

be argued to temporarily work as a surrogate son for Harriet. On one occasion, when Sasha considers going to the court-house to see his father, who is said to go in and out often, Harriet refuses to let him go. The military police are looking for him, and thus risking to be seen would put him in danger. Harriet "reasoned with him as with a child that must be protected against its own rashes. […] She could not permit him to walk into a trap. Watching her, he said: 'If you won't let me go, will you go yourself?'" (Manning, *BT* 464). The fragment shows she regards Sasha as a child, and she feels it is her duty to protect him. At the same time, his answer also shows that he acknowledges she has a certain authority over him; it suggests that he, too, has assumed the role of son. Likewise, on another occasion when Harriet needs Clarence to get Sasha a passport, she openly confesses she sees him as a child they have to protect: "'We've taken him in,' she said. 'We feel for him as for a child who has a right to the elements of a reasonable life. That's all'" (528). In fact, once she arrives in Athens, without knowing what has happened to Sasha, she often wonders whether she will ever be able to feel home without him.

Harriet, who has a maternal instinct but no child of her own, devotes herself fully to nurturing and caring for Sasha and for her kitten, and this is why the loss of both feels unendurable for her. But Harriet is not the only female character in the trilogies who has to face feelings of maternal loss. The death of Angela Hooper's son towards the beginning of *The Levant Trilogy* is possibly the most striking scene in the trilogies. As stated in chapter two, Harriet first meets Angela shortly after her arrival in Cairo. Harriet, Simon, and a few other British people are in the Hoopers' house discussing military advances when Angela arrives with two safragis who carry the inert body of her son. Angela and the boy had been on a painting excursion to the desert when he picked up a land-mine. The Hoopers, in consternation, phone a doctor, and while they wait for him to arrive, they decide to give the boy some food in the hope it will wake him up:

> One of the safragis returned, bringing a bowl of gruel and the visitors watched with awe and amazement as Sir Desmond, bending tenderly over the boy, attempted to feed him. The mouth was too clogged with congealed blood to permit entry so the father poured a spoonful of gruel into the hole in the cheek. The gruel poured out again. This happened three times before Sir Desmond gave up and, gathering the child into his arms, said, 'He wants to sleep. I'll take him to his room.' (Manning, *LT* 35)

It is clear to everyone in the room that the boy is dead, but his parents, in shock, refuse to accept it. Indeed, the scene is, in Patten's words, "at once tragic and grotesque" (123). For one thing, such a private moment is not lived in familiar intimacy, but in fact, one could argue, publically. Only one or two people of the whole group had actually met Sir Desmond before; thus, the Hoopers have to deal with their son's death surrounded by strangers, who, in addition, soon narrate the scene to all their acquaintances so that the event ceases to be private and becomes the talk of Cairo.

For another thing, the horrific nature of the wounds, and the father's desperate attempt to feed the boy through them stress the fact that the victim is only an innocent child. The scene, as Patten states, symbolically "outlines the invasion of a civilian space by the destructive power of war" (123). When Angela recalls the scene months later, she confesses to Harriet that the events of that day and the subsequent feeling of maternal loss were life-changing: "I went away […] not long after. I couldn't stay in that house. I didn't know what to do with myself. […] Everything ended that afternoon: child, marriage" (Manning, *LT* 182). This intrusion of war into the peaceful familiar setting is reminiscent of McLoughlin's claim that war often intrudes in the pastoral setting (already referred to in chapter three). The scholar argues that "[i]ntrusion and interaction […] characterise the relationship between the bucolic and the bellicose. War is immanent in the rural, insofar as its sounds may penetrate

the quietude at any moment, converting ready-made agricultural implements into weaponry" (98). The Hoopers' house is in an oasis in the middle of the desert; indeed, it is, supposedly, a pastoral place of peace and retreat, but this is suddenly disrupted by the boy's death. Admittedly, Angela's son does not die because of an injury caused by agricultural machinery turned into weaponry, but by a bomb intentionally placed in the desert to kill whomever touches it or steps into it. The lurking land-mine, McLoughlin specifies, "is a perverted sort of immanence in the earth" too (98). The Hoppers' boy's death is, undoubtedly, the clearest and harshest illustration in Manning's trilogies of how war intrudes in the domestic sphere: the horror and destruction of the military sphere are brought into the home.

4.3.3.1. BOY SOLDIERS

Harriet and especially Simon recall the scene in the Hoopers' house on several occasions after that day: the death of Angela's son is, after all, symbolically related to many other deaths of young soldiers who have been recruited to fight in the war. Harriet already reflects on this when they leave the Hoopers' house: "[a]s the oasis was left behind, the boy's death lost its immediacy and Harriet thought of all the other boys who were dying in the desert before they had had a chance to live" (Manning, *LT* 36).

It is noteworthy that Harriet uses the word 'boys' to refer to the soldiers. As Fussell states, "[a] notable feature of the Second World War is the youth of most who fought it. The soldiers played not just at being killers but at being grown-ups. […] Among the horribly wounded the most common cry was 'Mother!'" (*Wartime*, 52). Fussell explains that when conscription began, the minimum age in Britain was twenty and in the USA twenty-one, but it was later lowered to eighteen in both countries (53). In fact, the scholar states that the American army "contained numerous illicit seventeen-year-olds," whose presence as soldiers

was "more or less regularised by false papers not rigorously inquired into" (*Boys' Crusade*, 6).[24] Consequently, some of the soldiers were only boys (see fig. 13).

Fig. 13. *The Royal Navy During the Second World War: Operation Torch, North Africa, November 1942*.
This picture of American troops shows the extreme youth of some of the soldiers. Particularly, the one in the middle of the picture stands out for being not a young man, but only a boy.
© IWM (A 12661)

Manning's character Simon reflects on his own youth and that of most soldiers on various occasions. In fact, he turns twenty-one when he is on leave in hospital, and he remembers that he had always imagined he would celebrate his coming of age with his family:

> He had once thought of his twenty-first birthday as the summit of maturity, a day that would change him from a youth to a man. Having climbed up to it

[24] Some of the soldiers of the German army were even younger. Fussell states how towards the end of the war, "boys of the *Hitler Jugend*, aged sixteen or seventeen, and a few as young as fourteen or even twelve, were being thrown into the German line" (*Wartime*, 53).

> through the muddle of adolescence, he would find himself on a proper footing with the world. His parents would give him a party and someone important, like his Uncle Harry who was a town councillor, would make a speech and hand him a golden key, saying it was not only the key of the door but the key to life. (*LT*, 396)

War has crushed his expectations, and he has ceased to be an innocent boy long before his coming of age. He has already faced loneliness, disillusionment and death. There is no party for him, and in fact, he does not even tell anyone it is his twenty-first birthday, as "[h]ere in the Plegics it had no meaning" (396). He had always imagined his life as an adult would start that day, yet ironically enough, he has lost all hope in life after the war. When still in hospital, Simon receives the visit of a priest who tries to cheer him up, and again he thinks about all the lost youth: "Simon began to feel sorry for the padre. It could not be easy preaching the love of God to young men whose future had been ended before it began" (397). Similarly, when Guy tells him the Queen of Sparta has sunk and Harriet has drowned, Simon replies: "[p]eople are dying all the time now. Young people. I mean not people you might expect to die. People with their lives before them" (400).

Simon also reflects on how devastating it is for families to lose their young sons. When his brother Hugo dies he tries to write a letter to his parents to inform them, but he is unable to find the right words and he cannot stop thinking how hard it will be for his parents to receive the news: "[h]e though of his mother going into the greenhouse to read the wire, imagining perhaps that one of her sons was coming home on leave", only to discover she has lost one of them (204). Simon, in grief, "wept for his parents who must live with their sorrow, perhaps for years" (205).

Simon's reflections on the extreme youth of soldiers reinforce the anti-glorification idea prevailing all throughout Manning's two trilogies: war is not fought by heroes, but by

boys. At the same time, the scene of the Hoopers' boy's death, together with Simon's tears at the thought of all the suffering his parents will have to go through, emphasise the fact that war is not exclusively a public, military and political matter, but rather one which intrudes and invades the private and domestic spheres too. In fact, Manning seems to suggest the notions of family and domesticity have been destroyed and eroded with the development of the war: the Drucker family is dissolved, the Hoopers' son dies and Angela abandons her husband, and Harriet Pringle herself cannot form a family in such a context of danger and insecurity.

4.4. NO GENDER ROLE REVERSAL IN MANNING'S TRILOGIES

As stated in the previous section, Harriet Pringle looked for adventure and excitement when she married, and she was hoping to form her own family with Guy. The domestic sphere is, after all, the place she is supposed to occupy in society as a young wife. However, the war and all the instability it has brought to their lives have made this very difficult, and in addition, Guy has not proved the most devoted of husbands. As Inglis describes him, Guy is "quintessentially the abstracted, unconsciously neglectful husband, beginning his charity anywhere but at home" (24). Cusk also refers to "Harriet's lonely journey of marriage" (ix), and Meyers too notes that Guy is "more interested in his friends […] than in his wife, whom he frequently abandons as he rushes off to yet another social engagement" (24).

Harriet has not found in Guy the husband she had longed for, and she expresses her discontent openly on myriad occasions. Shortly before they flee to Athens in *The Balkan Trilogy*, for example, Guy notices Harriet's dissatisfaction:

> 'Are you sorry you married me?'
>
> He evidently needed reassurance, for when she said: 'Sometimes I am,' he looked very grieved. He asked: 'Do you feel you need a different sort of person?'

> ‘Perhaps.’ […]
>
> He asked despondently: ‘You mean you no longer love me?’
>
> ‘I don’t mean that, but I’m not sure you want to be loved very much. You want room for a lot of other people and things.’ (589)

Similarly, in *The Levant Trilogy*, it is acknowledged that “[d]issatisfaction – chiefly Harriet’s – was eroding the Pringle’s marriage” (241), and likewise, when everyone thinks Harriet dead, Aidan Pratt confesses to Guy that he thought Harriet’s “unhappiness was more destructive [for her] than the climate” (421). Throughout the six novels, it is evident for Guy and for everyone else that Harriet has not found happiness in her marriage; as Meyers states, she “does not stop loving [Guy] but loses faith and trust in him” (24).

In *The Balkan Trilogy*, when the Pringles are in Athens, Harriet is presented with an opportunity of escape from her disappointing marriage. She meets Charles Warden, an English soldier who strikes Harriet as being “very good-looking” (759), and they are soon attracted to one another: “[a]s she spoke, she saw Charles Warden. He was looking at her and, catching her eye, took a step towards her. Impulsively, she moved away from Guy” (809). The first time Charles and Harriet are left alone, they visit the Parthenon, and, there, Harriet realises that “as she found his eyes on her, she felt warmed and excited, and the air about them was filled with promise” (830). With Charles, she feels “a sense of affinity. She was amazed and worried as though by something supernatural” (831), and only a few minutes after this they realise they both feel the same:

> She watched him, not really listening. When he turned and found her eyes fixed so intently on him, he smiled in surprise; and she saw how this sudden, unselfconscious smile transformed his face. As they looked at each other, a voice said: 'Love me'.

> Harriet did not know whether he had spoken or whether the words had formed themselves in her mind, but there they were, hanging on the air between them, and conscious of them, they were moved and disquieted. (831)

From that moment on, Charles devotes time and attention to Harriet, and she finds in him the companion she so longs for, yet, in a way, this situation worries her, since she does not want to be disloyal to Guy.

Charles, of course, knows Harriet is married, and therefore he is patient with her indecisiveness. At the same time, however, he is also aware that he might not be in Athens for a long time, so he is aware that "their time [is] short" and that "the relationship [is] urgent" (842). Harriet, on the contrary, "had contemplated a long, developing relationship […]. She had had an illusion of leisurely intimacy, imagining them trapped together here, likely to share the same fate" (842), and now, knowing this will not be possible, she decides to put a stop to their relationship. This halt, however, does not last long, and their sense of mutual understanding is renewed: "[t]heir sense of likeness astonished them. It resembled magic. […] Harriet at times imagined he was the person most like her in the world" (872).

They are attracted to one another not only emotionally, but also physically, yet the circumstances never seem be right for Harriet to release her desire:

> He leant towards her and, moved by his looks, his ardent expectations, she felt the air charged between them. Her lips parted; she turned her head away and said: 'If it were possible … [but] I have to think of Guy.'
>
> He took that to be no more than conventional resistance. Catching her hand, he […] said: 'We can't talk here. Come up to my room.'
>
> The impulse to please him almost drew her from her seat, but as she turned towards the stairs she saw faces that were familiar to her" (913)

The thought of becoming the centre of gossip and of Guy knowing she went up to Charles' room stop her from following him. She is torn between her commitment to Guy and her feelings and passion for Charles, and even though Charles tries to be understanding, he starts to feel tired of such "a waste of passion and misuse of time" (914).

Soon, Harriet realises that perhaps she actually loves Charles, and he openly admits to love her. With his confession, "he had given her everything; there were no grounds for any sort of excuses or delays" (956). Harriet gives in to the passion she feels for Charles and this time she follows him to his room, but again, they are interrupted by the reappearance of Sasha. Harriet, of course, wants to know what happened to Sasha when their flat in Bucharest was raided, but Charles feels "cheated and humiliated" (956). He realises their relationship is an impossibility, and he gets tired of running after Harriet only to be constantly let down. After this, Charles and Harriet only meet once, when Charles and the rest of British soldiers are leaving Athens. She justifies herself to him: "'It was difficult. Among all these alarms and threats, coming and goings, no one has a private existence'" (969). This is their farewell, and they never see each other after this.

Charles has offered Harriet companionship, understanding, and passion, things she does not find in Guy. As Cusk explains, "when Harriet's experience of transformative love finally and briefly comes, she feels it as a demolishing of that formal loneliness, of bodily isolation" (xii). Charles offers Harriet a possibility of a love affair, and with him, Harriet could release her female libido. She does not, however, make use of this opportunity to break free from her discontent and, instead, decides to remain with Guy.

In *The Levant Trilogy* Harriet's "deep-seated discontent" is evident to everyone again (193), and when she recovers from the amoebic dysentery she has suffered, she decides to go back to England. She feels there is nothing to keep her in Egypt, and if she goes to England, she will be able to get a job and "be of some use in the world" (345). Since she has failed in

fulfilling her roles in the domestic sphere, she considers the possibility of actively participating in the war effort from the home front in England. After all, she had considered the possibility of actively participating in the war before she married, as she confesses to her friend Mortimer: "'I envy you,' Harriet said: 'I was about to join the Wrens but got married instead.'" (226). Mortimer explains to Harriet that she and the other girls drive a little lorry and also scrub ambulances, and how the job can be dangerous sometimes, as for example only a few days before one of the girls had cut her hand, got gas gangrene and died. Harriet, listening to Mortimer, thinks enviously: "'They belong to a world of war. They have a part in it: they even die'", and she realises she "ha[s] no part in anything" (229). Thus, going to England is an opportunity for Harriet to change her life. As she admits the day before her departure, she has "a sense of being completely outside Guy's life", and she thinks: "'At least I'm going in good time. I'm young enough to start another life'" (366).

On the day of her departure, while she is waiting to board the Queen of Sparta, Harriet sees Mortimer and her co-driver Phillips, and at once decides to secretly go to Damascus with them instead of taking the boat: she wants to see "all the wonders of the Levant" (377). This trip that Harriet goes on offers her all the freedom and adventure she has craved for since she married. After all, and as nineteenth-century literature shows, already in an era when "women were designated 'as the symbolic embodiment of home'", foreign travel was seen as a way for women to "redefine[e] themselves, assuming a different persona and becoming someone who did not exist at home" (Hammond 145). The trip allows Harriet to explore new countries as an independent woman and to get to know herself better.

In Damascus, her health improves, and she realises she is "on the outside of things, a female in a city where women [are] expected to stay indoors" (Manning, *LT* 430). She meets new people and makes new friends, such as Halal, a Syrian she meets in Damascus. Shortly after they have met, Halal takes Harriet to a private party in a big Arab house owned by his

friend Jamil. This party is the first event held by local people and for locals Harriet attends since she left England, and it proves a real experience. Halal is a Christian, but Jamil is an Arab, so after the men have greeted Harriet, she is taken to another room to drink coffee with Farah, Jamil's wife. Although Farah is nice and friendly with Harriet, she does not speak English, and therefore they cannot really have a conversation; thus, Harriet would have preferred to stay with the men. The scene, as Patten states, "expose[s] the complexity of female status partly in relation to the restrictions and customs of the Muslim and Arab world she has entered, partly in relation to her own confused position as a married woman" (140). Indeed, being an English woman, Harriet has more freedom than the local women, but still she has to respect certain traditions and there are places she dares not visit alone. Her friendship with Halal, who offers to be her escort, allows her to see the most beautiful places of the country, including Moslem sites. However, it also reveals Harriet's doubts towards her own position as a married woman who is away from her husband: Halal knows Harriet is married and he is very respectful with her at all times, but, still, the idea that people could suspect they have an affair, or that Halal himself might expect their relationship will develop, makes her feel uncomfortable.

When still in Damascus, Harriet needs money, so she temporarily works for Dr. Beltado, a historian, but he leaves the city without paying her, and, alone and moneyless, Harriet decides to go to Beirut in hope of finding her friend Angela. On her way to Beirut she has to stop in Baalbek, where she finds Lister, an old friend of Guy. Lister drives Harriet to the hotel near Beirut where Angela and Bill Castlebar are staying, and Angela offers to lend Harriet some money. Harriet admits the trip has not been as thrilling as she had imagined it: it has been an adventure and she has seen and explored new places, but she has not managed to earn a living and therefore she is now dependent on the charity of others. A week after her reunion with Angela, they run into Dr Beltado, and Angela demands that he pays the money

he owes to Harriet. With this money she earned, Harriet is financially set, and thus her independence is regained.

From Beirut, they go to Jerusalem, and Harriet decides she will set there. Aidan and Lister are in Jerusalem and they will be able to help Harriet get a job in a government office. It seems to Harriet that "all her problems [are] solved" (Manning, *LT* 502). Once there, she does not find Aidan, but, by chance, she meets Mrs Rutter, who had been on the Queen of Sparta and who tells Harriet how they were torpedoed and all passengers except for her and a few sailors had died. Harriet realises Guy thinks her dead, and she strongly feels a needs "to contact Guy and assure him she was alive and well" (530). Harriet, Angela and Bill decide to take a train to Cairo that very same night.

One could argue Harriet returns to Cairo as a phoenix: she was presumed dead but now she reappears with her health fully restored and with a will to return to her life with Guy. As Patten argues, "Harriet exists in *The Sum of Things* as a ghost of sorts, the novel providing an imagined 'afterlife' to the experiences of Cairo and her faltering marriage. Her journey east […] provides a necessary period of reflection (and individualism) before her eventual reconciliation with Guy" (138).

Harriet does not follow Gilbert's theory on gender and sexuality in wartime. In fact, to date no theoretical model can account for Harriet's lack of action in both trilogies when the possibility of breaking up with her main source of unhappiness and of reinventing herself arises. Harriet does not release her libido and she does not live the exciting life she had desired. In *The Balkan Trilogy*, a frustrating marriage, added to a clear intellectual affinity and sexual attraction to an officer do not lead to a sexual liaison. I would argue that her encounter with Sasha, just when she has finally given in to the passion she feels for Charles and she is going to his hotel bedroom, reminds her of her commitment to Guy. Sasha, after all, had been their surrogate son, and the time he spent at their flat had given Harriet an

illusion of family: now, seeing Sasha, the thought of a possible family with Guy is immediately renewed, and, for a last time, Harriet chooses Guy over Charles. More peculiarly, in *The Levant Trilogy*, Harriet Pringle is presumed dead, yet, given the possibility of therefore writing herself out of history and into a new identity, she returns to the lifestyle and husband she rejected and fled. When she hears that Guy thinks her dead, she imagines he must be suffering, and this is enough reason for her to run back to him. However, I would argue that her trip around the Levant has given Harriet freedom, self-esteem and self-confidence, and therefore, the Harriet that goes back to Guy is a renewed, stronger and more independent version of herself. Hartley also comments on this: "The long trajectory of six novels ends with Harriet surviving a death and returning to Guy, although what restores her is not so much her husband as her own development" (193). And Patten, too, argues that Harriet's trip to the Levant is defined "by a growing sense of individual self- assertion and self-recognition: this is an interlude of feminine independence which temporarily derails the marriage plot on which both trilogies rely, until Harriet finally returns to the restrictions and securities of Cairo and her husband" (141). The scholar states that "while [Harriet] makes only partial, reversible moves towards independence, whether sexual or economic, she abandons her former self which was entirely relational, inhabiting in its place a formative version of an emancipated woman" (141).

4.5. CONCLUSIONS

Manning's trilogies seem to suggest that the notion of family as traditionally understood was destroyed by the Second World War. Indeed, there is not one single example of a happy, traditional family that remains unaltered by the uncertainty, mobility, dangers and horrors brought about by the war: most of Guy's male friends in Romania, Greece and Egypt are married but separated from their wives, who are in England; the Jewish Drucker family is

dissolved and destroyed by the Iron Guard in Bucharest; Sophie, a Romanian law student who had once hoped to marry Guy in order to get a British passport and leave the country, eventually marries Clarence, but she abandons him a week after the wedding; the Hoopers' son is killed by a landmine; Simon's brother Hugo dies on the battlefield; Bill Castlebar is married but he publically abandons his wife for Angela; Edwina is desired by many men yet she remains unloved and in the end she marries Major Brody in fear she will never find another candidate; Mrs Rutter is a widow; and Marion and her baby Richard, with whom Harriet was supposed to travel to England, drown when the Queen of Sparta sinks.

In a way, and as Gilbert argues, the war altered traditional social order, especially for women. In Manning's trilogies, while men, whether actively fighting like Simon or simply working like Guy, continue to be devoted mainly to the public life, women find a lot of difficulties in carrying out the roles traditionally assigned to them in the domestic sphere, and this, in the case of Harriet, becomes a source of distress and dissatisfaction. Both in *The Balkan Trilogy* and in *The Levant Trilogy*, Harriet has the opportunity to escape from her source of discontent, satisfy her needs and try to find happiness outside marriage, but contrary to all expectations, she ultimately rejects these chances and decides to stay with Guy. Thus, Manning's solution to this social displacement Harriet and other women in the novels experience, which is only worsened by the geographical one, is neither for women to experience sexual liberation and have extramarital affairs nor for them to abandon their husbands and families. In the context of all the unpredictability and turmoil that the war and the geographical displacement resulting from it has brought to Harriet's life, her marriage to Guy represents permanence, and she values this above anything else. As Harriet herself thinks when they are crossing the Mediterranean on a refugee boat on their way to Egypt, "[t]o have one thing permanent in life as they knew it was as much as they could expect. […] They had life – a depleted fortune, but a fortune. They were together and would remain together, and

that was the only certainty left to them" (Manning, *BT* 1032 – 1033). In relation to this idea, Cusk states that "Harriet's determination — against every provocation — to preserve her marriage, to stay rather than to abandon, to keep instead of smashing, is the novel's other, private war" (viii). Lassner too comments on this: "Harriet chooses her tepid marriage as a safe haven in a world on the edge of destruction. […] In Manning's construction, marriage may be a malleable structure in which Harriet can survive" (*British Women*, 238).

In a world of war full of uncertainties, marriage is presented as the only certainty in Harriet's life, but with this Manning does not suggest that women should endure unhappiness. Rather, her solution to the frustration women feel caused by social displacement is for women to redefine and rewrite their role within the private sphere. The Harriet that goes back to Guy at the end of the trilogies is a renewed and strong woman who knows what she wants, and who has control over her life. David comments on "Harriet Pringle's recovery of individuality", and on how her "recuperation of a self apart from her husband" is partly achieved when Harriet starts having friends of her own (101). Hartley notes too that "friendship is part of this process, as it offers a vital and sustaining counterbalance to war" (193). In fact, when at the end of the trilogies Harriet and Guy are together again, Guy tries to control Harriet's friendships again, but this time she remembers Angela's advice "to box his ears" and tells him firmly: "'You have your friends; let me have mine'" (Manning, *LT* 561).

As Hartley argues, Manning's two trilogies "form a female odyssey" (183), and she adds that "Manning's heroine on her front line of one can be read as a concentrated version of what many women went through, confronting danger and turning it into gain and growth" (181). In the last pages of *The Levant Trilogy*, Harriet reflects on her new position within her marriage:

> [Guy] was content; but was she content? She was free to think her own thoughts. She could develop her own mind. Could she, after all, have borne

> with some possessive, interfering, jealous fellow who would have wanted her to account for every breath she breathed?
>
> Not for long.
>
> In an imperfect world, marriage was a matter of making do with what one had chosen. As this thought came into her head, she pressed Guy's knee and he patted her hand again. (566)

Harriet is at last satisfied, she has managed to find comfort and wellbeing within her marriage, and she learnt to enjoy her independence.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

5.1. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The main purpose of this thesis was to explore how Manning's Second World War trilogies engage with some of the great debates of the twentieth century, such as war and the narration of war, (the end of) imperialism, and changes in gender roles. My analysis of the six novels departed from the belief that the existing readings of Manning's trilogies have focused excessively on the links between the author's life and the novels. Consequently, these readings have generated more interest in Manning's life than in the texts themselves. In addition, they have focused mostly on what could be explained by the author's experiences, but they have failed to offer a successful and thorough account of the texts, and to provide an explanation for what could initially be understood as inconsistencies in Manning's works.

The three main chapters of this dissertation have all focused on a different major theme of *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy*: war narrators, the representation of place and space in the context of war and the end of British imperialism, and gender roles in wartime. There are several general conclusions that can be drawn from my analysis, which all confirm my initial hypothesis.

From the study conducted in the second chapter, "Narration Of War: The Figure Of The Witness", I firmly conclude that even though war writing has traditionally been understood to be an exclusively male domain (war was fought, written and narrated by men and for men), it is Harriet Pringle, a female civilian, who proves to be the best narrator of World War II in Manning's trilogies. Analysing the three main narrating voices in the trilogies (Simon, Guy and Harriet) following McLoughlin's and Rawlinson's theories on war narrators exposes the fact that while Simon's viewpoint on the war is restricted to the military zone, and Guy's perception of the world is tainted by his strong political ideals and limited by

his interest in ideas rather than in real events, Harriet's lack of direct involvement in the war and her eagerness to observe her surroundings make her account the most reliable one. Harriet fits to perfection Rawlinson's theory that the twentieth-century war narrator is not a hero but a detached witness. She observes and recounts the advance of the war, the gradual Nazi takeover of power, and the effects this has on the urban and social landscape of Bucharest, Athens and Cairo. The fact that Harriet usually remains distant towards the events and scenes she witnesses, and that she often goes back to her personal worries soon after, has on occasions obscured her role as war narrator, so much so that, as stated in the introductory chapter, some of her contemporary critics understood the novels to be an account of the Pringles' life as a married couple rather than an account of the Second World War. However, and as chapter two proves, it is precisely her position as a civilian external to the public sphere and to the war effort, together with her apparent lack of faith in politics, that validates her as a detached witness. Similarly, her observant position in the trilogies allows her to record not only her personal experience of war, but also that of the people around her: soldiers, civilians, British, and natives of the countries they inhabit.

I conclude from my third chapter, "'A Global War. A War Of Globe-Trotters. A Traveler's War': Place And Space In Olivia Manning's *Fortunes Of War*", that while Simon's and Harriet's behaviour in the warzone is presented as apt and natural, Guy's connection with his surroundings is again portrayed as being inadequate. As the analysis in chapter three proves, both Simon and Harriet conform to the natural behaviour of the individual in the warzone as described by McLoughlin. However, Guy seems to be oblivious of his surroundings and of the war, and this, again, discredits him as a reliable narrating voice.

In addition, I conclude from my examination of Manning's portrayal of the Balkan and Levant countries that while she writes a historically accurate account of World War II in Romania, Greece and Egypt, her representation of the culture and native people of these

countries is much intoxicated by stereotypes. Admittedly, it is mainly through Harriet's viewpoint that, as Lassner claims, Manning gives some visibility to the Nazi persecution of Jews and to the internal struggle for freedom and independence of these countries, but as shown in chapter three, this is never central in any of the novels, and the very few native characters who are given a voice are not given much depth and are often portrayed following Balkanist or Orientalist clichés. Therefore, and contrary to Lassner's claim, Manning cannot be considered an active anti-imperialist writer. On the other hand, Harriet's stereotyped and often negative view of many of the natives she identifies as Other (especially Romanian women, beggars and peasants) also invalidates Lassner's claim that Manning shows empathy for the oppressed and for those she identifies as other. Certainly, Guy tries to defend Romanian peasants, for example, on several occasions, explaining that they are victims of a political and economic system that keeps them oppressed. However, and as suggested earlier, his views are overshadowed by Harriet's. His almost blind faith in communism, and his inability to relate to his surroundings naturally in wartime, disqualify him and his viewpoint as trustworthy.

My fourth chapter, "War and Gender in Manning's Trilogies", leads me to suggest that, as presented in Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy,* the Second World War destroyed the notion of family as traditionally understood. While it is possible for men in Manning's trilogies to devote themselves to the public sphere as would commonly be expected, Harriet's experience reveals the different ways in which this war has brought destruction and horror to the civilian sphere and particularly into the home. In addition, Harriet shows her unhappiness and frustration in a marriage that does not allow her to fulfil her assigned roles in the domestic sphere: she cannot be Guy's lover, she cannot be a housewife and she cannot be a caring mother. It seems, as Harriet says, that in wartime "no one has a private existence" (Manning, *BT* 969), and this generates anxiety and unhappiness

in her. Still, as was my initial suspicion, contrary to Gilbert's theory on sexuality and gender in times of war, Manning's protagonist does not release her libido or experience a gender role reversal: Harriet refuses to take any action when different possibilities of breaking away with her position appear (she is not unfaithful to Guy and she does not abandon him). Instead, Harriet redefines her role within the private sphere.

In the light of the above, the most significant conclusion to be drawn from my study of Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy* is that it is precisely Harriet's apparent lack of reaction to the war events she witnesses, to the suffering of others, to politics, to the subjugation of colonised or semi-colonised Others, and even to her own unhappiness that marks her as the most trustworthy witness and narrator of the Second World War in Manning's novels. Simon's active participation in the military conflict limits his experience of the war to the battlefield, and Guy's intellectualism, idealism, and his strongly biased political views prevent him from perceiving the war as it is and responding to it in a natural way.

In addition, Harriet's detached position towards the evens she narrates should not be misunderstood for a lack of interest or attention. Fussell gives an explanation for this detachment that, as stated already, Rawlinson describes as typical of the twentieth-century war narrator: "detachment may be heartless, but it makes it possible for sensitive people to survive the war relatively undamaged" (*Wartime* 66). A perfect example of this detached type of narrator is Christopher Isherwood's in *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939), who explains: "I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking. Recording the man shaving at the window opposite and the woman in the kimono washing her hair. Some day, all this will have to be developed, carefully printed, fixed" (1). The role of the narrator is to *record* what they see, and this is what Manning's Harriet does. Precisely because she is a female civilian not directly involved in the fighting, she fits perfectly into the Isherwood

"camera-type" of narrator that Rawlinson refers to: she observes and narrates the places she goes to, the people she meets and encounters, and the events that take place around her from a detached position which allows the readers to learn about the effects of the war not only for the soldiers but also for civilians in the Balkan and Levant countries.

5.2. FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of this thesis open up several lines of research. The first is to continue this study in Manning's other war novels. What are Manning's war narrators like in *The Wind Changes*, *Artist Among the Missing* or *School for Love*? How is Ireland portrayed in of *The Wind Changes*, Cairo in *Artist Among the Missing* and Jerusalem in *School for Love*? How do the characters relate to these places in wartime? Finally, does the war interfere in the domestic spheres in these novels? In what ways?

Second, another possible research area would be to examine Manning's home, or England-based post-war novels, *A Different Face* and *The Doves of Venus*, to analyse their representation of gender and gender roles. Does Manning's suggestion that women should redefine their place in the private sphere apply only to wartime, or can more general conclusions be reached on this topic?

Finally, another line of research could be to apply a literary reading to other works by Manning which have also been mostly read as autobiography rather than as fiction. This has been the case with novels such as *The Rainforest* and with many short stories and sketches, most notably her collections entitled *Growing Up* and *My Husband Cartwright*. What would be the implications of reading these works from a literary rather than autobiographical point of view? Would this affect our understanding of these works?

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