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ENEMIES WITHIN AND WITHOUT: FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC AFFAIRS IN
THE SPY THRILLER NOVELS OF HELEN MACINNES, DOROTHY GILMAN,
AND ROBERT LUDLUM, 1940-1990

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY OF
MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

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ABSTRACT

ENEMIES WITHIN AND WITHOUT: FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC AFFAIRS IN THE SPY THRILLER NOVELS OF HELEN MACINNES, DOROTHY GILMAN, AND ROBERT LUDLUM, 1940-1990

Thomas D. Carter

Despite their best-seller status and their promise to open a window on the influence of popular culture on Cold War attitudes, spy thrillers have not yet received adequate scholarly attention. This dissertation examines the novels of Helen MacInnes, Dorothy Gilman, and Robert Ludlum and analyzes how contemporary events from 1940 to 1990 shaped their story lines and the content of spy thrillers and conversely how these authors interpreted world affairs for their readers.

This study concludes that six major themes underscore the messages of MacInnes, Gilman, and Ludlum. It considers the extent to which ordinary individuals as opposed to a superhero solves problems, violence is a main ingredient of the story, and technology provides the solution to the predicament that ensnares the protagonist. Other prominent elements are the roles that women play in the novels, the values represented therein, and the attitude and means employed to confront evil.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. FROM NAZIS TO TERRORISTS: COMBATING EVIL WITH HELEN MACINNES	10
3. DOROTHY GILMAN PRESENTS EMILY POLLIFAX AND THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING	44
4. THE DARK WORLD OF ROBERT LUDLUM	85
5. CONCLUSION	116
BIBLIOGRAPHY	124

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Grimacing, bent partially over, Bourne made his way to the first door on the left; it was parallel to the top of the staircase. He opened it and stepped inside. From what he could see it was an ordinary bedroom: lamps, heavy furniture, pictures on the walls. He grabbed the nearest lamp, ripped the cord from the wall and carried it out to the railing. He raised it above his head and hurled it down, stepping back as metal and glass crashed below. There was another burst of gunfire, the bullets shredding the ceiling, cutting a path in the plaster. Jason screamed, letting the scream fade into a cry, the cry into a prolonged desperate wail, and then silence. He edged his way to the rear of the railing. He waited. Silence.

It happened. He could hear the slow, cautious footsteps; the killer had been on the second floor landing. The footsteps came closer, became louder; a faint shadow appeared on the wall. Now. Bourne sprang out of the recess and fired four shots in rapid succession at the figure on the staircase; a line of bullet holes and eruptions of blood appeared diagonally across the man's collar. The killer spun, roaring in anger and pain as his neck arched back and his body plummeted down the steps. In his hands was a deadly automatic field machine gun with a rod and brace for a stock.¹

Suspenseful and violent passages such as the preceding one from Robert Ludlum's *The Bourne Identity* are a staple of espionage and spy thriller fiction.

The purpose of popular culture, which includes spy novels, is to define the process by which people clarify life's many complexities. Popular culture helps

¹Robert Ludlum, *The Bourne Identity* (New York: Richard Marek, 1980; Bantam Books, 1981), 523.

people make sense of their lives and also serves as a mirror of American life.² Ross Macdonald, creator of the Lew Archer detective series, said, "We learn to see reality through the popular arts we create and patronize. That's what they are for. That's why we love them."³ Scholars, however, have only begun to take popular culture seriously since the 1960s, but debates continue concerning its legitimacy as a field of study.⁴ In general the tide is running in favor of those who view popular culture as a field of critical thought and inquiry. Popular culture has become a meeting ground for several academic disciplines, and for historians it offers the opportunity to feature the ideas and routines of ordinary people. More studies are recognizing the power of the commonplace and seeking a better understanding of the function of popular culture within political and social life.⁵

²David Manning White and John Pendleton, *Popular Culture: Mirror of American Life* (Del Mar, Calif.: Publisher's Inc., 1977), 4.

³Ray B. Browne, "Popular Culture--The World Around Us," in *The Popular Culture Reader* Jack Nachbar, Deborah Weiser, & John L. Wright, ed. (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1978), 15-16.

⁴See, for example, Lawrence W. Levine, "The Folklore of Industrial Society: Popular Culture And Its Audiences," *American Historical Review* 97 (December 1992): 1369-99; Robin D. G. Kelley, "Notes on Deconstructing 'The Folk,'" *American Historical Review* 97 (December 1992): 1400-08; Natalie Zemon Davis, "Toward Mixtures and Margins," *American Historical Review* 97 (December 1992): 1409-16; T. J. Jackson Lears, "Making Fun of Popular Culture," *American Historical Review* 97 (December 1992): 1417-26; and Lawrence W. Levine, "Levine Responds," *American Historical Review* 97 (December 1992): 1427-30.

⁵Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, "Introduction: Rethinking Popular Culture," in Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, eds., *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 1-2.

A critical aspect of popular culture—spy fiction—makes a significant contribution to the way in which people come to terms with the issues of international relations. The general populace cannot or will not attempt to decipher weighty tomes and scholarly foreign affairs articles; however, novels are both enjoyable and understandable. Spy stories are terrific escapist literature since they provide suspense, intrigue, danger, and romance, but they can also provide powerful political and social commentary.

This dissertation examines the novels of Helen MacInnes, Dorothy Gilman, and Robert Ludlum and analyzes how current events from 1940 to 1990 shaped the story line and content of spy thrillers and conversely how these authors interpreted world affairs for their readers. MacInnes, Gilman, and Ludlum were chosen from among scores of recent writers of spy fiction because of their longevity, both in terms of popularity and productivity.

The development of spy fiction is primarily a twentieth century phenomenon. John G. Cawelti and Bruce Rosenberg in *The Spy Story* suggest that this recent popularity has come about because the modern person feels alienated from society and disoriented amidst large organizations such as corporations, universities, government bureaucracies, and urban development. The Progressive Era response to nineteenth-century industrialization and urbanization brought about government regulation from the city to the national level, university growth, and the proliferation of professional associations. The world wars and the New Deal continued the expansion of governmental, corporate, and union power, which also fostered the development of

organizations designed to mold public opinion. Cawelti and Rosenberg conclude that these developments resulted in a sense of abandonment and powerlessness for the individual. They argue further that some Americans survived by living a vicarious existence through the exploits of others such as sports idols and movie stars or by projecting themselves into the role of a fictional clandestine spy. In their interpretation the reader experienced frustration, betrayal, and failure in the real world, but found comfort in the idea that someone overcomes these obstacles in the world of fiction. Additionally, Cawelti and Rosenberg conclude the public experienced a great deal of anxiety concerning international conflict and the possibility of catastrophic events, and that the spy hero served to demonstrate that order can come from chaos and that seemingly overwhelming problems can be solved.⁶

A few fiction authors began experimenting with spy stories around 1900, and plots usually centered around themes of European balance of power or colonial intrigue. By the 1930s the genre was an integrated and popular segment of fiction publications. The usual story line was that an eventual war against fascism was inescapable and that each individual, not just spy heroes, had a responsibility to take a stand. When the war did begin, thriller plot lines continued to emphasize individual accountability in fighting evil and to maintain an optimistic view of the future outcome.⁷

⁶John G. Cawelti and Bruce A. Rosenberg, *The Spy Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 32-33.

⁷Ibid.

The spy novel continued to grow in popularity after World War II, in part because of the social and political circumstances of postwar America. The 1950s saw profound changes in American life due to the explosion of the atomic bomb, the Cold War, McCarthyism, and postwar prosperity. Americans feared a nuclear war in those years immediately after Hiroshima. With time the stress level abated only to elevate again after the United States and the Soviet Union began atmospheric testing of thermonuclear bombs. As historian Paul Boyer has pointed out, anxieties remained high throughout the decade of the 50s, and several successful films such as *On The Beach*, *Fail-Safe*, and *Dr. Strangelove* articulated this fear.⁸ The overall cultural tone, due to the McCarthy anti-communist crusade, emphasized being as inoffensive as possible. Historian Ellen Schrecker has suggested that the predominant characteristics of books, television, and films were timidity, banality, and conformity.⁹ The material life of Americans did not suffer as the nation experienced an unprecedented economic boom. James Patterson has noted that modern housing, automobiles, televisions, appliances, airline travel, and spectator sports were within reach of most American workers who also received paid holidays, sick leave, and health care.¹⁰ Many felt trapped in the new affluence because the new suburban

⁸Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 352-55.

⁹Ellen Schrecker, *Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1998), 395-400.

¹⁰James Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 313-23.

lifestyle came with an ever-increasing debt load. A job promotion and a raise in salary brought not only an expected and expensive lifestyle change but also more people in pursuit of that position according to David Halberstam. Both husbands and wives felt trapped and dreamed of escape, but that became increasingly difficult with successive advancement up the ladder of success. The novel *The Man In The Gray Flannel Suit* by Sloan Wilson, and the motion picture of the same name starring Gregory Peck focused on these themes maintained Halberstam.¹¹ Anxious yet helplessly trapped in a mundane world, many could "escape" only through their spy hero and idol.¹²

Even with the reduction of East-West tensions in the early 1970s, the world-wide communist threat remained the primary plot line, but the stories became increasingly complex in nature. For example, the spy hero's own agency became the real enemy as depicted in the film *Three Days of the Condor*. (1975) By the 1980s, spy stories moved to Third World settings and to the problems of international drug trade and terrorism.¹³

From the 1950s the development of the spy thriller protagonist centered around two basic story lines. For some authors, the political situation was secondary to the exploits of the spy hero, of which Ian Fleming's James Bond is the prime example.

¹¹David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Villard Books, 1993), 522-26.

¹²Cawelti and Rosenberg, *Spy Story*, 47-50.

¹³Katy Fletcher, "Evolution of the Modern American Spy Novel," *Journal of Contemporary History* 22 (April 1987): 319-23.

Technological gadgetry and almost superhuman qualities of bravery and physical and mental prowess were essential elements of success. Neither authenticity nor a plausible plot was important since the story was a form of escapist entertainment.¹⁴ Other authors such as Helen MacInnes, Dorothy Gilman, and Robert Ludlum emphasized realistic, credible plots and characters that exhibited more human emotions and responses. Additionally, these same post-World War II authors reverted to the 1930s plot device of "everyman" who is accidentally caught in a web of intrigue forcing him to take a stand against evil forces in the world.¹⁵ The novelists featured in this study—Helen MacInnes, Dorothy Gilman, and Robert Ludlum—promoted the idea that everyone has a duty to resist villainy.

Despite their best-seller status and their promise to open a window on the influence of popular culture on Cold War attitudes, spy thrillers have not yet received adequate scholarly attention. Cold War historians have been predominantly occupied with telling the diplomatic, political, and military histories of the Cold War conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union that ranged throughout the globe.¹⁶ These histories have devoted little attention to the ways in which the public understood the Cold War and even less to the ways in which the public used popular culture to

¹⁴See, for example, Nick Carter, *The Black Death* (New York: Award, 1970); idem, *The Omega Terror* (New York: Award, 1972).

¹⁵Fletcher, *Modern American Spy Novel*.

¹⁶Michael J. Hogan, ed., *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations Since 1941* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. chaps. 9-17 and 19, deals with this extensive historiography.

understand this complex global conflict. This began to change with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. New cultural histories of the Cold War began to appear. Some of these works concerned themselves with the intersection between the diplomacy and the politics of the Cold War and domestic issues of race and gender.¹⁷ Others chose to examine the global impact of official American cultural campaigns as well as the unofficial campaigns carried out by the spread of American movies and goods around the globe.¹⁸

But even among the new cultural histories of the Cold War, only a handful deal with popular culture at all. Both Fred Inglis' *The Cruel Peace* and Stephen J. Whitfield's *The Culture of the Cold War* discuss such influential Cold War films as *The Magnificent Seven*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Catch-22*, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, *Dr. Strangelove*, and *The Crucible*; and Cynthia Enloe's *The Morning*

¹⁷See, for example, Cynthia Enloe, *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War and Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); Laura McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home: Militarization Meets Everyday Life in the Fifties* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

¹⁸See, for example, Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 1999); Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997); Emily S. Rosenberg, "Consuming Women: Images of Americanization in the 'American Century,'" and Rob Kroes, "American Empire and Cultural Imperialism: A View from the Receiving End," both in *The Ambiguous Legacy: U.S. Foreign Relations in the "American Century,"* ed. Michael J. Hogan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 437-62, 500-20; and Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

After examines the effect of popular culture, ranging from the *Steve Canyon* comic strip to the *Rambo* movies, in reinforcing the militaristic attitudes of the Cold War.¹⁹ But only two pieces discussed novels at all. Whitfield's book deals in passing with *One Lonely Night* (a Mickey Spillane novel that he quite rightly portrays as an inflammatory, anticommunist spy story) and *The Quiet American*, Graham Greene's anti-Cold War novel. Walter Hixson, in a journal article that he never developed into a monograph, examined the novels of Tom Clancy as a window on the Cold War.²⁰ Clearly, an academic exploration of the Cold War spy novel and the ways in which the genre might have influenced its millions of American readers is overdue.

This study explores six major themes that underscore the messages of MacInnes, Gilman, and Ludlum. There is consideration as to the extent to which everyman, as opposed to a superhero, solves problems by using violence as a main ingredient of the story and technology as the solution to the predicament that ensnares the protagonist. Other prominent elements are the roles that females play in the novels, the values represented therein, and the attitude and means employed to confront evil. Scholars are taking popular culture studies more seriously. The generation of Cold War historiography proceeds at a rapid pace. There is a need for a convergence and this study is an effort in that direction.

¹⁹Fred Inglis, *The Cruel Peace: Everyday Life in the Cold War* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 98-103; Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 127-51, 220-25; and Enloe, *The Morning After*, 71-101.

²⁰Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 34-37, 205-07; Walter L. Hixson, "Red Storm Rising: Tom Clancy Novels and the Cult of National Security," *Diplomatic History* 17 (Fall 1993): 599-613.

CHAPTER 2

FROM NAZIS TO TERRORISTS: COMBATING EVIL WITH HELEN MACINNES

Aroused by the alarm bell in the early hours of April 19, 1775, the minutemen mustered to confront the British troops advancing to seize the arms and ammunition stored in and about the town.¹ Since 1770 apathetic and complacent villagers had been transformed into revolutionaries ready to die in defense of their freedom.² The interpretation of unfolding political events by leaders such as Samuel Adams contributed to the stand that the patriot colonists would take.³ Almost two centuries later, novelist Helen MacInnes began using her spy thrillers based on current affairs to admonish political indifference, to sound warnings of international dangers, and to encourage a new generation of minutemen to be steadfast in defense of liberty.

Helen MacInnes wrote twenty-one spy novels that collectively have sold more than 23 million copies. Every novel made the best seller list, four became films, and

¹Christopher Hibbert, *Redcoats and Rebels* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), 29-33.

²Robert A. Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 41-70.

³Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 224-60, 284.

her works were translated into over twenty languages.⁴ She began writing novels after observing the European political situation in the 1930s, and as her career developed, she adapted her plots to incorporate adventures involving World War II, communist agents in the 1950s and 1960s, and terrorists in the 1970s and 1980s, although she also drew extensively on her personal experience to devise plots and construct characters.⁵ Her body of work was both prolific and distinctive. These achievements earned MacInnes the title of the queen of the modern espionage thriller. All of her spy novels pit normal men and women against totalitarian regimes.⁶ Her heroes and heroines are not, for the most part, professional agents or people accustomed to performing extraordinary deeds. Rather, they are dutiful citizens caught in an unusual situation who respond by becoming informed and then taking action. Her message was consistent throughout her career—totalitarianism in any of its forms is an adversary of freedom and demands vigorous resistance. MacInnes viewed Nazis, communists, and terrorists as having essentially the same goals; they would even form short-term, expedient alliances. MacInnes believed that defying totalitarianism was an obligation of each citizen, and MacInnes had faith that if people were informed of a danger then they would find the means to overcome it. In

⁴Gina MacDonald, "Helen MacInnes" in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 87, *British Mystery and Thriller Writers Since 1940*, ed. Bernard Benstock and Thomas F. Staley (Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research, 1989), 285.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., 349.

MacInnes' view education, resolve, and action could defeat evil, and she maintained an optimistic theme that ultimately goodwill would prevail.

This daughter of Scottish Presbyterian parents grew up in Glasgow, Scotland, received a Master of Arts degree from Glasgow University, and had further training as a librarian at University College, London. Her characters' professions, their conversations, and their love of books and classical music reflect MacInnes' literary education and love of the arts, but they also reinforce the idea that the characters were everyday people. In *The Venetian Affair*, a character comments that Venice attracts her because of the commonplace items such as the outdoor lamp holders that are designed to be works of art.⁷ The protagonist of *The Salzburg Connection* has occasion to visit a bookstore where he purchases *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* and *The Last Battle*.⁸ *Prelude to Terror* finds the main character reading *Landscape Into Art*, and the Vienna Opera House is the location for a clandestine meeting in *The Snare of the Hunter*.⁹

MacInnes explained how she used artistic detail to enhance a story's development in a reply to a fan's letter in March 1961. After finishing *Decision at*

⁷Helen MacInnes, *The Venetian Affair* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1963), 213.

⁸Helen MacInnes, *The Salzburg Connection* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1968), 150.

⁹Helen MacInnes, *Prelude to Terror* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1978), 296; idem, *The Snare of the Hunter* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1974), 65.

Delphi, the reader, in a letter sent to the publisher, had questioned MacInnes about the design of two pieces of furniture. Her protagonist had occasion to remark that a coffee table was a Louis XXII and the chairs were Louis XIII. Even drawings of the pieces were requested.¹⁰ MacInnes pointed out that Strang was being facetious and went on to elaborate about her concept of art and character portrayal:

Why did I take the trouble to write that page about the little pink hotel room? First, because it proved Strang's knowledge of his job: he did not accept fakes. Second, because the satire showed his critical sense, combined with his sharp humor; he was no fool. Third, because it made him a hard-working man with a job on his mind, and not a sissy. Fourth, because it gave evidence of his sensibility for the feelings of others. A boor would not have cared if he had hurt the feelings of the Greeks, and would have told them very loudly that the room was all wrong for him. Instead, using his own variety of diplomacy, Strang got what he wanted, without wounding anyone's feelings. A boor would not have won Miss Cecilia, or got on so well with so many varieties of Greeks.¹¹

MacInnes' characters were not one-dimensional. She used her knowledge of the art world to make them believable and to give them depth.

In September of 1932, MacInnes married Oxford classics scholar Gilbert Highet and worked with him on translations while continuing her own career as a cataloguer and library consultant. Her efforts helped finance their summer trips to Europe, and MacInnes' familiarity with European geography became another

¹⁰Richard Dahl to William Jovanovich, 23 March 1961, MacInnes Papers, Rare Books & Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey. [hereafter Princeton RB & SC].

¹¹Helen MacInnes to Richard Dahl, 1 April 1961, MacInnes Papers, Princeton RB & SC.

trademark of her novels.¹² There is an excursion on a gondola in *The Venetian Affair* and the characters comment on the buildings' architectural elements that are unique to Venice.¹³ *The Salzburg Connection* contains enchanting descriptions of Austria's mountain lakes, and in *Message from Malaga*, the characters drive over a Spanish mountain highway to Granada and marvel at the Moorish palaces.¹⁴

MacInnes once asserted that she and her husband Gilbert toured most of the locales that she incorporated into her stories and that he found them useful in his career, too. MacInnes invented villages and street names, but made sure that they conformed to the regional geography. In preparing for *Decision at Delphi*, MacInnes found and interviewed former Greek partisans who had fought against the Nazis because she wanted to ensure accurate descriptions of how battles had transpired.¹⁵ She applied herself to research as an historian would and said, "I went to the trial of Colonel Rudolf Abel to study the eyes and the expressions. I want hard facts. I want to know what I am writing about."¹⁶

MacInnes' readers appreciated her diligence and eye for detail as exemplified

¹²MacDonald, "MacInnes," 285.

¹³MacInnes, *The Venetian Affair*, 369-70.

¹⁴MacInnes, *The Salzburg Connection*, 1-16; idem, *Message From Malaga* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1971), 235-36.

¹⁵Herbert Mitgang, "Behind the Best Sellers," *New York Times Book Review*, 17 December 1978, 42.

¹⁶Edwin McDowell, "Helen MacInnes" in *Contemporary Literary Criticism Yearbook 1985*, vol. 39 (Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research, 1986), 350.

by what one of them wrote after reading *Neither Five Nor Three*:

Although I have never been in New York, you make it very real to me. In fact, I would say that this is an outstanding feature of the book—the way you depict this huge city with not only the sight of its tall buildings, its rows of apartment buildings, its parks, its teeming population, but with the sound and feel of them even the smell!¹⁷

MacInnes maintained this attention to specifics throughout her career.

Helen MacInnes was extremely well-read and had an affinity for three authors in particular: George Orwell, Rebecca West, and Arthur Koestler. The fear of totalitarianism that ultimately characterized her work derived in part from her reading. She read George Orwell extensively and claimed Rebecca West as her mentor. Their strong stand against totalitarianism appealed to MacInnes.¹⁸ Orwell wrote the novel *1984* in which the government invades every aspect of the personal lives of his characters, and West was a British author who wrote fiction, biography, literary criticism, history, and travel sketches for over seventy years. Early in her career, West emphasized socialist and feminist causes, but her later works focused on the dangers of fascism and communism.¹⁹ West saw a world that was more evil than good; however, MacInnes was considerably more optimistic.²⁰ The third influential author, Arthur Koestler, grew up in Hungary in a family of Jewish heritage who

¹⁷Pearl L. Boyd to Helen MacInnes, 1 April 1951, MacInnes Papers, Princeton RB & SC.

¹⁸Mitgang, "Behind the Best Sellers," 42.

¹⁹MacDonald, "MacInnes," 285.

²⁰Peter Wolfe, *Rebecca West: Artist and Thinker* (London: Feffer and Simmons, 1971), 1-5.

thought that they were thoroughly incorporated into German society. He, like thousands of other Jews, had to flee from the Nazis, and his career as a writer and political theorist reflected his fear of totalitarian regimes. Koestler was confident, however, that such systems would ultimately collapse because of their own internal deficiencies.²¹ MacInnes incorporated all of these themes into her stories.

MacInnes' concerns about fascism and totalitarianism also derived from her personal experience. The Highets' 1937 honeymoon trip to Bavaria provided MacInnes with first-hand observations of the Nazi use of intimidation and violence. Later, with encouragement from her husband, MacInnes turned her diary and extensive notes of the trip into her first novel, which recounts the story of a British university couple on vacation in Germany in the summer of 1939 and their attempts to locate an anti-Nazi agent.²² This novel began the writing career that continued until her death in 1985. While most of the novels were set in Europe, MacInnes and her husband lived in New York City where they had moved in 1937 after Gilbert Highet accepted a professorship of Greek and Latin at Columbia University. Both became American citizens in 1951.

Two years after the Bavarian trip, MacInnes sat down and began her story writing in pencil on a yellow pad.²³ It was a story with a significant purpose. She had framed a fictional narrative around contemporary events that was intended to be a

²¹Sidney A. Pearson, Jr., "Arthur Koestler" in *Dictionary of Literary Biography Yearbook: 1983* (Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research, 1984), 114-21.

²²MacDonald, "MacInnes," 285.

²³McDowell, "MacInnes," 349-51.

warning about the dangers facing the world. Ms. MacInnes once remarked, "Underlying everything is the fact that I'm interested in international politics, in analyzing news, to read newspapers both on and between the lines, to deduct and add, to utilize memory."²⁴ Following these guidelines and using notes on Hitler, Helen MacInnes published her first novel *Above Suspicion* in 1941. As the story unfolds, another general European war seems eminent so Richard Myles, a young instructor at Oxford, and his wife Frances plan a return visit to Europe before the fighting starts. They anticipate another relaxing summer in the Tyrol region, but an old friend, Peter Galt, who is with the Foreign Office comes to their home unexpectedly and secretly with an unusual proposal. He thinks that the Myles' summer vacation would be a great cover for a mission to locate the whereabouts of a British agent in Germany. According to Galt, the operative's latest messages have seemed suspicious, suggesting that he has either changed them as a warning or someone else has discovered his real identity and is transmitting the dispatches. The Myleses are to begin their journey in Paris as planned and follow a leisurely course to their destination, which is really a chain of contacts leading to the missing agent.

Richard is uneasy about Frances' going, but understands that a lone individual would draw attention, and one professional agent sent on the search has already disappeared. Galt thinks that a couple on a holiday will be above suspicion.

²⁴Roy Newquist, *Counterpoint* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964); quoted in Anne Commire, ed. "Helen MacInnes," *Something About the Author*, vol. 22 (Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research, 1981), 181.

Although looking forward to the trip, Richard is still doubtful about the mission and expresses his lack of concern about European politics by saying, "Who cares what a lot of uncivilized people think anyway? It's only the opinion of the civilized that really matters."²⁵ However, MacInnes states the theme of the book clearly by having Frances reply, "It looks as if a lot of the civilized will be killed because they ignored the thoughts of the uncivilized. Ignoring doesn't abolish them you know."²⁶ When there is an imminent danger, decent people must be prepared to deal with it according to MacInnes.

The Mylesees begin the trip pleasantly by touring museums, lingering at cafes, and visiting other points of interest. After several days they meet their initial contact and start a circuitous course through Germany and the Austrian Tyrol. The Mylesees become reacquainted with old friends in Germany, and their observations and conversations emphasize MacInnes' opinion regarding the repression, intimidation, violence, and anti-Semitism prevalent in the country and the threat these forces represent. At one point, Frances tells Richard that:

The more I see of Germany, the more I know that a showdown must come, some day, and perhaps the sooner the better, before they are all turned into robots. When I think of the children leaving school each year, all of them carefully educated in the Nazi way, I honestly shudder to think what the rest of the world faces in ten years' time, if it waits.²⁷

²⁵Helen MacInnes, *Above Suspicion in Assignment Suspense: A Three Novel Omnibus* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), 17.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*, 61.

Later Frances has a conversation with a young German man and remarks:

It seems so strange then that Germany should have twice built up the most powerful army in the world, within thirty years. Armies cost a lot of money, Johann. And, the money is wasted unless the armies are used, and pay for themselves by winning. It is a very dangerous thing to build up a huge army when the rest of the world is at peace.²⁸

In MacInnes' view, extreme nationalism and militarism are not innocent pursuits.

Germany must be held accountable for the result of these pursuits, and the United States must be prepared to meet the threat.

The Mylesees do accomplish their mission but must escape Germany, and with the aid of the resistance movement, they make a laborious climb through the mountains. As they return to Britain, both of them more circumspect and determined to fight the Nazi menace, Frances remarks, "Knowing evil could be worse than guessing. When you guessed, you could always hope that evil things might not be so bad as your worst fears. But when you knew them, there was no hope left."²⁹ This represents a central and continuing message of MacInnes' novels. According to the author, a person might wish that evil were not in the world, but once the facts of a menace are apparent, the time for wishing is over and must be replaced by resolve and action.

Germany had indeed changed considerably in recent years. The country had labored under resentment of the Versailles Treaty which they felt blamed and punished Germany unjustly for the last European war. Additionally, the democratic

²⁸Ibid., 86.

²⁹Ibid., 194.

government instituted after Kaiser Wilhelm's abdication seemed unable to control Germany's severe inflation. Adolf Hitler thought that this discontent would favor his revolutionary goals for power, but he failed and was sentenced to a term in prison. While there, he realized that lawful, constitutional means were the path to dominance. The combination of a further deteriorating economic situation and modern campaign techniques sustained the Nationalist Socialist (Nazi) Party's ascendancy.³⁰

After gaining control of Austria and part of Czechoslovakia through an aggressive and militaristic foreign policy, a confident Hitler turned his attention to Poland.³¹ France and Britain promised to aid Poland but needed the help of the Soviet Union. However, Hitler made his own non-aggression pact with the Soviets and did not believe that Poland's new allies would be effectual.³² Hitler proceeded to invade Poland on September 1, 1939. Two days later Britain and France declared war on Germany, but the Poles surrendered on the 28th.³³ Neither side took any action for the next seven months, then in April, Germany invaded Denmark and Norway and a month later attacked the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. The lightning strike of Hitler caught the Allies off guard, split their forces, and left thousands of soldiers trapped at Dunkirk on the English Channel coast. Only a

³⁰Donald Cameron Watt, *How War Came: The Immediate Origins of the Second World War, 1938-1939* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 11-29.

³¹*Ibid.*, 188-89.

³²*Ibid.*, 462-78.

³³*Ibid.*, 530-50.

massive rescue operation saved them, but the Germans now occupied the majority of French territory.³⁴

The British need for information about German fortifications in France provided the premise for MacInnes' next novel *Assignment In Brittany* (1942). Bertrand Corlay is among the French and Belgian wounded who have made the escape from Dunkirk and is interviewed by Military Intelligence Officer Matthews. Corlay bears such a strong resemblance to British operative Martin Hearne that even Matthews, a friend of Hearne's, is temporarily fooled. From this mistake emerges the idea to parachute Hearne into Brittany to pose as Corlay, make his way to the family farm, then proceed to gather information about German emplacements and intentions. Hearne himself questions Corlay extensively to gather background knowledge but plans to feign shell-shock and loss of memory to cover any inconsistencies that could arise.

Hearne arrives at the Corlay farm and is seemingly welcomed home as Bertrand with no suspicion by his mother or others in the household. However, since he is exhausted, Hearne sleeps that night until the next afternoon and awakens to find that someone has undressed and washed him. The motive, Hearne suspects, is to verify the birthmark that Corlay has on his back. Fortunately, the Military Intelligence Chemical Department had provided for that eventuality.

Hearne soon discovers that impersonating Corlay will be more complicated than he or Matthews had surmised. He meets Anne, Corlay's fiancée, who proceeds

³⁴John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Viking, 1990), 64-81.

immediately to break their engagement. A detachment of German soldiers arrives to commandeer the farm as their headquarters but suspiciously change the plan upon learning that Bertrand Corlay lives there. Next, in a confrontation with Corlay's mother, Hearne learns she, in fact, had not been fooled. Hearne is kinder and more caring than her own son would have been. She will keep the secret, though, since Hearne is there to fight the Germans. Prior to the war, Corlay had made his living as a teacher and writer, but his possessions indicate a greater income than those professions would have provided. Finally, Hearne discovers a secret compartment in Corlay's bookcase that contains some mysterious notes. Corlay was supposed to be a member of a Breton Nationalist group and these connections were going to be instrumental for Hearne in completing his mission. These secret papers indicate that Corlay was apparently not all that he seemed.

He was, in fact, a Nazi collaborator who used his Breton Nationalist activities to hide his duplicity. Corlay's co-conspirator had been his mistress, the beautiful, red-haired Elsie. Now Hearn must maintain the relationship with Elsie, although he is repulsed by her, and he also finds himself increasingly attracted to Anne. Hearn plays a game of bluff and counter-bluff among the contending factions and uses Corlay's treasonous connections as an opportunity to gather the information he needs to complete the mission. Then with Anne's help, he gets to the coast and escapes.³⁵

Most of the time a MacInnes story called for an innocent individual to be

³⁵Helen MacInnes, *Assignment in Brittany in Assignment Suspense: A Three Novel Omnibus* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961).

inadvertently entangled in an international conspiracy. This one, however, finds a professional sent on a mission. The variation does not deter MacInnes from telling her readers that courage, resourcefulness, and daring will be needed to defeat the Nazis. She also offers hope in a time of despair. Although France has fallen, the people of Brittany will aid the allies, and she is confident that good eventually will triumph over evil. MacInnes conveys this idea near the close of the novel when Hearne quotes a portion of the poem "A Shropshire Lad" by A.E. Housman:

The world is round, so travelers tell
And straight through reach the track
Trudge on, trudge on, twill all be well
The way will guide one back.

The future holds many difficulties both for Anne's and Hearne's relationship and for the world at large, but courage and perseverance will prevail.³⁶

Two more MacInnes' novels deal with World War II. The novel *While We Still Live* (1944) describes espionage in the Polish resistance, and in *Horizon* (1946) she tells the story of an escape from an Italian prison camp. In these four novels MacInnes emphasized the idea that it takes a variety of people—innocent tourists, professional agents, country villagers, and prisoners—to resist evil. MacInnes used her characters to illustrate her own belief that through initiative, bravery, and intelligence virtue would prevail.

The Allies defeated fascism in 1945, but less than a year later, Soviet-led communism posed a new threat to the U.S. Communism was spreading the way

³⁶*Ibid.*, 530.

fascism had and Americans were called to respond. MacInnes rose to the challenge and shifted the focus of her novels. The Cold War, conducted primarily through propaganda, nuclear threats, subversion, and financial coercion, dominated the world's attention for the next four decades. At the end of World War II, the Soviet army controlled almost half of Europe, and Stalin refused to relinquish that command. Communist governments subservient to or aligned with Moscow came to power in Albania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Poland. The Truman administration saw these events as a violation of the rights of self-determination as outlined in the Yalta Declaration of Liberated Europe. Mindful of the results of the Munich Conference, Truman vowed to resist further Soviet expansion through the policy of containment. The Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the Berlin Airlift were the major expressions of this stratagem.³⁷

The success of these measures and the sole possession of the atomic bomb gave the United States a secure feeling in the initial phase of the Cold War. However, the fall of China to communism and the Soviet Union's proclamation of a successful detonation of an atomic device in September 1949 led to a frenzied anti-communist outbreak in the United States. For many Americans the only rationale to explain the communist advances was subversion within American society itself. The anti-communist crusade that swept the country questioned the loyalty of not only

³⁷Norman Freidman, *The Fifty Year War: Conflict and Strategy in the Cold War*. (Annapolis Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2000), 1-77.

government officials but also Americans in all walks of life. The cases of Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs seemed to justify the campaign.³⁸

Americans were inundated with books and magazine articles written by diplomats and military personnel alerting civilians to the worldwide threat of communism.³⁹ In 1950, Arthur Koestler conducted a lecture tour of the United States in which he also warned that too many in the West were trying to correct the imperfections of liberal democracy while ignoring the threats of international communism that could demolish the entire system. He insisted that Americans become more realistic about the menace and institute an efficient psychological warfare to fortify democratic principles. MacInnes reiterated these themes in her next work *Neither Five Nor Three*. With this novel MacInnes transferred her attention from fascism to international and domestic communism.

In *Neither Five Nor Three* MacInnes focuses on the communist infiltration of the New York literary world. In this story Paul Haydn, newly discharged from the Army, returns from Europe and contemplates resuming his publishing career. Prior to the war, Haydn had served as assistant editor of *Trend*, an architecture and housing magazine. Picking up where he left off will not be easy because his former fiancée Rona Metford still works at *Trend*. In addition, management has dismissed Blackwood, who was Haydn's wartime replacement, for slanting the magazine's

³⁸Iain Hamilton, *Arthur Koestler: A Biography* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1982), 174.

³⁹Lisle A. Rose, *The Cold War Comes to Main Street: America in 1950*. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 34-35.

stories to manifest a communist viewpoint. Despite misgivings concerning this career move and corporate politics, Hayden returns to *Trend*, where he will have to associate with Rona's new fiancé Scott Ettley, who is also a friend of Blackwood.

In addition to her warning of the threat of totalitarianistic governments, MacInnes also tries to warn the American people of the possibility that their democratic and open society could be used against them. MacInnes felt there were many who might manipulate the guarantees of freedom of speech to spread distortions and lies that could enhance communism and weaken America. The point of her story is that freedom cannot be absolute and that there must be restrictions in order to protect freedom as a whole. For example, when the executive at *Trend* who had fired Blackwood says that he still has doubts about the dismissal's justification, Haydn replies that:

... A man can be fired for what he says—if his beliefs are pernicious enough. It all depends on what we feel is pernicious. It's very tough on a typhoid carrier if he has to be segregated from his fellow men, but doctors insist on treating typhoid germs as a pernicious menace to public health. And most of us are very thankful that they do. No one goes around talking about persecution of typhoid carriers.⁴⁰

Communism, in MacInnes' view is a disease that will spread from one innocent carrier to another if not stopped. Later in the conversation, the problem of American naiveté is addressed as Haydn's associate wonders if the American people understand the methods used against them. Again Haydn responds, "I think we do. Most of us do. Most of us sense the overall strategy against us. We don't always recognize the

⁴⁰Helen MacInnes, *Neither Five Nor Three* (Leicester, U.K.: Ulverscroft, 1951), 96.

tactics. But we are learning."⁴¹ The American people are gradually, according to the novel, learning how the disease is spread and that the cure is mass education and eternal vigilance. To assist in the process is, of course, MacInnes' purpose.

Blackwood wants to sue *Trend* for libel, but there are insufficient grounds. He still claims persecution and that he has been denied an opportunity to earn a livelihood. Blackwood uses his position to try to subvert the magazine, and when caught, he attempts to play victim to gain some sympathy. MacInnes, though, condemns those who use America's benevolent nature against their country, as Haydn recounts his experience in Europe:

I had the same defense from hidden Nazis and disguised communists trying to slip into German newspapers. Same old story. Always appealing to human decency and conscience, although they themselves try to kick all anti-totalitarian writers into the gutter. They have no conscience ruining other people's career.⁴²

According to MacInnes, America must be just as resolute in defeating domestic enemies as it was in conquering those in Europe and just as firm in meting out punishment. Americans are decent people, but there must be justice for those who would do the country harm.

Haydn still has doubts about how concerned he needs to be about battling subversion. He had experienced war and deprivation in his eight years in the military; he desires now to come home, continue his career, and not be concerned about foreign

⁴¹Ibid., 99.

⁴²Ibid., 104.

affairs. However, an Army friend and fellow officer reminds Haydn that he really has no choice but to be involved:

They've chosen the weapons. Infiltration and control of propaganda sources. We shall have to learn to know them for what they are. Or go down in history as the biggest boobs of all time. For the writing is on the wall, clear to see. It is up to people like you and me, Paul. It's up to people like us, who make our living in an information medium—the publishers, the writers, the producers, directors, the journalists, the columnists, the teachers, and preachers, the editors, the television and radio men. It's up to us. We ought to see the lies and guard against them. We've got to expose them.⁴³

Exposing this subversive element in society is crucial because Hayden's friend emphasizes that after a decade or two of clever disinformation "No communist army would need to invade the United States by force. They could walk in after the propagandists had done their work."⁴⁴ He summarizes the situation by noting that "war has been declared on us. I'm just taking up the challenge. And so are you. And so are most of us."⁴⁵ Haydn commits to the battle as does Rona eventually. Her character represents the average American view of the communist threat, moving through successive stages of innocence, comprehension, alarm, and finally resolve and response.

Ettley is not merely a friend to a communist sympathizer but also an active member of an underground cell whose leader plans for Ettley to become a highly influential individual in the publishing world. Ettley's associates are demanding of his time, and his commitments to them cause his romance with Rona to flounder.

⁴³Ibid., 109-10.

⁴⁴Ibid., 130-31.

⁴⁵Ibid., 182.

Meanwhile, the flame between Haydn and Rona reignites as they combat subversion together. They expose Ettley and break up the communist cell, but not before murder, suspense, narrow escapes, and violence ensue. After reading the novel, the actor and later United States Senator, George Murphy wrote MacInnes to say how enlightened he was by the story and that it should be developed into a motion picture.⁴⁶ Bruce Bliven, a former editor of *The New Republic* reported to MacInnes that he had experienced circumstances similar to those she described in her novel.⁴⁷

The Korean War added to the anti-communist hysteria which culminated in the rise to power and fame of Senator Joe McCarthy of Wisconsin. This war also confirmed the American belief in the international communist conspiracy led by the Soviets. With the demise of McCarthyism, the pursuit of internal subversives abated, but the fear of global peril did not. To prevent aggression toward the Soviet's southern neighbors, the United States was instrumental in forming the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) comprised of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, and Great Britain. The Far East was fortified by the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) which included the United States, Great Britain, France, Pakistan, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand.⁴⁸

The novels written by MacInnes from 1958 to the 1960s are consistent in their

⁴⁶George Murphy to Helen MacInnes, 21 June 1951, MacInnes Papers, Princeton RB & SC.

⁴⁷Bruce Bliven to Helen MacInnes, 31 December 1967, MacInnes Papers, Princeton RB & SC.

⁴⁸Freidman, *Fifty Year War*, 149-70, 183-84, 226.

theme of the dangers of international communism and the need for unceasing vigilance and response. Although the message is not as heavy-handed as in *Neither Five Nor Three*, it is nonetheless certainly explicit. Also concerns about communism had begun to take a new form in the 1960s. American concern dealt more with the international encroachments of monolithic communism and less with domestic subversion.⁴⁹ The MacInnes novels reflected this trend.

In *North From Rome* (1958), writer Bill Lammiter is in Italy researching ideas for a new book. He is wrongly identified as an American espionage agent, which leads to his involvement in Rosanna DiFeo's investigation of her brother's death. Police have ruled his death an accidental drug overdose, but she believes it to be murder. As the case unfolds, Bill and Rosanna discover a drug organization operated by the communists whom they believe to be responsible for the murder. The situation becomes more complicated because one of the cabal's allies is a naive Italian count who is also engaged to Lammiter's former girlfriend Eleanor. However, Italian and American agents have also been on the drug smugglers' trail, and together they are able, after another murder and the kidnapping of Eleanor, to thwart the communist scheme and rescue Eleanor. This novel stresses the extreme measures communists will use to accomplish their ends. Once again MacInnes rings an alarm bell, while at the same time, she promises that vigilance, courage, and clear thinking in the face of danger will defeat totalitarian threats.

The scene of intrigue shifts to Greece in *Decision At Delphi* (1960). Ken

⁴⁹Ibid., 252-82.

Strang, a free-lance architect, goes there on an assignment to sketch some ruins. He is unaware that his luggage contains smuggled proof of an assassination plot. Strang's friend Stefanos Kladas has used him as an unsuspecting conduit, and the contraband evidence is against Kladas' own brother, a former guerilla fighter turned anarchist and assassin. Even though intelligence operatives are brought in, Strang stays involved. He is able, with the help of Cecilia Hillard, an American photographer, to counter the anarchists' assassination scheme and to bring them justice for past atrocities.

MacInnes' setting shifts again to Italy in *The Venetian Affair* (1963), although the plot centers around events in Paris and Algeria. Bill Fenner, a divorced drama critic for the *Chronicle*, has his raincoat accidentally switched at the Paris airport. He discovers the mistake later in his hotel room and, noticing a rip in the lining, discovers \$100,000 in cash. Fenner turns for help to Mike Ballard, head of the *Chronicle's* Paris bureau. Since Ballard suspects that this incident may have some international implications, he introduces Fenner to agents of both NATO security and the CIA. However, a conversation with an elderly gentleman who is a former resistance fighter and present-day amateur intelligence agent reveals to Fenner the extent of the conspiracy. The dialogue expresses the theme of the novel, "... The basic reality of power politics is always this: who is going to control your life—you or your enemy? There is no evasion of that question. If you ignore it, you have lost."⁵⁰ MacInnes is asserting her belief that people must take responsibility for protecting their freedom. They must fervently resist any attempt at subjugation.

⁵⁰MacInnes, *The Venetian Affair*, 95.

Some recent communist schemes to plant falsified documents in a disinformation operation which would split the Western Alliance had failed, but the gentleman informs Fenner that he knows "... That an act of violence is being planned right now. I know that it will take place soon. I know that the same propagandist is already preparing the campaign against America."⁵¹ MacInnes emphasizes to the reader that the creation of disharmony among the western allies is a central strategy leading to world domination and that, in spite of several setbacks, the communists are relentless in pursuit of their goal. Fenner's new acquaintance goes on to explain that this new plot to undermine the United States involves a coalition of communists, a fascist, and an extreme French nationalist all of whom are plotting the assassination of Charles deGaulle. This assassination will be linked to the United States, and even if not conclusively proven, the resulting distrust and dissension would lead to the elimination of American power in Europe and the breakup of NATO. Without NATO, the Common Market could not prosper and the United States of Free Europe would never materialize.

The love interest appears when Fenner's path crosses that of Claire Langley who is in Paris attempting to expose the terrorist organization responsible for murdering her husband in Saigon. Both political and romantic goals face difficult and awkward challenges since Fenner's ex-wife now works for his adversaries. The story continues with chases through France and Italy, coded signals, hidden microphones, and cyanide gas pens. The human characteristics of courage, intelligence, and

⁵¹Ibid., 99.

persistence, which are recurring themes used by MacInnes, are the most important aspects of defeating the evil cabal. One passage in particular illustrates these qualities. Enemy agents kidnap Claire and lock her in the attic of their headquarters. She maintains her composure, and using the resources available, including an old candlestick holder, is able to wedge an opening in the window shutters and to signal for help.⁵²

MacInnes returns to Greece in *The Double Image* (1966) and to the hunt for a Nazi concentration camp administrator who is presumed dead. A professor of archaeology and survivor of Auschwitz identifies the former commandant as being alive and living in Paris, and he discloses that information to John Craig. Craig is one of the professor's former students who is now a journalist. The Nazi, now a Soviet agent, murders the professor in order to conceal his secret existence. Craig then becomes a target, which requires him to join forces with American, British, French, and Greek agents in order to capture the ex-Nazi and expose his new Soviet espionage network. Again an amateur is drawn into the dangers of international espionage but stays committed to the cause of freedom that is everyone's duty to discharge according to MacInnes.

The schemes of former Nazis and communists threats are combined in *The Salzburg Connection* (1968). The idea for this novel came from contemporary

⁵²Ibid., 374-83.

newspaper accounts of ex-Nazis who had surfaced after years in hiding.⁵³ In this story Richard Bryant recovers a chest from an Austrian lake. The chest supposedly contains a list of Nazi agents and collaborators. Bryant, understanding his precarious position, conceals the evidence but is killed by two men assigned to guard the lake. They are part of an underground Nazi network waiting for an opportune moment to serve their movement by using the contents of the chest.

A publishing house retains Bill Mattison, a young American attorney, to resolve a matter concerning Bryant and a proposed photographic book on Austrian lakes. The murderers think that Mattison is after the documents, so he is soon drawn into the chase, along with operatives representing the Americans, the British, the Austrians, the KGB, and the Nazis. He is attracted to the beautiful Elissa Lang but soon becomes suspicious of her, and eventually he learns that she is, in fact, a Soviet agent. Mattison then meets Lynn Conway, an employee of the publisher, also in Austria on business. The initial friendship leads to trust and love, and together they survive unscathed by intrigue, betrayal, kidnapping, and murder. One can certainly surmise from the settings of MacInnes' novels that communism was a threat throughout Europe. This threat underscored MacInnes' emphasis on vigilance everywhere.

Both Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy not only kept the commitment of the United States to the policy of containment but also expanded the concept. Eisenhower allowed the CIA to intervene in domestic policies of foreign countries and broadened

⁵³Barbara Horowitz, "Helen MacInnes," in *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction*, ed. Frank N. Magill (Pasadena, CA.: Salem Press, 1988), 1169.

its surveillance techniques; however, the Soviet's capture of U-2 pilot Frances Gary Powers embarrassed him. Kennedy, as well, faced major crises in Berlin and Cuba and further enmeshed the U.S. in Southeast Asia. Under Richard Nixon, as American troops were finally withdrawn from Vietnam, an opportunity for a new relationship with the communist states was created. This détente was the first substantial change in policy since the Cold War had begun and could have meant a decrease in the number of enemies for spy thriller novelists to expose.⁵⁴

However, Western society faced a new, and in some ways, more frightening adversary with the acceleration of international terrorism in the 1970s and 1980s. When the Palestine Liberation Organization kidnapped and killed eleven Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games, the world watched spellbound as television broadcasted the tragedy. The Palestinians continued their attacks against Israel's supporters, and other groups sprang up also, such as the Baader-Meinhof Gang in Germany and the Red Brigade in Italy. The older, more established Irish Republic Army also increased its attacks against the British government and its civilians.⁵⁵

In spite of détente, MacInnes retained her established patterns in her novels. Totalitarianism in the particular form of communism was still the enemy, but it had new allies. In *Message From Málaga* (1971), a terrorist organization attempts to

⁵⁴Freidman, *Fifty Year War*, 231-40, 271-82, 354-72, 382-94.

⁵⁵Thomas Raynor, *Terrorism: Past, Present, Future* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1987), 85-88, 95-97, 104-107, 112-20.

thwart a CIA scheme to get a Cuban defector out of Spain before the KGB can kill him. Once again the protagonist is an innocent bystander who becomes involved inadvertently in the situation. He joins forces with the CIA and defeats the enemy while exposing double agents, avoiding assassins, and taking part in car chases throughout Spain.

With some inspiration from contemporary headlines MacInnes used her standard formula in *The Snare Of The Hunter* (1974). She said she got the idea for the story after reading newspaper accounts about persecuted Czech writers and from the ordeal of the exiled Alexander Solzhenitsyn whose books were being smuggled to the West.⁵⁶ In this novel, Irana Kusak attempts to escape from Czechoslovakia and carries with her the manuscripts of her famous author-father Jarmoir Kusak.

Government agents ask David Mennery, music critic and Irana's former lover, to identify her. Mennery's involvement becomes more complicated as does the plot. The escape has been set up by the Soviet secret police, but Mennery and the British-American team of agents are able to foil enemy plans and bring Irana Kusak to safety.

The controversy over The Pentagon Papers provides one of the themes for *Agent In Place* (1976)—the question of a journalist's moral obligations to publish versus his duty to protect national security information. In this novel, disaster follows when a naive young reporter leaks confidential material to a Soviet agent. However, an amateur agent and the professionals are able not only to outwit their adversaries but to regain the secret data.

⁵⁶MacDonald, "MacInnes," 293.

MacInnes again exhibits her love and knowledge of art in *Prelude To Terror* (1978). The communist scheme is to fund worldwide subversion by defrauding and murdering rich art investors. Robert Renwick, a professional undercover agent, engages a New York art consultant named Colin Grant who is in Vienna on business to help unravel the plot. The heroine voices the book's argument: "There's a job to be done, a necessary job. Someone has to do it, we can't all sit back and watch the totalitarians take over . . . or else we'll all end up as regimented nonentities, scared to death to step out of line."⁵⁷ MacInnes reasserts her belief that all of the free world has a responsibility to learn about the threat to their citizens' security and freedom and to take action. Vigilance and response are the answers, not complacency.

There is a sense of personal loss that pervades the novel, also. As the novel begins, Colin Grant's wife is the victim of a senseless act of urban violence, and in the final confrontation with the enemy agents, his new love is killed. (Perhaps this is a reflection of MacInnes' own loss as her husband had died in 1978 and the book is dedicated to him.) At the close of the novel, Grant thinks to himself that he has to "just keep going . . . that's all you can do. That's all any of us can do."⁵⁸ This is a reminder to persevere for personal survival for not only her readers but also the author as well.

In three successive novels, MacInnes uses, as a protagonist, Robert Renwick who is a professional espionage agent. One might speculate that devising plausible

⁵⁷MacInnes, *Prelude to Terror*, 265.

⁵⁸Ibid., 368.

plots for amateurs and their having the fortitude to resolve the crisis was becoming a problem for MacInnes. MacInnes confronts the issue of international terrorism in *The Hidden Target* (1980) but remains true to her formula that the terrorists are really pawns of communists. The protagonist of the novel is not an amateur this time, but rather Robert Renwick, the professional agent who thwarted a communist plot involving international art fraud in *Prelude To Terror*. The NATO operator Renwick's assignment is to form an international anti-terrorist agency similar to Interpol.

In London, Renwick runs into Nina O'Connell who is a student there. O'Connell had a crush on Renwick when she was a teenager, but Renwick realized that he was too old for her then. A spark of interest still remains for both of them. Before they can resume their relationship, O'Connell and a friend join four other young people and two guides to travel by camper through Europe and Asia. The excursion provides a pretext for two terrorists posing as the tour guides to make contact with revolutionary elements along their route, to distribute funds, and to assess their potential for successfully completing future assignments. The group meets to begin their journey in Holland where they almost become the victims of a terrorist bomb. After this, Nina exclaims that terrorists are "Cowards...all of them! They leave a bomb and run. Oh, no, they don't get killed or mutilated... . How very brave—how noble!...Don't terrorists ever think of people?"⁵⁹ Terrorists are indeed vicious, but they are also naive. As Renwick explains to an associate, "If the

⁵⁹Helen MacInnes, *The Hidden Target* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1981), 83.

Communists can use them to create a revolutionary situation, so can other totalitarians... . It's the old delusion: you use me but I'm really using you; I'll deal with you when the revolution is won."⁶⁰ Terrorists may think they have their own independent agenda, but they are actually, according to MacInnes, only dupes to be used by communists or some other totalitarian regime. The new multi-national agency Interintell not only uncovers evidence of the real purpose of the trip but also of a plot to begin terrorist incidents in the United States. Renwick saves Nina from the terrorist leader Erik, and the other young tourists pledge to be cautious and vigilant in the future.

Erik escapes and Renwick leads an Interintell search for him in Africa in *Cloak Of Darkness* (1982). Erik begins working for corporations dealing in illegal arms and assassinations, and Renwick must not only warn those on the hit list but also seize another document that names those sponsoring the terrorist activities. MacInnes uses this novel as a continuing exposé of terrorism and an emphasis to her readers that evildoers can be successful only with the assistance of affluent sponsors.

By 1984, détente was over. President Ronald Regan viewed the Soviet Union as a belligerent and pernicious world power. He accused it of being an evil empire and called for the installation of a new missile system, the Strategic Defense Initiative.⁶¹ Even though for Helen MacInnes, the Cold War never subsided, she did

⁶⁰Ibid., 96.

⁶¹Richard Crockatt, *The Fifty Years War: The United States and the Soviet Union in World Politics, 1941-1991* (London: Routledge, 1995), 305-16.

refocus her attention to a communist bloc country in *Ride A Pale Horse* (1984).

Acting on the promise of an important interview at an international peace convocation, journalist Karen Cornell flies to Prague. She agrees to carry top-secret documents back to Washington, but these documents are actually part of an intricate Soviet plot to use disinformation to break up the Western alliances. Agent Peter Bristow and Cornell must neutralize the communist plan, but moles in the CIA, double agents, and ulterior motives within the intelligence bureaucracy make resolving the task very complicated.

Ride A Pale Horse was the last novel in MacInnes' long and distinguished career. She died in September of 1985. Throughout four decades of popularity, MacInnes maintained the same essential elements in her novel. Her work was characterized by the triumph of good over evil, the descriptions of fascinating locales, a lack of explicit sex and violence, and the portrayal of strong, intelligent, assertive women. In *Above Suspicion*, Frances has to climb a mountain with her husband with two Nazis in pursuit. The Nazis close in with their weapons, but the wife saves the husband from being shot.⁶² *The Snare of the Hunter* contains a scene in which an American female agent and Irina Kusak, a Czechoslovakian defector, confront two killers on a sheer mountain ledge. They wound one of the assailants and cause the other to fall to his death.⁶³ Lynn Conway, Bill Mathison's love interest in *The Salzburg Connection*, exhibits a very assertive attitude toward agents involved in the

⁶²MacInnes, *Above Suspicion*, 116-25.

⁶³MacInnes, *The Snare of the Hunter*, 304.

case when they try to be overprotective, and she insists on remaining involved in the case despite the danger.⁶⁴ All of these ingredients combined to make MacInnes a highly successful author in a male-dominated genre. Critic Mary K. Boyd noted that her appeal was primarily to women because of the romance involved in each novel. However, her portrayal of the protagonist as strong, athletic, and resourceful would no doubt attract a male audience, too, according to Boyd.⁶⁵

Both Cold War spymasters Richard Helms and William Sullivan complimented MacInnes on her portrayals. After reading *The Double Image*, Helms wrote that:

I enjoyed it thoroughly. You have a remarkable ability to keep the action plausible and within the limits of legitimate tradecraft while at the same time avoiding what has become a rather fashionable author's device of ascribing base motives to the behavior of even the most heroic characters. Indeed, it is difficult to understand how so many persons in the West can claim to believe that we conduct this kind of activity for pleasure or as an end in itself.⁶⁶

Sullivan likewise was extremely enthusiastic about MacInnes' work:

I just knew that you would write an outstanding novel. By so doing, you have rendered, I think, a remarkably fine public service. This book will help to educate the American people to the stark realities of espionage operations. As you know, these operations go on day in and day out and they have only one purpose, and that is to damage the national defense posture of our country.⁶⁷

⁶⁴MacInnes, *The Salzburg Connection*, 273, 307, 329.

⁶⁵Mary K. Boyd, "The Enduring Appeal of the Spy Thrillers of Helen MacInnes," *Clues: A Journal of Detection* 4 (Fall/Winter 1983): 66.

⁶⁶Richard Helms to Helen MacInnes, 14 January 1966, MacInnes Papers, Princeton RB & SC.

⁶⁷William C. Sullivan to Helen MacInnes, 23 April 1968, MacInnes Papers, Princeton RB & SC.

They took great delight that a message so crucial in their world was delivered to the public in such an entertaining fashion by Helen MacInnes.

All of Helen MacInnes' novels were admonitions for the public. They warned of totalitarian threats from Nazis, communists and terrorists. She reiterated her beliefs in a reply to a fan's letter in 1952:

Such action, secret and disguised, as Germany followed during the '30s, has recently been duplicated by Russia who has never disbanded her armies and has gone on increasing her military strength, while she puts out peace propaganda to lull us to sleep. Like Germany, she tells her people that other nations are her enemies. Like Germany, she has taken over neighboring territories and called it liberating them. And so, again, we are faced with this terrible situation: that one nation threatens the security of the world through secret re-arming and peace propaganda. Our choice is as unpleasant as the choice that was given Britain and France in 1938. Either we stay unprepared and then be at the mercy of a highly-armed state, who has lied so constantly that it would be dangerous to believe her; or we have got to prepare to stand against her, with the prayer that our strength will make Russia realize that war does not pay. Against unarmed or untrained people, war pays most cruelly as we saw in the case of Holland, Norway, and all the smaller countries in 1940. Without help from the bigger countries who started to prepare themselves to face Germany in 1938, these smaller counties—however brave—would still be part of Greater Germany as it was called.⁶⁸

Perhaps she did preach too much as some critics suggested, and her portraits of people and situations may have been too simple and formulaic.⁶⁹ It is true, the bad guys were usually thoroughly wicked, and the endings were happy as the good guy and true love triumphed. In spite of these reviews, MacInnes' legions of readers remained loyal and appreciative of her consistent message. In the worlds that MacInnes created,

⁶⁸Helen MacInnes to Mrs. Wilson, 4 March 1952, MacInnes Papers, Princeton RB & SC.

⁶⁹MacDonald, "MacInnes," 291.

evil was not defeated by accident. It was a continuing menace, whether in the form of fascism, communism, or terrorism. In MacInnes' formula only courage, intelligence, and persistence could overcome it. If justice were going to prevail, then each individual had to be responsible and accountable. The message certainly got through to her readers as exemplified by the reaction of one after reading *Neither Five Nor Three*:

Your novel sounded a bugle call to me, now instead of taking in the printed or spoken word as gospel, I shall sift these words and accept or reject them only after thought...your book was so good that it has aroused all my patriotic instincts. Thank you for giving us such important information in such an interesting way. Your characters and action seem more than the printed word, the reader has the feeling of living in the book.⁷⁰

In *Prelude to Terror*, the heroine states not only the book's theme but also the author's lifelong contention: "There's a job to be done, a necessary job. Someone has to do it, we can't all sit back and watch the totalitarians take over... or else we'll all end up regimented nonentities, scared to death to step out of line... ." ⁷¹ Helen MacInnes rang the alarm bells about evil in the world because she was optimistic that strong, resolute people of good will would rise to meet the challenge.

⁷⁰Jean Hall Dinsmore to Helen MacInnes, 25 April 1951, MacInnes Papers, Princeton RB & SC.

⁷¹MacInnes, *Prelude to Terror*, 265.

CHAPTER 3
DOROTHY GILMAN PRESENTS EMILY POLLIFAX
AND THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING

From whatever perspective one views it, the decade of the 1960s was certainly turbulent. For some, it was the dawning of the Age of Aquarius that would be more egalitarian and inspiring. Others, however, thought that exhibitionism, excess, and immediate gratification ruled the day. Sit-ins, freedom rides, *Catch-22*, *The Feminine Mystique*, the March on Washington, Bob Dylan, *Dr. Strangelove*, Berkeley, Vietnam, Woodstock, and the sexual revolution made the 1960s a watershed decade. There were both losses and new beginnings.¹

Such was the case in many individual lives, such as the life of Dorothy Gilman. In 1965 after twenty years, her marriage broke up. Gilman did not have very much money to support herself and her two children even though she was an award-winning author of young adult literature. She decided to write adult fiction both for livelihood and escape and wanted to write about a woman surviving exploits that she herself would have liked to have had. The idea for her primary character Emily Pollifax originated in Gilman's childhood. Her father was a minister and almost fifty years old when Dorothy was born. Many of the family friends, therefore, were the older ladies of the congregation. They were somewhat eccentric but

¹James Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 442-49.

engaging and became supplementary mothers with formidable influence on her life.²

Dorothy Gilman grew up reading adventure books and imagining stories of espionage. When she began her new fiction venture, Gilman created a means for her heroine Mrs. Emily Pollifax to join the C.I.A. Later, as the agency's prestige declined in real life, Gilman changed the name in her novels to "Department." Mrs. Pollifax was a recurring character in a series of spy adventure novels in which good triumphs over evil, women are resolute in the face of danger, older people have a useful place in society, goodness and kindness are valued qualities, and through resourcefulness and lucid reasoning seemingly impossible problems can be solved. The novels also express the author's belief in a certain spiritual force working within and around people to bring about a more harmonious existence. Gilman emphasized this belief in *A New Kind of Country*, an autobiographical account of her experiences living alone in a New England village:

The best and the unique turnings in life are never forced, their roots have been growing in us underground for a long time, without our conscious notice, awaiting...a chance encounter, a phrase that haunts the ear, a meeting, an invitation, an insight, or revelation. All life asks of us is that we stay open to clues.³

According to Gilman, an inner resource is available to everyone and for her it is exhibited through ESP, mysticism, and Oriental means of healing.⁴

²*Contemporary Authors: New Revision Series*, "Dorothy Gilman."

³Dorothy Gilman, *A New Kind of Country* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1978), 71.

⁴*Ibid.*, 45-92.

Dorothy Gilman introduced her character Emily Pollifax in *The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax* in 1966. The action of this novel takes place in Mexico and Albania and provides the settings for exploring the issues of communist subversion in South America as well as the dispute between the Soviet Union and China over which power was the true inheritor of Lenin's legacy. Cold War problems form the basis of several of the Mrs. Pollifax adventures, but she also becomes involved in terrorism, political assassination, and revolution.⁵ All of the Pollifax stories present the reader with current world problems in a meaningful, yet sometimes lighthearted, way. Her first adventure involves the contest for global supremacy with players from Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and the United States.

In the mid-1960s a significant schism developed in Russian-Chinese relations as a result of ideological differences regarding which country would prevail in particular global domains. This schism provided the historical context in which Gilman wrote her first novel. Cuba became a focal point in the struggle, with Fidel Castro caught in the middle. He felt closer to China's ideology but had a stronger economic relationship to the Soviet Union. At one point Castro had to warn Chinese advisors and technicians against disseminating anti-Soviet material on the island and attempting to recruit Cuban soldiers as spies.⁶

Communist bloc dissension also created an opportunity for China to expand its influence in Eastern Europe. The Balkans' history of ethnic turmoil determined

⁵"Communists: The Deepening Split," Newsweek, 22 March 1965, 30.

⁶"Cuba: Fidel vs. Mao," Newsweek, 21 February 1966, 56-57.

Albania's relationship with Yugoslavia and thus with the rest of the communist world. Each country accused the other of fostering internal divisions across the border. The Soviet-Yugoslav relationship also fractured, and during this time, Albania received protection from Moscow. When Khrushchev resolved the dispute, the Soviet-Albania friendship regressed, and Albania looked for another protector. Mao Zedong was more than willing to fill that role. When the Soviets withdrew their economic and technical aid to Albania, Chinese advisors soon took over. The Soviet Union and Albania broke off diplomatic relations and Albania left the Warsaw Pact in 1968.⁷

Into this volatile, dangerous world steps the naive and innocent sixty-one year old Mrs. Emily Pollifax of New Brunswick, New Jersey. She is a depressed, bored, and lonely widow who believes that she has outlived her usefulness. Her grown children live elsewhere, and she abhors volunteer work, yet she desires to live to her full potential. Inspired by a newspaper story about a woman becoming a Broadway actress at sixty-three, Mrs. Pollifax leaves the next day for Washington, D.C, where she plans to fulfill a dream of her own—to become a spy. She obtains a letter of introduction from her congressman and then proceeds to C.I.A. headquarters at Langley, Virginia, and asks for a job interview. The perplexed personnel officer does not really know what to do with this lady, but another problem calls the interviewer out of the room before he can make a decision.

At the time of her arrival, Carstairs, a supervisor for covert operations, is

⁷Thomas S. Arms, *Encyclopedia of the Cold War* (New York: Facts on File, 1994), 10.

meeting with his assistant, Bishop. They need someone to pose as a tourist in Mexico City and to bring back an important package. It should be a simple courier assignment. Tirpak, another agent, will send a microfilm containing very important information about the infiltration of communism into South America. The courier's job is to retrieve the microfilm and bring it to the United States.

After reviewing the files of experienced agents, Bishop arranges an interview for Carstairs with Charlotte Webster for 2:00 P.M. When Carstairs enters the room, he finds Mrs. Pollifax still waiting and immediately believes that she is perfect for the mission. Carstairs proceeds to outline the undertaking, and Mrs. Pollifax enthusiastically agrees to go. Later, Bishop and Carstairs realize they have interviewed the wrong person but decide to send Mrs. Pollifax anyway.⁸

Mrs. Pollifax flies to Mexico City as a conventional tourist. However, on a certain date, she is to enter the Parrot bookstore, exchange a prescribed coded message with the proprietor, and receive a package. On impulse and against orders, Mrs. Pollifax visits the shop several days in advance of her arranged date. The novice agent engages the owner, Señor De Gamez, in a conversation and buys a book. De Gamez also gives Mrs. Pollifax a book about solitaire and a deck of playing cards. After leaving, Mrs. Pollifax decides that it was a mistake to visit the shop prematurely and waits until the appointed time to return. When she does so, however, there is another man there who also claims to be Señor De Gamez.

⁸Dorothy Gilman, *The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), 5-24.

Suspicious about the new man's explanation for there being two proprietors and the fact that he does not recognize the code, Mrs. Pollifax lingers and naively accepts a cup of tea. The drink contains a sedative. Later Mrs. Pollifax awakens to find herself tied back-to-back with a man named Farrell. He tells her that their guards are Chinese and that there are many more Chinese in Cuba who have been sent over by Mao Zedong.⁹ They conclude that their predicament involves more countries than Mexico.

Back in Langley, Carstairs and Bishop receive a report about the real De Gamez's murder and attempt to locate Mrs. Pollifax. She cannot be found, and her hotel room shows evidence of having been searched. Also troubling is the knowledge that the De Gamez imposter appears to be General Perdido, Mao's hand-picked man for China's South American operations. The C.I.A. believes that Mao's ultimate goal is to bring Castro's relationship closer to China and away from the Soviet Union.

The guards give Farrell and Mrs. Pollifax food, but it puts them to sleep. After waking they realize that they have slept for a very long time, are in an airplane, and are descending into a country of snow-capped mountains. On landing, two Chinese guards take them from the plane. The presence of the Chinese and the topography leads Farrell to surmise that they are in Albania. Mrs. Pollifax questions why there would be Chinese in Albania, and Farrell provides the background intelligence. He informs his new colleague that when Khrushchev denounced Stalin, China and Albania disapproved. Russia punished Albania by withdrawing aid,

⁹Ibid., 24-45.

technicians, and military assistance. China then seized the opportunity to grab a foothold in Europe.¹⁰ Mrs. Pollifax responds to this knowledge by admitting that:

I didn't know. The very idea—and to think that I subscribe to *Time* magazine. I really must stop skipping the Balkan news. Americans should be aware of foreign affairs and understand that those events affect them immeasurably.¹¹

Gilman is clearly admonishing Americans for their lack of knowledge about world affairs.

The guards escort the two of them to a remote prison garrison atop a mountain perched on the edge of cliffs that overlook a pastoral valley. Major Vassovic, the commander, places his two new prisoners in the same cell. Although they have been searched, Mrs. Pollifax still possesses her cards and some trinkets bought for her grandchildren, and she passes the time by playing solitaire until time for her interrogation. There she recognizes the second Señor De Gamez who tells her that he is General Raoul Perdido. When Mrs. Pollifax demands an explanation, the general accuses her of spying. Mrs. Pollifax maintains that she is only an innocent tourist, but Perdido recounts her suspicious actions in the bookstore. Mrs. Pollifax replies that she was only being friendly.¹²

When she is returned to the cell, Mrs. Pollifax confides to Farrell the nature of her assignment, and he admits to being an agent for Carstairs, too. Perdido had captured him by sending a false message supposedly from De Gamez. Farrell is next

¹⁰Ibid., 50-58.

¹¹Ibid., 59.

¹²Ibid., 60-74.

to be interrogated, but ill-advisedly he tries to escape, is shot in the arm, and breaks his leg jumping from the cliff.

The resourceful Mrs. Pollifax sets the leg with the assistance of a guard, Lulash, who had previously worked in a hospital. Later Mrs. Pollifax goes with Lulash to the guard room to look for aspirin, and she notices guns and ammunition in an unlocked cabinet; this is information that she hopes will be valuable later.

A new prisoner joins the two and professes that he does not understand English, but he seems suspicious. When Lulash brings in the food trays, he gives Mrs. Pollifax a book about Albania written in English and dated 1919. In spite of its age, the volume does contain maps that help determine the prison's location. Major Vassovic allows Mrs. Pollifax short daily walks outside, and she takes the book with her in an attempt to orient herself from the cliff and to plan an escape route.

Mrs. Pollifax also obtains permission to remove the bullet from Farrell's arm and does it with the assistance of the new prisoner. This new prisoner is in reality Colonel Nexdhet of the secret police, and once he realizes that the two are not fooled, he admits his true identity. The colonel observes that Mrs. Pollifax performs very well under pressure and that General Perdido probably underestimates her.¹³

The next morning Mrs. Pollifax begins to plan for the escape as she takes her walk. Colonel Nexdhet is her escort and points out a nearby missile site being built by the Chinese. The colonel warns Mrs. Pollifax:

¹³Ibid., 75-108.

The Chinese are very patient, Mrs. Pollifax, they build for the future. They are not taken seriously yet as a major power, but see what they have already accomplished! They have fought and won a small slice of India. They have their finger in a dozen pies in Southeast Asia. They are proving extremely successful in infiltrating Latin America - every communist party there has its Mao-ist wing. They now have trade relations with most of Western Europe and with Canada, Australia, and Japan. They have exploded a primitive atom bomb. But most of all, they are here to help and to protect my country, which you must not forget is a European country. The Chinese have arrived in Europe.¹⁴

Mrs. Pollifax displays her ingenuity as she collects items needed for her escape: a compass, the weapons seen earlier in the cabinet, and a crutch for Farrell. They even get help from Colonel Nexdhet who is actually a Russian agent. Mrs. Pollifax questions the colonel's motives since both Albania and Russia are communist countries. According to the Russian spy, there is more involved in the relationship than ideology and "between the two are conflicts, alarms, suspicions."¹⁵ It is apparent that Mrs. Pollifax is doubtful about the situation and naive about international politics when she replies: "I am wondering if it is quite ethical to let you help us. It feels terribly unpatriotic."¹⁶ However, the worldly Farrell attempts to reassure her by pointing out that politics makes strange bedfellows. Mrs. Pollifax is not entirely convinced but has no choice but to accept the assistance.¹⁷ Gilman has Mrs. Pollifax representing those Americans who desire distinct lines between friends and enemies. Farrell symbolizes those who take a pragmatic approach when forming alliances.

¹⁴Ibid., 112-13.

¹⁵Ibid., 140.

¹⁶Ibid., 142.

¹⁷Ibid.

Farrell, in spite of his leg being in a splint, Mrs. Pollifax, and a mystery prisoner from the cell next door make their escape. They maneuver down the mountainside to the valley below and seek refuge in a peasant hut. The inhabitants are a family of goatherders who further facilitate the three in eluding capture.¹⁸ The remainder of the escape involves stealing an automobile from the guards of a convict work crew, faking a car wreck to throw off the pursuers, shooting one of the search party, and hiding in a cave along a lake bank. After a short rest, they paddle across the lake to Yugoslavia while holding on to a log, pirate first a rowboat and then a sailboat, and have another shootout before finally being picked up by a sea-going tug.

Rested and back in Washington, D.C., Mrs. Pollifax and Carstairs meet to review the events of this extraordinary adventure. The mystery prisoner turns out to be Dr. Lee Tsung Howell who had been kidnapped by the Chinese two years previously. Dr. Howell's research focuses on developing a method of extracting protein from a common weed. This process, if successful, would be of immense value to the Chinese. Carstairs also tells Mrs. Pollifax that De Gamez had been given a photograph of her. The shop owner recognized his new contact, knew that he was under surveillance, and probably took that opportunity to slip Mrs. Pollifax the microfilm ahead of schedule. But where could it be? Then Mrs. Pollifax remembers the playing cards that she kept with her throughout all of her harrowing adventures.

¹⁸Ibid., 131-68.

Analysis of the cards in the lab reveals the microfilm.¹⁹

The *Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax* illustrates the power that can come from having faith in one's self, from being resourceful, from being assertive, and from being patient in seeking solutions to problems. Mrs. Pollifax also proves that a person does not have to retire from life even though she might be of retirement age. There is a definite warning in these novels to be vigilant concerning the rising Chinese Communist power. Dorothy Gilman's message is that the Chinese are a formidable threat in both South America and Europe and work in competition with, not in concert with, the Soviet Union.

In her next book, *The Amazing Mrs. Pollifax* (1970) once again good overcomes evil through the courage and determination of ordinary people performing extraordinary deeds. Gilman manifests her belief that there are forces within the world working against freedom and self-determination, but there are also greater forces moving towards harmony which require discernment to recognize. Mrs. Pollifax returns to New Brunswick to resume her normal activities and to take karate lessons. As she relaxes before departing for a garden club meeting, the fearless lady reads a newspaper article about a communist agent, Magda Ferenir Sabo, who defected to Turkey and then vanished. Sabo had a worldwide reputation for her beauty in the 1930s, was a companion to Mussolini, and was married to, or had affairs with, a French playboy, a Nazi official, and a Hungarian communist writer. No one has heard from Sabo for many years.

¹⁹Ibid., 169-216.

Before Mrs. Pollifax can leave for her meeting, Carstairs telephones. He needs her for a new assignment and she must leave immediately. A car is to pick her up in twenty-two minutes. The C.I.A. operations agent wants her to go to Istanbul to be the contact person who will relay a passport when Magda Sabo reappears. Sabo is in reality an American agent and has already been in touch with the C.I.A. Carstairs wants Sabo to meet someone that no one else knows because one agent has already been killed. Mrs. Pollifax will be doing another simple courier job in the guise of an innocent tourist. For her protection, though, she will be shadowed by C.I.A. professional Henry Miles and can call upon Dr. Guillaume Belleaux, a local retired criminologist, if there is an emergency. Mrs. Pollifax must merely go to the Hotel Itep each evening with a copy of *Gone With the Wind* and wait in the lobby.²⁰

On the flight from London to Istanbul, Mrs. Pollifax's seat companion is a bright English model who hopes to see her brother Colin. Since her assignment will not permit her to stay in the city, the young woman asks Mrs. Pollifax to give a message to Colin. After checking in at the Itep, Mrs. Pollifax goes to Colin's place of employment, Ramsey Enterprises, owned by his uncle. The company is presently in Turkey making a documentary film about the country. Mrs. Pollifax becomes easily acquainted with Colin, and he gives the gregarious agent a ride back to the hotel and waits for her outside while she keeps her appointment. Afterwards, they plan to have dinner together.²¹

²⁰Dorothy Gilman, *The Amazing Mrs. Pollifax* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), 1-18.

²¹*Ibid.*, 19-41.

While Mrs. Pollifax is waiting in the hotel lobby, a woman enters and sits down. However, she mysteriously disappears in a short time. The officers believe that Mrs. Pollifax is the mystery woman's accomplice and escort her to headquarters for interrogation. When she returns to her room, there is a phone message from Colin that says he has her lost package. Intrigued by the note, Mrs. Pollifax proceeds once again to Ramsey Enterprises to discover that the package is Magda Sabo herself. Colin had noticed the strange activities around the hotel and hid Magda in his jeep. Mrs. Pollifax and Magda verify their identities to each other, and Magda describes being pursued by Russians, Bulgarians, and kidnapers of unknown nationality. She insists that it is imperative that she get to Yozgat to recover some information she brought with her. Two thugs, Stephan and Otto, appear and take Magda and the jeep and leave behind the body of Mrs. Pollifax's shadow, Henry Miles.²²

Colin offers to use the company van to go after Magda and her abductors. Mrs. Pollifax accepts but decides they must also take Miles' body to avoid any complications with the police. Now is the time to enlist the aid of Dr. Belleaux. At his mansion, however, they discover a party in progress, the jeep outside, and Magda being held prisoner inside. With the resourceful use of a movie prop gun from the van and a karate chop to Otto's throat, Colin and Mrs. Pollifax extricate Magda. Their best course of action now seems to be to locate Colin's uncle who is in Erzurum for a filming, but they must leave Miles somewhere and a cemetery is the logical choice. At the cemetery, a shabbily-dressed man accosts them and threatens to expose

²²Ibid., 43-64.

them if he is not taken along. The mystery person whom Mrs. Pollifax assumes to be a thief or opium smuggler introduces himself as Sandar. Fortunately he does know how to travel the back roads, and the group reaches Ankara by driving through the night. Dr. Belleaux's men are still in pursuit and catch up via an airplane. The police, too, are searching for the van.²³

During the drive, Magda recounts her story of wanting to retire and of being smuggled across the border by her gypsy friends. Sandar also has friends who provide clothes to disguise everyone. They leave the van and take a seven-hour bus ride to Yozgat in order to locate the gypsy camp. Dr. Belleaux is, however, waiting for the wanderers and captures everyone but Colin. The traitor takes everyone to a secluded house to question Magda concerning the location of the classified information that she brought out with her after which he plans to kill all three.²⁴

Colin searches the surrounding neighborhoods for Magda and Mrs. Pollifax. One of Gilman's favorite themes involves a character whose life changes as a result of a challenging and dangerous episode. Typically the character has some personal flaw to overcome and does so when confronted with evil by drawing upon a previously unknown inner strength.²⁵ In this case, Colin's sister told Mrs. Pollifax that Colin suffered from a lack of confidence and seemed to be adrift in life.²⁶ Throughout this

²³Ibid., 65-99.

²⁴Ibid., 105-32.

²⁵Mary Helen Becker, "Dorothy Gilman," in *Twentieth-Century Crime and Mystery Writers*, ed. Leslie Henderson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 443.

²⁶Gilman, *The Amazing Mrs. Pollifax*, 23.

adventure, Colin's self-esteem grows, and in this endeavor, he exhibits remarkable courage and resourcefulness. He finds both the house and the gypsy camp, happens upon his Uncle Hu in a local cafe (who agrees to help Colin), and enlists the aid of a local girl and her friends in arranging a rescue for Mrs. Pollifax, Sandar, and Magda.²⁷

Afterwards, the three escapees, Colin, and Hu take off in the van, but they do not really know where to go. Mrs. Pollifax decides that their destination should be the nearest airport which is about fifty miles away at Kayseri. Mrs. Pollifax still has the passports, and Magda can board a plane to get out of the country. Miraculously, Uncle Hu discovers that he knows Magda. She helped him break out of a German prisoner of war camp during World War II, and afterwards they became lovers for a brief time. He thought that Magda had died in the war. When the refugees stop for the night at a gypsy camp, Dr. Belleaux is already there having arrived by helicopter. He leads the camp to believe that it is Mrs. Pollifax who is holding Magda prisoner. The quick-witted lady agent, with the intercession of a young boy, convinces the camp matron of the group's true relationship to Magda. The lad is also Magda's grandson, and he is the information that she wanted to retrieve. The purpose of the escape was to afford him an opportunity to grow up in freedom. The gypsies assist in yet another escape through the use of a drugged potion the effects of which last about eight hours.²⁸

²⁷Ibid., 133-58.

²⁸Ibid., 159-99.

During this entire time Magda is unconscious from the drugs and beatings administered while she has been Belleaux's prisoner in the house. She wakes up and recognizes the new member of the party, Hu Ramsey:

She thought that just when life appeared to have no discernible pattern there could arrive a coincidence so startling that one could envision forces tugging, arranging, balancing, contriving, and contracting all the arrivals and departures of life.²⁹

Once again, certain occurrences are beyond the realm of mere coincidence.

The fugitives travel through the night by wagon to within a short distance of Kayseri. They hide during the day among some ancient ruins, and the next morning they make a dash for the airport only to be overtaken once again by Dr. Belleaux in his helicopter. The Turkish police also arrive and fighting among all three parties breaks out. In the confusion, Mrs. Pollifax, Colin, and Magda manage to board the helicopter. Mrs. Pollifax unbelievably and awkwardly flies to the airport where Magda boards a flight to London and freedom.

The Turkish authorities arrest Mrs. Pollifax for the murder of Henry Miles, but Sandar confirms her story. Sandar is actually a lieutenant in Turkish intelligence, and the night of the party he had Dr. Belleaux's house under surveillance. He saw what happened and decided to follow Mrs. Pollifax and Colin.

As the story concludes, Magda starts a new life, Dr. Belleaux is in prison, Mrs. Pollifax returns safely to New Brunswick, and Carstairs and Bishop have no clue as to all the adventures that have transpired. The reader is left to wonder about what

²⁹Ibid., 195.

happens to the grandson, if Dr. Hu and Magda rekindle their relationship, and whether Colin goes back to find the young lady in Kozgat.³⁰

Reading this novel, one can perceive the underlying tensions that abounded in Turkey during this time. In the early days of the Cold War and the Truman Doctrine, Turkey maintained a solid adherence to United States policy. Geographically, Turkey was integral to the containment of Soviet expansionism.³¹ Turkey received \$3 billion in aid from the United States between 1947 and 1960 and joined NATO in 1951.³² Turkey supported this partnership by sending the second-largest contingent of troops to Korea after the United States.³³ Middle Eastern nationalists resented the U.S. presence,³⁴ and during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, the U.S. removed missiles from Turkey without notification. Two years later Turkey requested an invasion of Cyprus to protect Turkish Cypriots, but President Johnson denied it. As a result, Turkey's relationship with the U.S. cooled, and the relationship with the Soviet Union became closer.³⁵

The Amazing Mrs. Pollifax reflects the shifting moods and allegiances of 1970s Turkey. Turkey was still highly important to the worldwide policy of containment,

³⁰Ibid., 200-34.

³¹Arms, *Cold War*, 554.

³²William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, Colo.: Western Press, 1994), 260.

³³Arms, *Cold War*, 554.

³⁴Cleveland, *Modern Middle East*, 261.

³⁵Arms, *Cold War*, 555.

and one can surmise that a purpose of Gilman's book is to better inform Americans about a country vital to U.S. interests as she did with Albania in *The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax*. The novel also demonstrates the Turkish attitude of suspicion of American motives and the tendency to not immediately discount those with viewpoints that oppose America.

One needs to refer to a map of Turkey when reading *The Amazing Mrs. Pollifax* to keep track of all the places named, but that is a characteristic of all of Gilman's books. She filled her novels with cultural and geographic detail. She traveled to see firsthand all of her settings except Albania. Gilman was too poor at the time and knew that no American could go there anyway.³⁶

Bulgaria, another unlikely destination for most Americans, was the scene for the third Mrs. Pollifax novel. Bulgaria earned the reputation as the Soviet Union's most loyal satellite. However in 1965, some members of the Bulgarian Communist Party attempted to overthrow Todor Zhivko who had the support of Nikita Khrushchev. The party wanted Bulgaria to have a greater measure of independence from the Soviet Union. The plot failed, and Zhivko re-emphasized Bulgaria's alliance with the Soviet Union.³⁷ It was against this background of European Cold War tensions and unrest within the communist bloc that Dorothy Gilman wrote *The Elusive Mrs. Pollifax* (1971).

The story begins with Mrs. Pollifax and a group of friends waiting at her

³⁶Peacock, "Gilman," *Contemporary Authors*, 136.

³⁷Arms, *Cold War*, 85.

apartment for her night-blooming cereus to open. Meanwhile, somewhere in New York City, Carstairs and Bishop meet in a run-down hotel with Shipkov, an agent recently returned from Bulgaria. The spy reports that several underground agents are in danger and that he only barely escaped arrest himself. Someone now must enter Bulgaria secretly carrying new identification papers and passports to the others. Shipkov also warns Carstairs and Bishop about General Ignatov who has a reputation for being more repressive than the current regime and who has forged alliances with elements of the secret police that may help him gain power. General Ignatov has also impressed the Soviets with his command of the Bulgarian troops that invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Carstairs decides reluctantly to send Mrs. Pollifax on another mission. She does not always follow the rules, but he hopes this time it will be different. Once again she is the innocent tourist, and her contact will be in a particular tailor shop where she will place an order for a unique vest. Carstairs also instructs Mrs. Pollifax to contact an independent tour guide and freelance correspondent, Carleton Bemish, who will offer her more independence of movement than a government escort.

The C.I.A. agents still do not quite trust Mrs. Pollifax, therefore, unbeknownst to her, she will also transport some other papers in her coat lining to another agent. At some point there will be a switch of coats supposedly without Mrs. Pollifax's knowledge. Bishop is upset because this could put Mrs. Pollifax in too much danger. Carstairs reminds Bishop that "We're heels in the C.I.A. ... outcasts and sinners ... try to remember that." But Bishop retorts, "Outcasts, yes. Sinners possibly. Heels

obviously. But I thought we were at least gentlemen."³⁸ This passage represents the innocence with which many Americans viewed world affairs. According to Gilman, there must be a standard of behavior even in the spy world to which one must adhere. Bishop knows one must be ruthless with enemies, but expects loyalty within the agency.

Mrs. Pollifax flies to Europe, and while waiting for a plane to transfer to Bulgaria, she observes some young people in the airport who are on a self-organized European tour arguing about whether to include Bulgaria. Three of the group are more noticeable. Debby is an extremely attractive young lady; Nikki is overbearing and insistent about Bulgaria; and Philip appears to be very ill.

After her arrival in the capital city, conflict ensues between Mrs. Pollifax and Nevena, the representative from the government's tourist agency. Mrs. Pollifax rejects the offer of a quick tour of the city pleading the need for rest. However, she goes first to the tailor shop and then to Bemish's apartment. He is no longer working as a guide because he expects to receive a large sum of money soon. As Mrs. Pollifax leaves, her suspicion is aroused as Nikki arrives. Back at the hotel, Mrs. Pollifax encounters Debby who is frantic because Philip has been taken into custody by the police at the airport. Her companions have left the country, but Debby remains to help Philip. Mrs. Pollifax escorts Debby to the American Embassy to request intervention for Philip's release. However, the official is more concerned

³⁸Dorothy Gilman, *The Elusive Mrs. Pollifax* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971), 28.

about the hippie image of Debby because the Bulgarians favor more conservative clothing.³⁹

Mrs. Pollifax is in the middle of too many peculiar circumstances. She thinks that she is being followed; an intruder has invaded her room during the night; Nikki's visit to Bemish and her overall behavior is questionable; and Philip's arrest has no clear reason. Debby stays with Mrs. Pollifax in her room, and again a man enters while they sleep. Awakened by the intruder, a struggle results, and Debby suffers a wound. In spite of this, the next morning she accompanies Mrs. Pollifax to a small town called Tarnovo where the elusive agent will meet her underground contact.

Their trip is a harrowing one. Not only are they followed, but someone also has sabotaged their car which almost causes them to plummet off the side of a mountain. Mrs. Pollifax and Debby finish the journey riding double on a motorcycle. During their adventure, they also have an opportunity to discuss not only Philip's predicament but also his background. He is the son of Peter Trenda, president of an American oil company. Bemish and an associate abduct Mrs. Pollifax and Debby and take them to some ruins outside of town where the two will be murdered. Bemish has made plans that the two women have jeopardized, so he decides they must be eliminated. However, two of the underground agents who have been watching Mrs. Pollifax kill the two kidnappers instead. Mrs. Pollifax reflects upon the bits of information that she has gathered and the plot becomes clear. Bemish's wife Stella is the sister of Peter Trenda, Philip's father. Philip's imprisonment is part of a scheme

³⁹Ibid., 29-74.

to extort money from Peter; however, Nikki's involvement is yet to be explained.

Bemish attempted to murder Mrs. Pollifax because he feared she would figure out the plan.

Many problems have to be resolved in a short time. Mrs. Pollifax decides that Philip must be rescued from prison. Additionally, Tsanko, the leader of the underground, and one of those who helped Mrs. Pollifax at the ruins, and his compatriots must get their passports. Mrs. Pollifax discovers the papers (counterfeit currency) sewn into the lining of her coat but is perplexed as to whom it should go and how. She must also continue to avoid Nevena, the government tour guide, who attempts to restrict Mrs. Pollifax's junkets.

Mrs. Pollifax enlists the aid of Tsanko and his comrades in freeing Philip. They have doubts about the enterprise because they are not really equipped physically nor are they trained for the task. Mrs. Pollifax inspires them, though, with her resourcefulness and positive attitude. Mrs. Pollifax questions Tsanko's motives, but he maintains that he is a good communist and supports the Russians. He appreciates the protection, peace, and prosperity but fears men like General Ignatov. Tsanko wants his country to progress.⁴⁰ He assures Mrs. Pollifax that the Bulgarians and Americans "are of different cultures on the outside, but inside we are alike."⁴¹

With the help of a group of ordinary people each of whom contributes in some measure to the overall scheme, the escape succeeds. Philip uses one of the passports

⁴⁰Ibid., 125-45.

⁴¹Ibid., 207.

to get out of Bulgaria, while Tsanko manages to discredit Ignatov by planting the counterfeit money in his house. Again Mrs. Pollifax notes the guidance of a higher power as she speaks to Tsanko before they depart:

I've had the feeling we rush toward something—some kind of Armageddon—set into motion long ago. There are so many people in the world, and so much destruction. I was astonished when I first heard that a night-blooming cereus blooms only once a year and always at midnight. It implies such intelligence somewhere.⁴²

The blessings of this superior intelligence are available to mankind, according to Gilman, if only people will be receptive to it. Through this power things work out for good, seemingly impaired people accomplish extraordinary feats when encouraged and given a chance, and people around the world find that inside human beings are all alike.

Gilman also speaks to both sides of the generation gap. By the late 1960s, a significant counterculture of young people had emerged in America that opposed the Vietnam War, accepted drug and sexual experimentation, and distrusted authority.⁴³ Mrs. Pollifax's friend Debby is a member of this movement in some aspects, as she finds herself estranged from her parents and upset that her new friend and confidant actually works for the C.I.A. Reflecting upon the matter, Debby concludes that:

Her problem with Mrs. Pollifax was that she couldn't find anything phoney about her yet. She said exactly what she thought. She didn't make the slightest pretense at entertaining Debby or deferring to her. We have to accept the situation and lay down some ground rules, she'd said, and that was that.

⁴²Ibid., 205.

⁴³Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 275-307.

There seemed to be something infinitely reliable about her: it was incredible in anyone so establishment.⁴⁴

Openness, honesty, and lack of pretense were the keys to closing the generation gap.

These characteristics help Mrs. Pollifax befriend another troubled young person while resolving an international incident in *A Palm For Mrs. Pollifax* (1973). The rise of Arab nationalism and the struggle for power within the Middle Eastern states provided the framework for this novel.⁴⁵ The novel opens with Mrs. Pollifax practicing yoga before attending her customary meeting of the Save-Our-Environment Committee. A special delivery letter arrives that summons her to a lunch meeting in New York City with Carstairs. There he proposes a much different assignment from the previous escapades. This is not merely a courier job but also an investigative one. There have been two recent thefts of plutonium—the total amount of which almost equals that needed to produce an atomic bomb. Some evidence indicates that the material could be routed through a hotel in Switzerland. Interpol has a man on the scene posing as a waiter named Marcel, and a British agent has already died after falling into a ravine.⁴⁶ Carstairs confides to Mrs. Pollifax:

I have a feeling that this situation needs something more than training and experience. It needs a rare kind of intuitiveness, a talent for sniffing out what others miss. You're rather good with people and you simply don't act or react

⁴⁴Gilman, *Elusive Mrs. Pollifax*, 99.

⁴⁵For further background see Reinhard Schulze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World*, trans. Azizeh Azodi (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 151-225.

⁴⁶Dorothy Gilman, *A Palm For Mrs. Pollifax* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1973), 1-9.

like a professional agent ... what we are looking for—aside from stolen plutonium, Mrs. Pollifax—is evil in its purest form.⁴⁷

Dorothy Gilman reiterates, as did Helen MacInnes, that there is an evil force in the world, and ordinary people must take a part in combatting it.

The hotel in Switzerland is actually a health resort, and Mrs. Pollifax will stay there while recovering from a hypothetical severe illness. Before departing, Bishop supplies her with the procedure for contacting the other agents stationed nearby, a scintillation counter to locate the plutonium, and information that the deceased British agent was actually murdered. After her arrival Mrs. Pollifax tries to meet as many people as possible. Among those she meets are Marcel, the British agent/waiter, and Robin Burke-Jones who is in the import business. Marcel tells Mrs. Pollifax that Burke-Jones' credentials are not legitimate. There is also a beautiful young lady; Court van Roelen, a French general retired from the Sûreté; and a boy, Hafez, who is staying with his grandmother.

That evening Mrs. Pollifax finds Hafez in her room, and before he leaves, she notices that the boy steals some aspirin. When Mrs. Pollifax goes to Hafez's grandmother's room to inquire about this, she finds a person in bed, and then she is grabbed from behind and forcefully escorted out. What is going on she wonders?⁴⁸ Later that night, thinking that "fortune favors the bold," Mrs. Pollifax makes her initial search for the plutonium. She surreptitiously explores the whirlpool baths and

⁴⁷Ibid., 10.

⁴⁸Ibid., 11-17.

the therapy, equipment, and storage rooms without any luck. Marcel is also prowling around, and they encounter each other and exchange information. Finally returning to her room after a long and tiring day, Mrs. Pollifax falls asleep but awakens with the awareness that someone is in her room. Jumping out of bed and switching on the light, Mrs. Pollifax discovers Burke-Jones dressed head to toe in black. He is a jewel thief. She decides not to call the police if Burke-Jones promises to halt any further escapades.⁴⁹

Through Marcel and some seemingly insignificant questions to the hotel staff, Mrs. Pollifax learns that Hafez and his grandmother Madame Parviz are from the Middle Eastern country of Zabya and that they stay secluded. Another mysterious person is the wheelchair-bound Ibrahim Sabry, the owner of a small munitions factory in Egypt.⁵⁰

On her second night at the resort, Mrs. Pollifax goes on another snooping expedition and discovers Marcel in the water massage room with his throat cut. The murderer is still in the area and Mrs. Pollifax barely escapes being caught, too. As a precaution, she takes the elevator to the floor above her own and enters an unlocked room to hide. The room belongs to Robin Burke-Jones. He is there, and after he explains his suspicions about Mrs. Pollifax, she confesses what her mission is. Since the murderer may still be lurking about in the hallway, Mrs. Pollifax lowers herself via Robin's climbing rope down to her own balcony.

⁴⁹Ibid., 18-53.

⁵⁰Ibid., 59-87.

Mrs. Pollifax, having left her room unlocked, discovers Hafez there. He takes Mrs. Pollifax to his grandmother who requests that Mrs. Pollifax send a cable from the village. It is to go to her son, General Parviz, in Zabya telling him that they are safe and well. The next morning Robin drives Mrs. Pollifax into the village, and she tells him about Marcel. Robin replies that he wants to help.⁵¹ Mrs. Pollifax accepts the offer and expresses confidence in Robin by saying to him, "How wasted you are on petty crime."⁵²

Too many questions remain unanswered and Mrs. Pollifax needs to think through what she does know. There is more going on than even Carstairs and Bishop suspected: "The workings of fate always struck her with awe, for on these small assignments, she inevitably arrived just in time to meet the effect of a course sown recklessly long ago."⁵³ There are forces at work that she does not yet understand, but Mrs. Pollifax has faith in her powers of observation and deduction. She ... "knew that at some point influences and coincidences would converge. Nothing, she felt, happened purely by accident; it was an unraveling process."⁵⁴ Gilman is suggesting that the way to solve problems is to carefully review the facts of the situation, to be patient, and an answer will become clear.

No one at the resort mentions Marcel, and it seems to be business as usual

⁵¹Ibid., 88-121.

⁵²Ibid., 111.

⁵³Ibid., 114.

⁵⁴Ibid.

except that an extremely handsome man arrives at the clinic. Mrs. Pollifax learns that he is Yazdan Kashan, an immensely rich sheik from Zabya, and she notices him at lunch with Sabry. Afterwards, Mrs. Pollifax meets Court van Roelen in the garden where the young lady recounts the story of a previous unhappy marriage. Ms. van Roelen has tried to be distant and avoid commitments, but now she finds Robin attractive. She doesn't want to fall in love because she fears she may repeat her past mistake. Mrs. Pollifax's advice is to let life happen.

Mrs. Pollifax begins to wonder what disability keeps Sabry in a wheelchair, thinking it could be nothing more than a clever disguise. She persuades Robin to open the door to Sabry's room so that she can investigate. Her search uncovers a suitcase with two extra locks and a body wrapped in plastic. It is Marcel who had disappeared earlier. Sabry discovers her, and with his accomplices, escorts Mrs. Pollifax and Hafez who was found nearby outside to a waiting car. Robin, who had been able to hide from Sabry, follows in another car, cuts off Sabry, and forces a wreck. This happens near the entrance to a popular tourist attraction, the Castle de Chillon. Sabry orders Fouad, one of his men, to take Mrs. Pollifax, Hafez, and the suitcase into the castle before the police arrive.⁵⁵

The three join a tour group, but after they leave the group, Mrs. Pollifax surprises Fouad with a karate chop, knocks him unconscious, and hides him in an old chest. Hafez and Mrs. Pollifax hide in another chest until after closing time as they

⁵⁵Ibid., 122-37.

ponder their escape from Sabry who is waiting outside.

During this time, Hafez also relates his story. Back in Zabya, he had been taken to the airport to see his father who was ill. Once inside an airplane, he found his grandmother who had been drugged, and the craft took off for Switzerland. The two were kept prisoners at the resort, and Hafez had stolen the aspirin to substitute for the drugs administered to Madame Parvez. Hafez's father is general of the army and loyal to the king who has instituted many reforms. Those opposing the king were planning a revolt, and now the general's allegiance would be divided.

Using ropes found in the chests, Hafez and Mrs. Pollifax get out of the castle that night by descending an ancient shaft previously used to dispose of garbage. They emerge below the castle on Lake Geneva where Robin waits for them in a rowboat. Back at the hotel, Robin opens the suitcase and finds two items that look like ordinary food cans. They have found the plutonium. They see the sheik and Sabry returning but are unable to call the police because the lines have been cut. Mrs. Pollifax hurries to the basement pantry where she removes the labels from two cans of peaches and swaps them for the plutonium. Mrs. Pollifax and Robin are taken prisoner again, but Hafez is able to hide and get into the trunk of the vehicle carrying the captives. They are taken to a remote mountain chalet rented by the sheik. A helicopter is on its way to secure the escape of Sabry and the sheik, but Mrs. Pollifax and Robin will be left dead. The sheik has an army hidden in the desert along with munitions, scientists, and a laboratory. After the sheik overthrows the king, he will use Zabya as his base

of operations. He will then unite the Arab world and eventually impose his order upon the world.

Robin and Mrs. Pollifax think that they can overpower their captors if they can manufacture a diversion. Then they hear outside that the "police have surrounded the chalet" while, in fact, it is only Hafez's tape recorder with the volume on high. However, the captors do shift their attention momentarily, a struggle ensues, and all but the sheik are subdued. He escapes in the helicopter. During the struggle, Mrs. Pollifax is shot in the arm and faints.

Back at the resort, Mrs. Pollifax awakens to find Bishop and an Interpol officer there. They inform her that the sheik's army has disbanded, but he, as well as the plutonium cannot be found. She leads them to the stolen plutonium, recommends Robin for a job with Interpol, and decides to stay another week at the hotel to convalesce and serve as matron of honor at Court and Robin's wedding.⁵⁶

Through this novel Dorothy Gilman asserts her belief that there is diabolical evil present in the world which threatens both individuals and mankind as a whole. Decent people who have courage, faith, and a willingness to take risks can thwart those designs. Listening, understanding, and not trying to force one's lifestyle and beliefs on others are the keys to building positive relationships among people of different ages and/or cultures.

After her recuperation, the adventurous agent is off to Africa in *Mrs. Pollifax*

⁵⁶Ibid., 138-226.

on Safari (1977). This novel focuses on African nationalism and civil war. The C.I.A. intercepts a message that international assassin Aristotle is going on a safari in Zambia as a means of inconspicuous travel. No one knows his true identity. Mrs. Pollifax is asked to join the safari and take pictures of the other members so that they can be verified and Aristotle can be found through the process of elimination. Her contact will be Agent Farrell with whom she escaped from an Albanian prison in *The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax* (1966). Mrs. Pollifax is not able to contact Farrell on arrival, but she does join the safari, and among the members of the group is Cyrus Reed who is traveling with his daughter Lisa.

Mrs. Pollifax begins at once to take her pictures which provokes suspicion in someone who steals the film, and then she is kidnapped along with another tour member. She suffers a beating and endures a long trek across the African plain. Reed attempts a rescue but also is captured. Before further harm befalls them, a group of Zambian freedom fighters, one of whom is Farrell, rescues the captives. The person originally abducted with Mrs. Pollifax is actually a confederate of the captors and a leader in a fanatical right-wing group in Rhodesia sent to assassinate the Zambian president. However, the conspirator dies before revealing the identity of Aristotle. Back in Zambia's capital, people are hurrying to hear a speech by the president. Mrs. Pollifax recognizes a person in her hotel lobby as a safari member in a disguise. Mrs. Pollifax and Cyrus chase the culprit (Aristotle), capture him, and

save the president. Then Cyrus proposes to Mrs. Pollifax.⁵⁷ Throughout the story Mrs. Pollifax demonstrates her astute powers of deduction along with her other standard problem solving techniques. She is calm, patient and resilient in time of turmoil.

Before she can be married, Mrs. Pollifax must join yet another group on an overseas adventure in *Mrs. Pollifax on the China Station* (1983). Carstairs and Bishop ask her to go to China as part of a tour, and her assignment will be to help someone escape from a labor camp. This person is the principle designer of the fortifications along China's borders. The Soviets also know about him so this operation must proceed hastily. Mrs. Pollifax will have a collaborator among the other tourists, but for security reasons will not know who it is until later in the trip. The eight-member tour group is made up of a mixture of ages, genders, and professions which creates various situations of romance and jealousy, rival cliques, fragile egos, and opportunities for Mrs. Pollifax to lend a listening ear and understanding heart. One member is Peter Fox, a dour, unhappy young man who is on the trip only because it was a graduation present. Another member is Joseph Forbes, a seemingly competent and confident businessman. When Mrs. Pollifax discovers that her luggage has been searched, she realizes that someone on the trip is not who he purports to be.

The vagueness of her instructions about how to find and help the prisoner

⁵⁷Dorothy Gilman, *Mrs. Pollifax on Safari* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1-184.

Wang Shen troubles Mrs. Pollifax, but she has faith that a miracle will take place, and indeed it does. Mrs. Pollifax is able to reach her contact in China and locate the labor camp. Peter Fox also reveals that he, surprisingly, is her mystery associate and will help Wang Shen escape. They free Wang Shen, hide him in a cave for a while, and plan to fake Peter's death by creating the illusion that he falls into a canyon so that he will not be suspected of leading Wang Shen out of China. Peter follows Mrs. Pollifax's advice and seizes a miracle opportunity that presents itself. Fox and Wang Shen are assisted in their escape by a new associate, Sheng Ti. The men become acquainted during these adventures, and Sheng Ti decides to take a risk and escape. He is a highly intelligent and ambitious person but has been assigned to do only menial labor under Mao's regime.

The opportunity comes during a horseback riding excursion. Peter and Mrs. Pollifax separate from the group by feigning a runaway. Peter plans to vanish during the stunt. Joseph Forbes follows, though, and reveals himself as a Soviet agent, and then he demands they hand over Weng. Mrs. Pollifax delivers a karate blow to Forbes' temple which kills him. Peter and Mrs. Pollifax concoct a story wherein Fox and Forbes fight at a precipice. Peter goes into the gorge, and Forbes is left dead at the top.

The Chinese authorities doubt the veracity of Mrs. Pollifax's story, but they have no definite proof otherwise. Therefore, they allow her to return to the United States. The story ends at the wedding of Mrs. Pollifax and Cyrus as Peter walks in

after having survived his perilous journey.⁵⁸

The newlyweds' life together suffers an interruption due to developments in Hong Kong having to do with drug smuggling, international terrorism, and mainland China's control of the city. Cyrus goes to Vermont on a ten-day bird watching expedition and leaves Mrs. Pollifax to supervise the remodeling of their home in Connecticut. Bishop arrives and tells her that Sheng Ti (from *On China Station*) is working for Feng Imports in Hong Kong. A C.I.A. agent also employed there is sending back misleading reports, and two agents already sent to check on the situation have disappeared. Bishop suggests that since Mrs. Pollifax knows Sheng Ti, she can find out what is going on. However, she must leave in one hour. After writing a note to Cyrus, the bride departs and begins the adventure of *Mrs. Pollifax and the Hong Kong Buddha* (1985).

Once again Mrs. Pollifax meets a variety of characters. Boarding the plane in San Francisco for the second stage of the trip, she accidentally steps on the foot of a fellow passenger who gives her a withering look. They will cross paths again later. Albert Hitchens is her seat companion. He is a professional psychic who is on his way to Hong Kong to help a former student find a missing relative. At breakfast the next morning, Hitchens points out Lars Peterson, the third richest man in the world but whom Mrs. Pollifax recognizes as Robin Burke-Jones, the former burglar and

⁵⁸Gilman, *Mrs. Pollifax on Safari*, 1-182.

present Interpol agent.⁵⁹

When she visits the export shop, Mrs. Pollifax gets the runaround regarding Sheng Ti, but Detwiler (the agent) does present her with an ivory buddha in appreciation of her concern. Mrs. Pollifax eventually locates Sheng Ti and finds out that Detwiler is a heroin addict. Damien Ho, the head of the Hong Kong police's drug unit, is missing, and it is he that Hitchens will try to recover. Robin Burke-Jones is in Hong Kong to investigate rumors of connections between drugs, diamonds, and weapons.

Hitchens is able through his psychic powers to find Damien Ho, but he is already dead. During a search of Ho's house looking for clues relating to her current case, Mrs. Pollifax finds a picture of the rude man on the airplane. He is "Eric the Red," an international terrorist. Later, Mrs. Pollifax has to subdue another intruder in her room with two karate kicks, to investigate what is happening with Detwiler, and to help Burke-Jones organize a surveillance of Feng Imports.

The plan to capture Feng goes awry, and Mrs. Pollifax is kidnapped and endures a beating before the plot is foiled with timely assistance from Cyrus who has just arrived from the United States. Feng had been a follower of Chiang Kai-shek and since the latter's defeat had worked to undermine communist China. He used the drug trade, smuggling, and alliances with terrorist groups to thwart the takeover of Hong Kong by mainland China.⁶⁰

⁵⁹Dorothy Gilman, *Mrs. Pollifax and the Hong Kong Buddha* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 1-32.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 33-186.

The major focus of *Hong Kong Buddha* is its strong condemnation of terrorism. Robin and Mrs. Pollifax present this clearly in a conversation they have.

Robin begins by saying:

That's what terrorism is, basically—pure theatre. Nothing in particular is ever accomplished by it, other than to focus attention on a small group of people who seize absolute power by threatening everything that holds civilization together.⁶¹

Mrs. Pollifax agrees:

They're the parasites of the century. They want to make a statement. They simply toss a bomb or round up innocent people to hold hostage or kill without compunction, remorse or compassion. Their only passion is to mock and destroy.⁶²

According to Gilman it is clear that terrorism has no redeeming virtues.

During her predicament, Mrs. Pollifax still has the opportunity to lend her words of wisdom to someone in distress. Hitchens' marriage to his true love, Ruthie, fell apart years ago, and two more of his marriages failed after that. The flames with Ruthie rekindle when they meet again during the trip, but Hitchens still regrets those lost years. Mrs. Pollifax reminds Hitchens: "We all betray ourselves from time to time or how else would we find out what ourselves are? ... it's where you are now that matters."⁶³ She tells him about Robin who went from a burglar to an Interpol agent, but it was being a burglar that developed the skills necessary for Robin to succeed in his present profession. "If living is a process, then how does one arrive

⁶¹Ibid., 104.

⁶²Ibid., 104-5.

⁶³Ibid., 103.

anywhere except by just such painful routes?"⁶⁴ Losses and failures can be a means of fulfillment later. No situation is too difficult for Mrs. Pollifax not to sway from her role as wise counselor.

Mrs. Pollifax goes back to the Far East in *Mrs. Pollifax and the Golden Triangle* (1988), and this time Cyrus goes with her. They are preparing for a trip to Thailand when Bishop shows up. He asks them to alter their itinerary to include Chiang Mai so an agent can pass them some vital information. Although Mrs. Pollifax is still recovering from her adventures in Hong Kong, she agrees.

Background information provided to Mrs. Pollifax about the political situation of Thailand is limited because the country forced the United States out in 1976. She does learn, however, that Thailand signed friendship pacts with China, Laos and Cambodia. Thailand still faces a traditional enemy, Burma, to the west, and, in spite of the pact, China supplies Thai insurgents with weapons. The army dominates Thailand by threat of force, but the king and Buddhism are the real strengths of the country.

The name Chiang Mai is familiar to Cyrus because a high school friend, John Lloyd Matthews, was a U.S. diplomat stationed in Thailand until he disappeared ten years ago. Mrs. Pollifax doubts that the mission will be as smooth and easy as Bishop implies, but it is a chance to enhance their travel experiences.⁶⁵ She "felt herself

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Dorothy Gilman, *Mrs. Pollifax and the Golden Triangle* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1988), 1-18.

expanding and flowering" in the exposure to so many cultures⁶⁶ and believed that there was "nothing so enlivening than to be plunged into a new culture and to grope for a key to its workings."⁶⁷ Dorothy Gilman argues is encouraging her readers to have an open mind and learn from other cultures.

Of course, as Mrs. Pollifax feared, the simple transfer does not proceed without trouble. As they turn into the alleyway leading to a small house, a man runs out and bumps into the pair, and in the confusion, Cyrus and Mrs. Pollifax become separated. At the house, the agent, Ruamsak, is found dead. Another man arrives and he returns with Mrs. Pollifax to the street to observe Cyrus's being loaded, unconscious, into a van.

A cross-country pursuit begins which involves Mrs. Pollifax, her new friend Bonchoo, and two men following them. Mrs. Pollifax and Bonchoo delay their pursuers by ambushing them on the trail and then hike four hours through the jungle and into the mountains. Their journey to find Cyrus continues overnight, and the two encounter local mountain tribesmen, smugglers, monks living in a secluded monastery, and a revolutionary army.

Bonchoo and Mrs. Pollifax eventually rescue Cyrus who had been kidnapped by rebels because he had accidentally gained possession of a coded message concerning a coup in Thailand. They escape an execution by drug smugglers, destroy 900 pounds of cocaine, uncover a C.I.A. agent turned traitor, and locate John Lloyd

⁶⁶Ibid., 19.

⁶⁷Ibid., 21.

Matthews living with the monks. They make their way back to civilization via a six-hour trip down river through bone-jarring rapids.⁶⁸

Once again Mrs. Pollifax becomes enmeshed in the turmoil of a world hotspot. Thailand, Burma, and Laos had formed the Golden Triangle where the rural farmers grew the poppy that produced tons of opium each year. Communist guerilla groups had also operated within the area since the 1960s. Under international pressure to stem the opium tide, the Thai government instituted a substitution program to gradually eradicate poppy production. The farmers were taught to grow potatoes, coffee, barley, and kidney beans. An immediate, total eradication process would bring about poverty and throw the farmers into alliance with the insurgents with both positive and negative effects.⁶⁹ Dorothy Gilman presents this montage of rebels, smugglers, drug lords, and assorted others in a highly readable, enjoyable story. This novel continues a major theme of Dorothy Gilman as she brings to her public the topical issues and cultural and ideological conflicts found throughout the world.

Mrs. Pollifax confronted cold war issues such as communist infiltration in the Western Hemisphere, Sino-Soviet tensions, and Eastern bloc power struggles. Also, problems presented by the struggle of African nations for independence, by Middle Eastern coups, and by Asian turmoil focusing on mainland China, Hong Kong, and

⁶⁸Ibid., 22-184.

⁶⁹Barbara Crossette, "In Their War on Opium, Poppies Yield to Potatoes," *New York Times*, 18 October 1984, sec. A, page 2; Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Lawrence Hill, 1991), 283-386.

Taiwan were solved by Mrs. Pollifax. Assorted assassins, terrorists, and double agents met their match in this strong-willed and intelligent woman. The message is clear in the Mrs. Pollifax novels. Problems can be solved through clear, logical thinking. One must be patient and let the answer evolve, but one must not be passive. Be assertive, be in touch with the environment, seek solutions, and an idea will present itself. There is also a life force at work which brings assistance, and although Gilman does not call this force God, she definitely believes and promotes the spiritual realm of our existence. After the unfolding process, one must then be resolute, resourceful, daring, and brave. Mrs. Pollifax solves her problems in this way, and although she employs the occasional karate chop and in one instance shoots an adversary, there is little overt violence. Perhaps it is this avoidance of quick decisions and the ability to keep an even temper that attracts lost souls to Mrs. Pollifax. There is usually one person in each novel who has made mistakes, missed opportunities, or simply not found a niche in the world. Through her encouragement and guidance, Mrs. Pollifax convinces people that they need not live in the past, that they can learn from past failures, and that they must move on to focus on future opportunities.

These positive themes undoubtedly contribute to the popularity of the Mrs. Pollifax series. From 1966 to 2000, Dorothy Gilman has written fourteen novels, and Mrs. Pollifax continues to travel the world solving problems with her innocent nature and her perceptive and analytical mind. In *Mrs. Pollifax and the Whirling Dervish* (1990), she goes to Morocco to confirm the identity of undercover informants, and *Mrs. Pollifax and the Second Thief* (1993) finds her in Sicily to help authenticate a

document signed by Julius Caesar. Her old friend and partner Farrell is there, too. The scene of *Mrs. Pollifax Pursued* (1996) is back home in Connecticut and New York, but the danger comes from repercussions of an assassination in the fictional African country of Ubangiba. She travels to this country in *Mrs. Pollifax and the Lion Killer* (1996) to combat terrorism and then travels to Jordan to help Farrell smuggle out the final manuscript of a dissident Iraqi novelist who was murdered while in prison. Finally, she goes back to the Middle East in *Mrs. Pollifax Unveiled* (2000) to solve a conspiracy involving terrorism, kidnapping, and hijackers. Dorothy Gilman continues to enlighten her readers about the world's trouble spots with a character who shows wit, charm, acumen, and determination.

CHAPTER 4
THE DARK WORLD OF ROBERT LUDLUM

In the early 1960s the American dream seemed attainable for most citizens, and President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address embodied their idealism and hopes. At home there would be social progress and peace, and abroad there would be strength and resolve.¹ The nation's best and brightest minds entered government service reassuring Americans that indeed the country would be moving forward and conquering new frontiers.²

Despite this auspicious beginning, the promise of the 1960s went unfulfilled, and Allen Matusow and William O'Neill recount how society unraveled.³ The American economy that had fueled the optimism of the sixties seemed to be in decline in the seventies as automobile and steel plants shut down, and global commercial

¹Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), 4-5.

²David Halberstam, *The Best and The Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972), 38-41.

³Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984); William L. O'Neill, *An Informal History of America in the 1960s* (New York: Times Books, 1971).

dominance deteriorated.⁴ The various rights movements of the 1960s opened doors of opportunity for those individuals previously denied entry, but the stagnant economy closed many of them. Twenty years previously, the economy had accelerated, but the prevailing attitude of society, particularly in racial equality, did not foster diversity. As society changed, many people experienced never-before imagined dreams and hopes but became despondent with the realization that their goals were still unreachable.⁵ The baby boomer generation raised in an atmosphere of prosperity, education, hope and idealism became unsure about their personal expectations and their family and social roles.⁶

Along with personal frustration came anxiety and anger over domestic issues such as abortion, crime and affirmative action. Overriding all of these matters, though, was the loss of faith by the American people in their government. Watergate proved that duplicity and illegalities reached the highest levels of American government. This loss of trust came after the deceptions about Vietnam by both Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon.⁷

Deceit, foreboding, and insecurity replaced hope, optimism, and trust. The

⁴Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 3-5.

⁵Daniel Yankelovich, *New Rules: Searching for Self-Fulfillment in a World Turned Upside Down* (New York: Random House, 1981), 21-22.

⁶Landon Y. Jones, *Great Expectations: America and the Baby Boom Generation* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1980), 1-2.

⁷James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 749-83.

decade of the seventies became a darker world, and out of this environment came the books of Robert Ludlum. For Ludlum, the most disturbing and prevalent danger to society was the abuse of power, and this remained his central theme throughout his twenty-two novels. The corruption of power in Ludlum's fictionalized versions would lead the reader through international conspiracies, betrayal of friends and colleagues, and murder.⁸

Ludlum combined current events with the "what if" question to develop his plots. In answering a question about plots, Ludlum replied that they "always come back to the same thing: abuse of power, the abuse of office. It's going on everywhere and it's very disturbing to me."⁹ After a career as an actor and producer, Ludlum started writing. At the age of forty and looking for a new occupation, Ludlum turned to writing full time. He did voice-overs for commercials until he sold his first book *The Scarlatti Inheritance* (1971).¹⁰ Some of Ludlum's friends attempted to dissuade him from undertaking this new career. Fortunately he ignored them. One friend later tried to schedule Ludlum to address his literary group, but the novelist had to decline as he would be residing in Spain for six months.¹¹

From 1971 to March of 2001, Robert Ludlum's prodigious work ethic

⁸Lanny Sherwin, "The Ludlum Techniques," *Writer's Digest* 67 (July 1987): 21.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., 19-21.

¹¹Gene Murphy, "The Lives They Lived," *New York Times*, 13 January 2002, sec. 6 p.4.

produced twenty-two novels with an estimated 300 million copies sold worldwide.¹² Hollywood adapted several of his works as major motion pictures.¹³ Ludlum rose every morning at 4:15 to compose his work on a yellow legal pad with a No. 2 Ticonderoga pencil and completed about 2,000 words per day.¹⁴ Neighbors seeing him at his desk would drop by too often to chat so he had a window with one-way glass installed. Ludlum devoted his afternoons to re-reading, developing plot outlines, and planning the next day's work.¹⁵

One product of his stoic work ethic was *The Osterman Weekend* (1972). In this novel, Ludlum developed the themes of betrayal and abuse of power. The novel's hero is John Tanner, a news director for a national television network. He lives with his wife and two children in Saddle Valley, New Jersey, a gated community advertised to be the safest place in the world. Police cruisers patrol the streets frequently; outsiders are not welcome; and even the residents are under close observation.

The novel begins on a leisurely Sunday afternoon, but the overly zealous scrutiny by the patrol cars spoils the residents' relaxed mood. For the Tanners,

¹²"Robert Ludlum," *The Economist (US)* <<http://lexus-nexis.com>> ; accessed 18 June 2002.

¹³Roy S. Goodman, "Ludlum on the Screen," in *The Robert Ludlum Companion*, ed. Martin H. Greenberg (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 447-50.

¹⁴Fred Tasker, "Robert Ludlum, Bestselling 'Storyteller,' Unfazed by Critics or Fame," Knight-Ridder/Tribune New Service <<http://web4.infotrack.galegroup.com>> ; accessed 18 June 2002; "Robert Ludlum," *The Economist (US)*.

¹⁵Sherwin, "Techniques," 20-24.

though, it is the next weekend that they are really anticipating. They are due to host three couples, the Tremaynes and Cardones from Saddle Valley and the Ostermans from California, for two days of poolside cookouts and fellowship.

On Monday, however, Tanner answers a summons from the Communications Commission to come to Washington to resolve a regulatory complication. This is a ruse as Tanner's appointment is actually with Laurance Fassett, an agent with the Central Intelligence Agency. Fassett discloses to Tanner a plot, code named Omega by the Soviet Union, to blackmail hundreds of important business leaders of the United States which would potentially cause severe economic disruptions in the country. Saddle Valley is one of the operation centers for the scheme, and either the Tremaynes, Cardones, Ostermans, or all three couples have some involvement. Fassett asks Tanner to be a part of a trap to uncover which of his friends are traitors. The agent provides assurances to protect Tanner's family at all times.¹⁶

The agency's scheme involves harassing the three couples in a variety of ways including dropping hints that someone knows about incriminating activities in their pasts. If they have nothing to hide, they will go to the police; otherwise their paranoia and suspicion will grow as they contemplate who knows their true identities as agents of the Soviet Union. The couples are also fed information that will lead them to believe that Tanner, too, is not the innocent neighbor that he purports to be.

¹⁶Robert Ludlum, *The Osterman Weekend* (New York: World Publishing, 1972; Bantam Books, 1982), 1-72.

When the traitor's panic level increases sufficiently, he will go to Tanner for help, then Tanner will relay the information to Fassett and destroy the Omega Operation.

To protect Tanner and his family, Fassett conceals surveillance teams around his house and installs microphones throughout the inside so that help can be summoned quickly. However, Tanner cannot reach Ali, his wife, when he calls home on Wednesday morning. After several more calls, Tanner attempts to obtain information from the stakeout crews, but apparently they, too, have some communication problem. Worried, Tanner comes home to find a note explaining where he can find Ali and the children. He proceeds to the appointed spot where he finds his family overcome by gas and unconscious.¹⁷

The police arrive, but the officers fabricate a strange story about the Tanner's house having been robbed. Tanner confronts Fassett about his agents' ineptness at providing security. He tells Fassett he wants to quit because Omega is too close. Fassett assures Tanner that the previous mistake will not happen again. Now that Tanner's involvement is known to Omega, the original plan needs to be finished. Tanner reluctantly acquiesces, but his panic re-emerges when one of the surveillance team members is found dead in the woods near the house.¹⁸

Fassett carries out his harassment plan so that when the four couples congregate that weekend, it is not like old times. Everyone is very tense and suspicious, posing probing questions and avoiding others' queries. The evening turns

¹⁷Ibid., 73-129.

¹⁸Ibid., 130-63.

to horror when Tanner's daughter discovers her dog in the bathroom with its head severed. Additionally, someone stops the Tremaynes and Cardonnes on their way home, gasses everyone and leaves them at the train depot. This sequence of events overwhelms Tanner, but when he goes to find Fassett's men outside the house, no one is there, and when he calls the CIA, he is told that no one by the name of Fassett ever worked there.¹⁹

Tanner knows now that he is alone and that he needs to protect Ali and the children above all else. When he confronts the Ostermans about Omega, they deny any involvement but promise to seek help from some of their government friends in Washington. Both the Tremaynes and Cardons renege on the Saturday night dinner engagement, but the Tanners and Ostermans plan to leave for Washington, D.C., anyway. Before they can depart, a major storm blows in. When Tanner goes outside to put up the patio furniture, rifle bullets hit around him. He makes it back inside unharmed, but the shots continue. Finding that their cars have been disabled, the Tanners and the Ostermans take refuge in the basement hoping that help will arrive. The hidden microphones apparently do not work. Tanner realizes that everything he has been told is a lie.

The group signals a passing patrol car with a flashlight, but it does not stop. Men approach the house and fire shots through the basement windows, however no one is injured. Finally, the police do arrive as well as several CIA agents. The latter

¹⁹Ibid., 175-245.

assure Tanner that Fassett is indeed a legitimate agent, but they discover that the planted microphones are inoperable because acid had been dropped on them.²⁰

Not knowing whom to trust, Tanner realizes it is up to him to bring this matter to an end. He proceeds to set a trap that will expose the true leader of Omega in Saddle Valley. He feels compelled to do this:²¹

He took momentary stock of himself and his actions. He had never considered himself an exceptionally brave man. Whatever courage he had ever displayed was always born of the moment. And he wasn't feeling courageous now. He was desperate.

It was strange. His fear—the profound, deeply felt terror he had lived with for days—now created its own balance, gave birth to its own anger. Anger at being manipulated. He could accept it no longer.²²

Here Ludlum clearly states his contention that people can find the courage and resolve to confront evil and oppression.

In the final encounter, Tanner disables and captures Omega's leader who is CIA agent Laurance Fassett, and he kills Fassett's associate, the Saddle Valley Chief of Police. Enlisting the aid of Tanner to expose the traitors had been a ruse by Fassett to mask his own nefarious scheme.²³ The fact that foreign conspiracies can infiltrate from the federal level down to local officials and that those plots can invade even seemingly secure communities such as Saddle Valley is made clear by Ludlum. He also reveals his belief that American intelligence operatives are incompetent and

²⁰Ibid., 246-80.

²¹Ibid., 281-95.

²²Ibid., 296.

²³Ibid., 297-336.

that one's friends are not truly reliable. These, however, are not the only serious problems that threaten America.

In the 1970s, Americans were growing increasingly concerned about the large number of the population using illicit drugs. Heroin addiction, especially among both soldiers in Vietnam and the general populace at home, had reached epidemic proportions.²⁴ Ludlum combined this apprehension with his theme of international conspiracy to formulate a story of another tranquil setting that conceals a pervasive evil. In *The Matlock Paper* (1973), James B. Matlock II, Ph.D., is a professor of English literature at Carlyle University in Connecticut. He is an Army veteran, divorced, and the son of exceptionally affluent parents. Matlock's lover is Patricia Ballantyne, a graduate student, but they keep their relationship very discreet. His professional and private lives seem to be progressing smoothly. However, the memory of a younger brother's overdosing on heroin three years previously haunts Matlock.

Dr. Adrian Sealfort, president of Carlyle, summons Matlock to a meeting at his residence. Also attending are Samuel Kressel, a dean of the college, and Ralph Loring from the Narcotics Bureau of the Justice Department. Loring produces a paper that will admit the bearer to a conference of the major drug suppliers that is to take place in three weeks somewhere in the Carlyle area. The group asks Matlock to take the paper and infiltrate the organization to determine the identity of the leader known

²⁴Alfred McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Lawrence Hill, 1991); Arnold S. Trebach, *The Heroin Solution* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), 1-21.

only as Nimrod. The Narcotics Bureau believes that there is a significant link between the university and Nimrod and that someone within the campus community could find it while arousing less suspicion than an outsider.

Loring informs Matlock that since 1968 drug trafficking has increased in New England more than in any other area of the United States. The suspected control center for narcotics distribution throughout the New England states is Carlyle University. There is connection between the drug cartel and organized crime, but the apparent purpose of the drug conference is to bring about a better working relationship between Nimrod and the crime bosses. Matlock expresses reluctance to be involved in a federal investigation on a college campus, but he agrees to help.²⁵

Shortly after the meeting, someone shoots and kills Loring and also fires at Matlock. Frightened but undeterred, Matlock pursues his mission. He arranges to be invited to dinner by a colleague rumored to experiment with drugs. During the course of the evening, Matlock picks up the unlikely name of Lucas Herron as a possible lead. Herron is a quiet, 70-year-old professor of impeccable reputation. Not much information comes from the visit to Herron as he is too frightened to talk. In the meantime, someone searches Matlock's apartment; someone makes threatening phone calls to Patricia; and the campus militant black student organization that has its own anti-drug agenda demands to know what is going on.²⁶

²⁵Robert Ludlum, *The Matlock Paper* (New York: Dial Press, 1973; Bantam Books, 1989), 1-35.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 36-133.

The forces of Nimrod accelerate the violence when they kidnap, torture and leave Patricia injured but still alive on Matlock's doorstep. Lucas Herron apparently commits suicide, but the autopsy confirms that it was murder. Greenberg, Loring's replacement, wants Matlock to bail out, and when he refuses, the agent has him sign a document to acknowledge that there will be no help forthcoming from the government. Matlock decides that he must become more aggressive, too. He withdraws his brokerage account and borrows additional funds from his father to finance a perilous venture. After hiring a private security agency to guard Patricia, Matlock makes the rounds of private gambling clubs, playing the part of a big-time spender and dropping hints that he is a major player with the crime syndicate, while all the time looking for a lead to Nimrod.²⁷

Matlock learns that college students work in many of the clubs—some by choice, some by force. A club owner Matlock meets describes the background and goals of one of the waiters who is a Vietnam veteran and current Yale student:

He was a lieutenant, an officer. Now he's studying business administration He fills in here maybe twice a week. Mostly for contacts. By the time he gets out, he'll have a real nest egg. Start his own business. He's a supplier These kids, that's what I mean. You should hear their stories. Saigon, Da Nang, Hong Kong, even. Real peddling. Hey, these kids today, they're great! They know what's up. Smart, Too.²⁸

Matlock suppresses his shock but wonders in dismay that:

The graduates of Indochina were not the pink cheeked, earnest, young-old veterans of Armentieres, Anzio, or even Panmunjon. They were something

²⁷Ibid., 134-233.

²⁸Ibid., 205.

else, something faster, sadder, infinitely more knowing. A hero in Indochina was the soldier who had contacts on the docks and in the warehouses. That man in Indochina was the giant among his peers. And such young-old men were almost all back.²⁹

Ludlum's view is that this generation does not have the same values as the earlier soldiers who fought in France, Italy or Korea. Vietnam and the drug culture had made them more cynical and materialistic. Later in his quest, Matlock encounters a coed who has been forced into prostitution by the threat that her drug habit will be exposed. Matlock encourages the girl to seek help, but she replies "... the drug courts, the doctors, the judges! They run it all! ... There's nothing you can do about it."³⁰ Matlock admonishes the girl for her defeatist attitude and for succumbing to fear. However, the coed states that her generation is:

Different from you. My friends are all I've got. All any of us have got. We help each other I'm not interested in being a hero. I'm only interested in my friends. I don't have a flag decal in my car window and I don't like John Wayne.³¹

All she wants to do is get her diploma and leave the country. According to Ludlum, the lies and corruption by people in authority have destroyed young people's faith in their country and these are America's best and brightest. These college students and veterans no longer possess a sense of idealism, hope, and faith in the future as a result of what they see all around them.

The forces of Nimrod chase after Matlock to gain possession of the

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., 256.

³¹Ibid.

confidential document. At one of the gambling clubs, he eludes an ambush in which four men die. Later he evades another trap and survives having his automobile run off the road. In the midst of this mayhem, Matlock discovers a clue that leads him back to Lucas Herron's house. Although it had already been thoroughly ransacked and searched by someone, Matlock finds a notebook buried in the garden that provides details on the entire Nimrod history and organization. Herron, the respected college professor, had developed an addiction to pain pills due to wounds suffered in World War II. He later became a courier for the cartel in exchange for his supply.³²

On his way to take the diary to the federal agents, members of the black militant group capture and detain Matlock. They force him to surrender the document and diary, but allow him to help lay a trap for Nimrod. This plan involves proposing to exchange the diary for a guarantee of safety for Matlock and Patricia. Matlock suspects that Nimrod is the school's Dean Samuel Kressel, but he and his wife are found dead. Nimrod of course, plans to kill Matlock, but the militants foil the plan. The leader of the drug cartel is actually President Sealfort. Matlock expresses his outrage that a college president would be involved in the illicit drug trade, but Sealfort says that it was done to avoid financial collapse:³³

Look at us now. Independent! Our strength growing systematically. Within five years every major university in the Northeast will be part of a self-sustaining federation!

³²Ibid., 219-324.

³³Ibid., 332-72.

You're diseased You're a cancer! We survive! The choice was never really that difficult. No one was going to stop the way things were. Least of all ourselves . . . We simply made the decision years ago to alter the principal players.³⁴

Ludlum's indictment of society is severe. The most advanced component of the education system, the foundation for America's freedom and democracy, is itself a force for evil and corruption. Nimrod and the cartel do not survive, but the whole operation is kept from the public. Matlock, however, vows to tell the whole story of the ultimate corruption.

Three major themes are predominant in *The Matlock Paper*. Sealfort represents those who are placed in a position of authority and trust and who betray the responsibility entrusted to them. The veteran and the coed represent those who lose faith in the system because of corruption by others. Ludlum's character of Matlock demonstrates that in a democracy individuals can make a difference and that each person has a responsibility to confront dishonesty whenever it is found.

The theme of the amateur, but forthright, individual drawn by duty into the world of intrigue changes in *The Bourne Identity*. Ludlum features a professional agent who is abandoned by his friends and betrayed by his government. This novel begins as a wounded man is pulled out of the Mediterranean Sea by the crew of a fishing boat. The man suffers from amnesia. He is Jason Bourne and has an account number for a bank in Zurich, Switzerland, surgically implanted in his hip. After recovering physically, due to the diligence of a local doctor, the man travels to Zurich

³⁴Ibid., 372.

hoping to find a clue to his identity. Some glimmer of memory leads him to a hotel where the clerk recognizes him as Jason Bourne. Bourne also learns that he has some connection to Treadstone Seventy-One Corporation in New York City. He tries to call this corporation, but there is no number listed.³⁵

Bourne verifies his account at the bank which contains \$5 million. He transfers a portion to the doctor who treated him and the remainder to a bank in Paris. When two men attempt to kill Bourne at the bank, he overpowers them. He does not understand why he is attacked, but he instinctively knows how to extricate himself from a harmful situation.³⁶

More assassins follow Bourne to the hotel, so he enters a conference room there and abducts a young lady, Marie St. Jacques, to aid in his escape. Using a gun taken from an earlier adversary, he kills an assailant waiting in a car outside the hotel, and he and Marie get away. More infrequent bits of memory provide Bourne with leads to those who can provide the links to his past. One contact mentions the name Carlos, but before he can elaborate, he dies in his attempt to kill Bourne.³⁷

More assassins pursue Bourne and Marie. The assassins capture the pair, and one takes Marie away in order to kill her and throw her body into a river to give the appearance of an accident. Bourne kills his two captors, takes off after Marie, and rescues her. Later, Bourne recounts his story to Marie and expresses the fear that he

³⁵Robert Ludlum, *The Bourne Identity* (New York: Richard Marek, 1980; Bantam Books, 1981), 1-50.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 51-63.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 63-100.

is in fact a paid assassin. She does not think he is because of Bourne's actions and character. Marie decides to help her abductor and begins immediately to use her contacts as a Canadian economic official to learn about Treadstone Seventy-One. However, her source in Ottawa has been shot in the throat, a sign that the killer was Carlos. Bourne realizes that his predicament has international impact and his foe's reach is long.³⁸

Together Bourne and Marie research the background of Carlos. They learn that he is the preeminent terrorist, but has no particular political loyalties. The Palestine Liberation Organization and Baader-Meinhof from Germany are among Carlos' clients. They discover that Carlos' real name is Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, and he is the son of a Marxist attorney in Venezuela. He studied in Russia and received espionage training at Nongorod, but the Soviets thought him to be uncontrollable and dismissed him. He went to Cuba and worked with Che Guevera and then went to Paris where he established his headquarters as an international assassin. Carlos is credited with murders around the world, and it is speculated he was on the grassy knoll in Dallas on November 21, 1963. Bourne becomes conscious of the fact that somewhere in his past he has encountered Carlos and can identify him. This is Carlos' motive for eliminating Bourne, and it is he who is sending the assassins.³⁹

Marie and Jason discuss whether or not they should take the money from the Zurich account and run off to a secluded part of the world. But they both know that

³⁸Ibid., 101-88.

³⁹Ibid., 189-98.

would not work. Marie notes that "it's not the meek who are inheriting the earth, Jason, it's the corrupters. And I have an idea that the distance between corruption and killing is a very short step."⁴⁰ Bourne acknowledges that he does "want them exposed, I want them to pay for what they've done. And you can't run away."⁴¹

Ludlum emphasizes to his readers the perilous nature of world and that there can be no compromise with evil, for its result is death. Decent people must resist and defeat the villainous.

Bourne avoids another trap laid by Carlos and kills yet another would-be assassin. This attempt further convinces Bourne of Carlos' ability to infiltrate every element of commerce and government. Another lead takes Bourne to a prominent Parisian fashion house. While he is there, an employee recognizes Bourne, however he refers to Bourne as Cain. Meanwhile at a high-level meeting at the Pentagon, the members of the group discuss Cain's whereabouts and what to do about him. Cain is a professional assassin with thirty-eight executions attributed to him. He is also a veteran of a Vietnam cadre called Medusa that performed clandestine raids into enemy territory. Through his contact at the fashion house, Bourne comes to believe that he is Cain.⁴²

The Treadstone Corporation that Bourne and Marie seek to contact is actually a front for a secret U.S. government operation with links to Medusa. Carlos, with the

⁴⁰Ibid., 198.

⁴¹Ibid., 199.

⁴²Ibid., 200-62.

help of allies within the National Security Council, plots the assassination of the people inside the building and plants evidence that incriminates Bourne. Now both Carlos and investigative agencies worldwide are after Bourne. A phone number found at the fashion house leads Bourne to Villier, a World War II French patriot and hero. Villier's house is a conduit for messages from Carlos to his minions. Villier convinces Bourne that he is not a traitor. But who could the traitor be?⁴³ Their discussion leads to problems within France, and Villier tells Bourne that:

A free society is ripe for infiltration, and once infiltrated the changes do not stop until that society is remade into another image. Conspiracy is everywhere; it cannot go unchallenged.⁴⁴

Ludlum once again reminds his readers that the rights of a democratic society create opportunities for those who oppose it and that responsible people must be vigilant, strong, and uncompromising.

Carlos' contact at Villier's home turns out to be Angelique, Villier's wife who is actually Carlos' long-time lover. Upon learning of this relationship, Villier decides to help Bourne. Carlos kills the manager of the fashion house because she knows too much about the assassin's operations. The fact that Carlos is eliminating his associates persuades another one, Phillippe D'Anjon, to assist Bourne also. D'Anjon is a fashion house employee who had previously recognized Bourne from the Vietnam operations. Bourne and D'Anjon survive another trap set by Carlos, and Bourne kills two more adversaries. Bourne, still seeking information about his past, agrees to a

⁴³Ibid., 263-357.

⁴⁴Ibid., 357.

surreptitious rendezvous with former CIA agent Alexander Conklin. However, Conklin plans to kill Bourne because he thinks that Bourne is a traitor. Bourne tries to explain what has happened, but Conklin will not listen, and at the conclusion of the confrontation, Bourne has the opportunity eliminate Conklin but does not do so.⁴⁵

With the assistance of Villier's connections in the French military, Bourne flies to New York where he plans to set a trap for Carlos at Treadstone. He transmits a message to Carlos admitting he killed Angelique. The message is a lure to get Carlos to New York. It is Carlos and his men though who ambush Bourne. Conklin arrives to help his former nemesis Bourne, but Carlos escapes. Finally, through the intercession of Marie and Villier, various U.S. government agencies realize that Bourne is not a traitor, and they in turn reveal his background. He is actually David Webb, a history instructor at small New Hampshire college. During his Vietnam service in the Medusa operation and while using the code name Cain, Webb executed the real Jason Bourne as a traitor during an assignment behind enemy lines. When the government requested his services to help find and eliminate Carlos, Webb assumed the identity of Bourne. The stories of the assassinations were fabricated to draw out Carlos who would fear a competitor. As this episode ends, Marie and David Webb recuperate at a seaside cottage while armed guards are stationed nearby because of the continuing threat from Carlos. Marie worries that the amnesia and stress have

⁴⁵Ibid., 371-460.

irreparably damaged Webb psychologically; however, she begins to discern signs of recovery that give her hope for their future together.⁴⁶

In this novel Ludlum explores further the theme of conspiracy and abuse of power. Carlos is able to implement his scheme through the assistance of highly placed officials of the government and of businesses in Europe and the United States. Except for Marie, Bourne is not sure whom he can trust among his past and present associates. Bourne is not the innocent amateur caught up in a web of intrigue; he is a professional agent with a severe impediment. Bourne does have, unlike past Ludlum protagonists, the aid of a strong, intelligent woman—Marie St. Jacques. They both are committed to fight evil in the world together.

Ludlum did not plan to write a sequel to *The Bourne Identity*, but for his next novel he needed a character who was familiar with the Far East. He saw no reason to create one when Jason Bourne already existed. The negotiations between China and Great Britain over the acquisition of Hong Kong intrigued Ludlum, and after visiting China he knew that it was the perfect setting for a book.⁴⁷

The Bourne Supremacy (1986) opens with a man disguised as a priest killing five men at a secret conference in Kowloon. One of the victims is the Vice-Premier of the People's Republic of China. The assassin writes Jason Bourne's name in blood on the floor before he departs. Sometime later, a conversation takes place in

⁴⁶Ibid., 461-535.

⁴⁷Sherwin, "Techniques," 22.

Washington, D.C., between Undersecretary of State Edward McAllister and Ambassador Raymond Haviland. They decide that since David Webb, the former Jason Bourne, has such an extensive background in the Far East and apparently someone is already there impersonating him, he would be the perfect agent for an assignment to neutralize the Chinese minister of state, Sheng Chou Yang. Sheng seems to be a friend of the West, but in reality he is fomenting a plot to bring about defacto control of Hong Kong to his own family after the 1997 accord. McAllister and Haviland suspect that Webb will refuse to help because of his deep mistrust of the government. Webb now lives in New Hampshire with his wife Marie and teaches at a small college. McAllister meets with Webb and attempts the recruitment, but he is unsuccessful. In spite of the restrictions on his activities due to the guards assigned to protect him from Carlos, Webb is happy teaching and living with Marie. Mysteriously the security force leaves, and while Webb is away, someone kidnaps Marie. A note is left in the house challenging Webb to follow if wants Marie back⁴⁸

Webb entreats the State Department to help him, but only gets a bureaucratic runaround. Webb's conversation with one official is infuriating:

"I'm sure you can get whatever help you think you need if you'll just call your contact at State."

"He's not there! He's gone!"

"Then ask for his backup. You'll be processed."

"Processed? . . . what are you, a robot?"⁴⁹

⁴⁸Robert Ludlum, *The Bourne Supremacy* (New York: Random House, 1986; Bantam Books, 1987), 1-58.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 65.

Webb does not yet know that his own government kidnapped Marie, but he does understand that it is up to him alone to get her back. He will have to become Jason Bourne again and regenerate his espionage skills. Marie calls with instructions from her captors for him to come to Kowloon. Webb arranges for a graduate student to take over his classes, withdraws money that they kept from the Zurich account in a Cayman Island bank, and begins his journey by going to Washington, D.C., to seek help and advice from Alexander Conklin, a former CIA agent. After his arrival in Hong Kong, various clues lead Bourne to a taipan who offers to exchange Marie for the man posing as Bourne who is responsible for the recent assassinations. Bourne has no choice but to agree and begins his quest for the fake Bourne. However, this is all a setup as the taipan is really Major Lin of the Special Branch following orders to assist Edward McAllister.⁵⁰

Bourne's quest to find the imposter takes him to the People's Republic of China where again he encounters Phillippe D'Anjou who has eluded Carlos in Paris. They become allies, and there are traps and counter-traps set for and by the Bourne imposter. D'Anjou eventually dies in the pursuit, but Bourne captures his adversary and takes him back to Hong Kong by commandeering a Chinese aircraft and parachuting out over the city. In the meantime, Marie demonstrates her ingenuity and courage by escaping and then calling both a friend at the Canadian consulate and

⁵⁰Ibid., 59-169.

Alexander Conklin. Marie's friend helps her avoid recapture, and Conklin arrives in Hong Kong to inform McAllister that his operation contains a traitor.⁵¹

David Webb, through Conklin's intercession, meets again with Haviland who explains the conspiracy involving Sheng and organized crime. Webb expresses his outrage at the lies and deceptions, but Haviland is unrepentant concerning his manipulations. He believes that eliminating Sheng through whatever means necessary is the only solution because no one in China would believe a Westerner's allegations. Because of his position, Haviland still exerts considerable control over Webb, Marie, and Conklin. Therefore, Webb agrees to return to China posing as the imposter Bourne in order to join up with Sheng and then kill him. There is, of course, a fierce confrontation but Bourne survives victorious. Hopefully, now he can return to his life as a teacher in New Hampshire.⁵²

In this volume Ludlum has a representative of the U.S. government who is not only guilty of lies and devious manipulations but also guilty of kidnapping a citizen. Arrogance and abuse of power by high officials is rampant. Although Bourne is not the innocent amateur, it could be argued that he is at a greater disadvantage due to the stress upon him and that he is an involuntary agent. Once again Marie is a stalwart partner. Alexander Conklin redeems his previous betrayal, and Carlos still poses a threat to David Webb and his family.

Ludlum addresses these issues in *The Bourne Ultimatum* (1990). Alexander

⁵¹Ibid., 170-500.

⁵²Ibid., 501-646.

Conklin and Mo Panov, a psychiatrist who helped Webb recover from the trauma of his amnesia, answer a summons supposedly from Jason to meet him in an amusement park. It is a trap. They escape, but an innocent bystander is shot. Conklin surmises that the mastermind of the scheme can only be Carlos and warns David Webb of the danger. Webb arranges for Marie and their two children to fly to the Caribbean island of Montserrat to stay with her brother Johnny. Conklin knows that the facts relating to Webb's being Jason Bourne and to his location are supposedly in a maximum classified file, but there is a leak somewhere. Someone with high security clearance must be a traitor. Webb loathes Jason Bourne and does not want to relive that part of himself again. And, at fifty years of age, he has some doubts about his ability to handle the stress of espionage again. However, he must protect his family, and the only way to do that is to become Bourne again, to go to Europe, and to find and kill Carlos.⁵³

Conklin suspects that the source of the leak may be a senior government official who was once part of Bourne's Vietnam mission Operation Medusa. He begins contacting these men hoping that one will let some information slip or at least spread some doubt about their own invincibility. These include the chairman of the Federal Trade Commission, the Ambassador to Great Britain, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Supreme Commander of NATO. Conklin and Bourne ponder the motives of these men in trying to have Carlos eliminate Bourne. It has to

⁵³Robert Ludlum, *The Bourne Ultimatum* (New York: Random House, 1990; Bantam Books, 1991), 1-41.

be more than to cover-up their involvement in a twenty-year-old southeast Asia covert enterprise. One of the Carlos' U.S. underlings is Randolph Gates, a prominent Boston corporate attorney. Gates discovers the location of Marie and the children and relays it to Carlos. The terrorist sends an assassin there, but his attempt to murder the Bourne family fails. After learning of this, Bourne delays the hunt for Carlos in Europe to rush to Montserrat because his nemesis may actually be on the island. The terrorist is indeed there, and there is another violent confrontation, but again Carlos escapes and Bourne must follow him.⁵⁴

Bourne flies to Paris, but Marie worries so much about him that she soon follows. She knows she was an indispensable ally during their earlier Paris escapade, and on her arrival, she does indeed help foil an attack by Carlos' men in the streets of Paris. However, Carlos commits an assassination for which Bourne is blamed. Now every law enforcement agency in Europe is after him. Alexander Conklin discovers that the former Medusa members are now administering an international cartel which will control supplies and prices and that will form a government within the government. Apparently they think that their former Medusa colleague might be a threat to their current enterprise, therefore they want him dead. The C.I.A. is already aware of the cartel, and the director tells Conklin that if the Bournes get in the way they are expendable. Bourne has another ally—the Russians who kicked Carlos out of their espionage training facility and still fear him. A Russian agent helps to set a trap for Carlos which also fails, and the terrorist escapes to Moscow with Bourne in

⁵⁴Ibid., 42-249.

pursuit. Meanwhile, the Medusan cartel that has infiltrated the government also forms an alliance with the Mafia and the managing partner of a Wall Street law firm. However, the network begins to unravel as a result of the investigative work of Alexander Conklin.⁵⁵

After more mayhem and murder, Carlos and Bourne meet for their final showdown at the KGB training installation where the Carlos first learned his craft. Initially Carlos avoids yet another trap while luring Bourne into one of his own. This time, though, Bourne succeeds in killing Carlos. The hunt by Bourne for Carlos leads to the exposure of Medusa's international conspiracy. Carlos dies and the cartel disintegrates, and the extent of its power can never be acknowledged.⁵⁶ Public knowledge would lead to a momentous loss of faith by the American people in their government institutions. This conspiracy will have to be "history unwritten and unacknowledged" according to one of Bourne's friends.⁵⁷

This last installment of the Bourne trilogy involves a terrorist with connections in the governments of both the United States and the Soviet Union. Leaders in business, finance, and the government of the United States collaborate with organized crime to fix prices, kidnap, and murder. A United States government agency, while pursuing its mission, deliberately endangers two innocent citizens. These are alarming visions of the United States indeed. For Ludlum, vigilance, persistence, and moral

⁵⁵Ibid., 250-553.

⁵⁶Ibid., 554-649.

⁵⁷Ibid., 649.

character are the weapons needed to defeat the conspirators, and Jason Bourne demonstrates these characteristics. There is no betrayal by friends in this last episode. Bourne could not have been successful without the assistance of Alexander Conklin and, of course, Marie who demonstrates her love, resolve, and resilience.

In Ludlum's view, the characteristics exhibited by Bourne, Conklin, and Marie are those required of everyone if evil is to be defeated. One does not have to be a master spy to confront the dark forces of the world. Ludlum emphasizes this when Alexander Conklin ponders the situation after learning of Randolph Gates' duplicity:

Conklin reflected on a truth that was forever reconfirmed: the world of global corrupters was in reality a small multilayered neighborhood, geometric in design, the irregular avenues of corruption leading into one another. How could it be otherwise? The residents of those lethal streets had services to offer, their clients were a specific breed—the desperate dregs of humanity. Extort, compromise, kill. The Jackal and the men of Medusa belonged to the same fraternal order. The Brotherhood of I Must Have Mine.⁵⁸

Thus, according to the author, there is an interconnectedness to evil. International thieves and assassins are not always in a distant land waiting to be subdued by Jason Bourne or James Bond. Their evil associates can be found in every community and must be opposed by ordinary citizens.

Carlos the Jackal did not exist solely in Ludlum's imagination. The revolutionary terrorist was one of a group that invaded OPEC headquarters in Vienna in December 1975. They killed two people and held hostage the ministers of eleven oil-exporting countries. They demanded and got a plane from the Austrian government and flew to Libya and to Algeria. Eventually, a ransom estimated to be

⁵⁸Ibid., 167.

between five and fifty million dollars secured the release of the prisoners, and the terrorists fled, most likely to Libya.⁵⁹ Carlos claimed to have killed eighty-three people and helped plan the hijacking of a French commercial jet by Palestinians in 1976. After the fall of communism, Eastern European countries no longer offered sanctuary, and Middle Eastern countries did not desire his presence either. This vulnerability led to Carlos' capture by French authorities, and he was put on trial in December of 1997 for the murder of two intelligence agents and a Lebanese informant.⁶⁰

In Ludlum's fictional account of Carlos' exploits, the terrorist was much more powerful than in reality. He had connections in the government, military, and commercial worlds of the United States, Europe, and the Soviet Union. Though endowing Carlos with more resources than the true Jackal actually possessed, Ludlum was consistent in his theme of demonstrating the behind-the-scenes manipulation of power at the highest levels. Ludlum's other best sellers re-emphasize his concerns. Three of Ludlum's novels reveal the attempts of the Third Reich to dominate the world with the duplicitous aid of foreigners. *The Scarlatti Inheritance* (1971) details the financial backing of the infant Nazi Party by a group of western business executives who are Nazi sympathizers. *The Rhinemann Exchange* (1974) and *The*

⁵⁹Thomas Raynor, *Terrorism: Past, Present, Future* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1987), 122-24.

⁶⁰Christopher Burns, "Flamboyant Cold War Terrorist Gets His Day in Court," *The Associated Press*, 12 December 1997; <<http://web.lexus-nexis.com>>; accessed 5 June 2002.

Holcroft Covenant (1978) center on a scheme by descendants of earlier German leaders to re-establish the Third Reich. An international alliance of army generals are the villains of *The Aquitaine Progression* (1984). This group intends to secretly organize and carry out a series of massive, violent demonstrations. When the bloodshed and destruction become acute, the generals will intervene and form a dictatorship comprising of Western Europe, North America, Africa, and the Middle East. The Middle East is the focus of *The Icarus Agenda* (1988) in which an obscure congressman from Colorado, Evan Kendrick, foils a terrorist plot to take everyone hostage in an American embassy until certain demands are met. Afterwards, the congressman's only request is anonymity, but someone leaks the information which makes him the target of terrorist revenge. Kendrick must discover who is manipulating him and the events in the U.S. and what their purpose is. *The Icarus Agenda* is a story of a government within a government and the machinations of powerful people.⁶¹

The perception of international conspiracy to accumulate and wield enormous power, the abuse of public trust, ruthlessness as a means an end, and the unsuspecting nature of citizens are common themes in these books. Democratic values and civil liberties are at stake and are defended by a lone individual who must demonstrate courage, resourcefulness, and with intelligence to save the world. As his works were

⁶¹Robert Ludlum, *The Scarlatti Inheritance* (New York: World Publishing, 1971); idem, *The Rhinemann Exchange* (New York: Dial Press, 1974); idem, *The Holcroft Covenant* (New York: Richard Marek, 1978); idem, *The Aquitaine Progression* (New York: Random House, 1984); idem, *The Icarus Agenda* (New York: Random House, 1988).

prolific, so were Ludlum's critics. One reviewer thought that *The Bourne Identity* was Ludlum's "most overwrought, speciously motivated, spuriously complicated story to date. It's difficult to tell whether the writing is worse or it's just getting easier to spot his tricks."⁶² He noted in another review that Ludlum's plots were implausible and his characters survived more death traps than those set by Wiley E. Coyote for the Roadrunner.⁶³ Another critic in *The New Yorker* complained that:

Ludlum's novels aren't just awful; they're awful in exactly the same way that the airport lounge and the efficient hotel and the cheery shopping center are. We've bought into something that we thought would be invigorating, full of spirit and crude energy, and now we're depressed. It's the same feeling we get, year after year, while watching the Super Bowl or the Oscars: suckered again.⁶⁴

Immensity and a publicity campaign did not necessarily make for quality. Thomas R. Edwards writing in *The New York Review* coined the word "ludlum" that he defined as "a long turgidly written, and frantically overplotted novel."⁶⁵

The commentaries are quite severe of one who is considered to be the master of the thriller.⁶⁶ Robert Ludlum remained mystified by the criticism but did not take

⁶²Christopher Lehmann-Haup, "Books of the Times," *New York Times*, 6 March 1986, C-25.

⁶³Christopher Lehmann-Haup, "Books of the Times," *New York Times*, 16 March 1984, C-23.

⁶⁴Terrance Rafferty, "Beeg," *New Yorker*, 20 June 1988, 90.

⁶⁵Thomas R. Edwards, "Boom at the Top," *The New York Review of Books*, 8 May 1986, 12.

⁶⁶Roy S. Goodman, "Master of the Thriller," in *The Robert Ludlum Companion*, ed. Martin H. Greenberg (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 125.

himself too seriously anyway. He did not think of himself as a literary great, but only as a storyteller offering an entertaining diversion to his fans.⁶⁷

However, Ludlum's books are more than this as he had cogent messages to convey. There is manipulation, corruption, and abuse of power by people in authority. The forces of greed and evil reach from the international scene to our neighborhood, and people must be consistently vigilant and must prevail with determination and courage. Through his novels, Robert Ludlum offers hope in a sometimes dark, complex world.

⁶⁷Tasker, "Ludlum, Unfazed."

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Current events shape the content of spy thriller novels as illustrated by the works of Helen MacInnes, Dorothy Gilman, and Robert Ludlum. These authors offer to their readers an interpretation, through a suspenseful story, of how they perceive the world. MacInnes, Gilman, and Ludlum are clear and consistent in their messages and their plot devices make them relevant in the life of the reader.

The primary device used by MacInnes, Gilman, and Ludlum is the use of an ordinary citizen as a protagonist. The reader can imagine himself in the character's predicament and relate it to his own daily existence. The author's intended message that everyone is responsible for solving the world's problems is better received this way. For example, Helen MacInnes uses this device extensively as she has a variety of people including attorneys, journalists, and art critics who become innocently involved in a conspiracy that needs to be resolved.

Dorothy Gilman's protagonist Mrs. Pollifax is employed by the Central Intelligence Agency but would certainly not be considered a professional agent. She is sent on cases precisely because of her unassuming and amateurish nature. Mrs. Pollifax has remarkable results in solving complicated plots occurring in countries to

which she has never before traveled. Mrs. Pollifax provides an admirable example of the power of ingenuity and resourcefulness.

Robert Ludlum's James Matlock and John Tanner are everymen recruited to assist government agents. Jason Bourne is a professional agent, but he does not want to be one any longer. Bourne relishes the quiet life of a family man and college professor, but the world's problems force him to respond to protect his family. It is extremely unlikely that a Ludlum reader would encounter such massive conspiracies as do the Ludlum characters. The reader can relate to the character on a different level through his knowledge of institutions, indifferent bureaucrats, betrayals, and fears of drugs and crime. One cannot avoid life's problems, and MacInnes, Gilman, and Ludlum encourage their readers to be a part of the solution.

For some spy thriller heroes the resolution of the mystery mandates the use of violence, but for MacInnes, Gilman, and Ludlum violence is not necessarily the means to solve the problem. Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer is the leading example of the earlier approach, and the writers referred to earlier in the introduction made note of this. Mickey Spillane admitted once in a 1961 interview that he had followed an earlier trend of brutality and bloodshed. One of his major goals was violence-filled pages. Mike Hammer served as jury, judge, and executioner when he found out that his lover was a murderess. According to one pair of critics, Hammer does not believe that society is responsive to a high moral code leaving the job to Hammer and his .45 automatic.¹

¹Max Allan Collins and James L. Traylor, *One Lonely Knight: Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984), 8-14.

Admittedly Ludlum's Jason Bourne kills numerous enemies. Antagonists are dispatched in a variety of ways, and their bodies left littering the streets of various European cities, Asian forests and Caribbean beaches. Even Ludlum's Jason Bourne must be brutal to preserve himself and his family. He does not assume the role of a defender of higher law. Both Ludlum's James Matlock and John Tanner kill an assailant in self defense, occasionally, as do the characters of Helen MacInnes. MacInnes and Gilman rarely employ violence as a prerequisite for solving problems. Mrs. Pollifax has to shoot a pursuer and eliminates another adversary with a karate chop. These are exceptions as Mrs. Pollifax more often resolves dilemmas through the meticulous gathering of information, patiently meditating, and seizing the appropriate moment for a resolution usually without bloodshed. The MacInnes characters also use an intellectual process to circumvent villainous plot, the same techniques, and she is very judicious in her use of violence. For MacInnes, Gilman, and Ludlum, society must be judge and jury. The rule of law, not men, must prevail.

James Bond was not known as a killer, but extricated himself from a variety of potentially fatal circumstances through the use of a variety of ingenious gadgets. These episodes, though, were emphasized more in the films than in the books.² The characters of MacInnes, Gilman, and Ludlum solve problems by relying on their own intelligence rather than technology. Robert Ludlum utilizes surveillance technology as a weapon of the enemies of John Tanner and Jason Bourne, but they survive because of a tenacious and determined spirit, not an intricate gadget. Mrs. Pollifax uses

²Joan Del Fattore, "Ian Fleming," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 87, *British Mystery and Thriller Writers Since 1940*, ed. Bernard Benstock and Thomas F. Staley (Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research, 1989), 1-2.

articles on hand to escape a prison in Albania as does Claire Langley in MacInnes' *Decision at Delphi*. A person's ingenuity, resourcefulness, and persistence was more important to these writers than dependence on a new apparatus.

Another characteristic of the novels of MacInnes, Gilman, and Ludlum is that solving problems is not strictly a male prerogative. A female taking a leading role in the plot's resolution of a spy thriller from Eric Ambler through Ian Fleming would be difficult to find. Although Helen MacInnes uses males as her protagonists, females were not there for romantic interest only. MacInnes employs assertive women who are involved in the resolution of the dilemma. Gilman's Mrs. Pollifax is a powerful example of a woman who is the leading character and operates as a detective, counselor, and diplomat. Jason Bourne could not have survived without Maria's help in *The Bourne Identity*. She is kidnapped in *The Bourne Supremacy* but escapes through her own well-devised scheme and engages help for her husband. In *The Bourne Ultimatum*, Maria is sent to a Caribbean island for her protection but leaves, flies to Paris, and joins Bourne in his final confrontation with Carlos. MacInnes, Gilman, and Ludlum each present women in a positive way. Their female characters are confident, intelligent, and perceptive.

At the same time, these authors offer a very traditional view of male-female relationships as well. The relationships are portrayed as monogamous and meaningful. Helen MacInnes provides a romantic interest for her protagonist, and while he may be temporarily diverted by a flirtation, he eventually understands who is right for him. Her heroes certainly do not move among a variety of female companions during the course of an adventure. Mrs. Pollifax seems to be content as a

widow but finds another love and remarries. She also spends a great deal of time counseling people on the ways to maintain healthy and long-lasting love affairs. Ludlum's John Tanner is a happily married man whose major concern during the course of *The Osterman Weekend* is the protection of his family. Before James Matlock in *The Matlock Paper* goes off to find Nimrod the drug lord, he first provides security for his girlfriend. After Jason Bourne finds his identity, his adventures focusing on eliminating Carlos are carried out to protect his family. In the midst of betrayals and conspiracies, the family offers stability and support for society according to Ludlum. MacInnes, Gilman, and Ludlum portray women as strong and independent but not at the expense of denigrating monogamous relationships and traditional family values.

Not only were MacInnes, Gilman, and Ludlum strong proponents of a value system that included intelligent and resourceful women, they were just as clear in how they depicted the evils that confronted the world. Some authors, most notably John le Carré, are troubled by the dilemmas that spying brings to liberal democracies. While these societies are based upon openness, justice, and equality for all, the spy business requires secrecy, ruthlessness, and sometimes executions. Do the democracies then really enjoy the moral high ground over communists, dictatorships, and terrorists? This is the ambiguity examined by le Carré.³ For MacInnes, Gilman, and Ludlum, there is no doubt about right and wrong. There are those who go about constructing a better world, and those whose aim is death and destruction. This force is represented

³Myron J. Aronoff, *The Spy Novels of John le Carré* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 1-2.

at times by communists, terrorists, drug smugglers, and assassins. They are confronted without equivocation as the evil that exists in every community must be. The authors do not argue for vigilante justice, but they do admonish their readers to be firm, determined, and persistent in combating villainy.

The themes emphasized by MacInnes, Gilman, and Ludlum are clear and consistent. A point more difficult to determine is the extent to which these messages are accepted by their readers. One cannot prove conclusively that the authors have played a meaningful role in shaping public opinion. However, an initial examination of Helen MacInnes' letters indicates that her novels did have considerable influence on both the general public and some government officials. A more in-depth examination and the availability of the Gilman and Ludlum papers will offer a greater insight into their books' impact.

Historians should consider the significance of the messages contained within the spy thriller because this mode of entertainment and information is certainly not going away. Following the Cold War's conclusion, the demise of the spy thriller seemed imminent. Some leading spy novelists abandoned the genre to focus on other topics.⁴ The thriller writers turned to new purveyors of evil such as computer criminals and terrorists.⁵ Techno-thrillers, police novels, and political collusions became new topics as well.⁶ To a considerable extent spy novels, even those with a

⁴Hubert B. Herring, "Good Times Foil A Genre," *New York Times*, 27 December 1998, sec. 4, p. Wk2.

⁵Herbert Mitgang, "Thriller Writers Are Quick to Find New Orders of Evil," *New York Times*, 1 December 1991, sec. 4, p. E6.

⁶"The New Bad Guys," *The Economist*, 28 August 1999, 68.

Cold War theme, never went away. Dorothy Gilman and Robert Ludlum continue to be popular authors into the new century. William F. Buckley, Jr. penned a series built around agent Blackford Oakes who is involved in various Cold War escapades. Robert Littell recently published *The Company* (2002), a fictional account of the Central Intelligence Agency's development since 1950. Frederick Forsyth offered his version of the possible intelligence operations inside Iraq during the Persian Gulf War in *The Fist of God* (1994). Gerald Seymore has an assassin stalking a British chemical salesman to retaliate for the latter's spying on Iran in *A Line in the Sand* (2001). Spy novelists have kept their readers informed on current issues and offered new perspectives on former conflicts.

The inclusion of popular culture as a necessary part of American historical research will increase. The influence of the Cold War upon popular culture has only recently been examined by historians. Within this framework, the only spy novelist to be regarded as influential has been Mickey Spillane. As has been demonstrated, other novelists have profound statements, too. Not only should scholars continue to research the impact of these novels upon the American populace, they also can be an integral part of the work done by students within their courses. Spy novels generally offer excellent examples of clear, concise prose, provide lessons in analyzing facts, and reflect the concern of society.⁷ Spy thrillers will remain popular with the American public as the space allotted to them in any bookstore attests. The evils these

⁷Robin W. Winks, "The Genre of Mystery and Spy Fiction Should Get Serious Study but it Must Be For the Right Reasons," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2 August 1989, p. B1.

writers portray as threats to civilization may change with the times but their message and impact deserve serious inquiry.

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