



“The right side lost but the wrong side won”: John le Carré’s Spy Novels before and after the End of the Cold War

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John le Carré has maintained his position as the world’s premier spy writer for more than forty years. In contrast to his literary comrades-in-arms such as Ian Fleming and Len Deighton, he has even managed to be acknowledged not only as a genre writer but also as a writer of highbrow literature. John Halperin, for instance, claims: “John le Carré is the only writer of espionage ‘thrillers’ today who is also a writer of literature” (17). Michael Vestey underlines this statement in *The Spectator*: “I think le Carré is one of the finest of British post-war novelists. Curiously, some have dismissed him as a superior thriller writer, which of course he is, but he is also much more.”

David John Moore Cornwell, le Carré’s real name, was born on 19 October 1931 in Poole, Dorset. He grew up as the son of a con man who involved him in his criminal activities; he taught at Eton and worked for the Foreign Office and the British intelligence services MI5 and MI6. His literary breakthrough came in 1963 with his novel *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*. Until the end of the cold war, he wrote several spy novels dealing with the East-West conflict and continued to publish spy novels after the cold war ended. In this essay, I analyze the themes of his cold-war novels and discuss the impact of the end of the cold war on his recent works.

1. Individual versus Institution

A major theme in le Carré’s novels is the conflict between an individual agent and his or her own intelligence service rather than the conflict between an individual agent and a foreign intelligence service. Le Carré thus

goes beyond the theme of espionage and uses the spy novel to generalize about the relationship between the individual and the institution. As David Monaghan has pointed out, the human being, for le Carré, is split into two components that are hard to reconcile. With reference to Friedrich Schiller, he calls these components *naïve* and *sentimental*—as, for instance, in the title of his novel *The Naïve and Sentimental Lover*. To achieve full humanity, these components must be united, but le Carré assumes that these “components of life as we live it are irreconcilable, and chaotic” (Gross 33). Le Carré’s heroes often are lonely and isolated and unable to find satisfaction in relationships with other people. They are social outsiders who often—just like le Carré himself—have an uneasy relationship with their fathers or a failed marriage. Unable to live in such a lonely and emotionally unsatisfying world and searching for emotional satisfaction, love, faith, and security, these individuals transfer their feelings—which have frequently been disappointed—to an organization, the intelligence service. The agents are looking for emotional satisfaction, love, faith, and security in the intelligence service. Joining the service is a flight from failed relationships. It offers the individual security and protection as a family does. This function of the intelligence service is described best in *The Looking Glass War*. The building that houses the intelligence service appears to be old and decayed, yet for the agents, it offers a certain refuge: “For those who worked in it, its mystery was like the mystery of motherhood, its survival like the mystery of England. It shrouded and contained them, cradled them and, with sweet anachronism, gave them the illusion of nourishment” (26).

The intelligence service not only becomes a surrogate family but also a surrogate religion. Especially in *The Looking Glass War*, le Carré employs a striking number of religious metaphors:

For its servants, the Department had a religious quality. Like monks, they endowed it with a mystical identity far away from the hesitant, sinful band which made up its ranks. While they might be cynical of the qualities of one another, contemptuous of their own hierarchical preoccupations, their faith in the Department burned in some separate chapel and they called it patriotism. (66)

Inevitably there will be a conflict between the agent and his or her organization. The agent, following the naïve aspect of his or her personality, is looking for love, trust, and security. However, in the world of espionage, these values do not count. The agent’s superiors decide about his or her fate—by rational, not emotional, criteria. As an organization, the intelligence service has lost contact with feeling and humanity and has become an anonymous bureaucracy that makes decisions without considering the consequences for the individual agent. For the intelligence only results matter, and to achieve results, the service is willing to sacrifice the agent like a pawn in a chess game. Not until they are involved in their mission do the agents realize that they have been betrayed by their leaders. The conflict between the individual and the organization in all cases has a negative outcome for the agent, the spec-

trum ranging from disenchantment to death. Avery in *The Looking Glass War* breaks down in tears. Peter Guillam, who has regarded the intelligence service as surrogate family and surrogate religion, experiences the moment of disenchantment in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* extremely painfully: "In that moment, Guillam felt not merely betrayed but orphaned. His suspicions, his resentments for so long turned outward on the real world—on his woman, his attempted loves—now swung upon the Circus and the failed magic that had formed his faith" (345).

Others, like Alec Leamas in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* or Jerry Westerby in *The Honourable Schoolboy*, suffer more. They stay true to their beliefs and so are killed.

2. The Philosophy of the Cold War

The problem of the individual versus society has prompted le Carré to break with the common views of the cold war. In contrast to Ian Fleming, le Carré tries to overcome the dichotomous worldview. In le Carré's spy novels, good and bad are distributed evenly; instead of black and white, there is a gray that blurs the borders between the two sides. As Connie Sachs appropriately states in *Smiley's People*, "It's grey. Half-angels fighting half-devils. No one knows where the lines are" (182). In his novels, le Carré deals with the ethical problems and consequences of the Western engagement in the cold war. The West, le Carré argues, does not fight against an identifiable enemy but against an ideology, which is communism. Le Carré emphasizes that the West not only has the right but also the duty to fight: "I do believe, reluctantly, that we must combat communism. Very decisively" (Gross 33).

For le Carré, the fight is humanistically justified because in the East, the individual is sacrificed to the masses, whereas in the West, the individual counts more than an ideology. The paradox is that in the process of this humanistically-founded fight, the West employs the methods of the East; that is, to save an individual, an individual is sacrificed. Thus the West betrays the ideals for which it fights. Le Carré poses the question whether the end justifies the means. The West has the better ideals but defends them with methods contradicting those ideals. Thus, the West risks becoming a society that is not worth defending:

There is a constant moral ambiguity as there is in most things in our lives. It resides in the basic paradox that we are in the process of doing things in defence of our society which may very well produce a society which is not worth defending; we're constantly asking ourselves what is the price we can pay in order to preserve a society, yet what sort of society is preservable? (Vaughan 340)

This issue is best exemplified in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*. The novel focuses on three discussions of whether the end justifies the means. In the beginning, Leamas discusses this question with his boss Control. For Control, the situation is clear. The West has the better ideals but is forced to adapt the methods of the East:

I mean you've got to compare method with method, and ideal with ideal. I would say that since the war, our methods—ours and those of the opposition—have become much the same. I mean you can't be less ruthless than the opposition simply because your government's *policy* is benevolent, can you now? (20; emphasis in original)

For Control, the ideals justify the use of despicable methods, which in this case means sacrificing an individual. After defecting to the East, Leamas discusses the same problem with the East German Stasi agent Fiedler. Fiedler, a Stalinist, has no moral difficulties with his job. He is willing to kill individuals, if that will promote communism. What he cannot understand is how the West can do this in direct opposition to its Christian and humanistic ideals:

[Leamas] hesitated, then added vaguely: "I suppose they don't like Communism."

"And that justifies, for instance, the taking of human life? That justifies the bomb in the crowded restaurant; that justifies the write-off of agents—all that?"

Leamas shrugged. "I suppose so."

"You see, for us it does," Fiedler continued, "I myself would have put a bomb in a restaurant if it brought us further along the road. Afterwards I would draw the balance—so many women, so many children; and so far along the road. But Christians—and yours is a Christian society—Christians may not draw the balance."

"Why not. They've got to defend themselves, haven't they?"

"But they believe in the sanctity of human life. They believe every man has a soul which can be saved. They believe in sacrifice."

"I don't know. I don't much care," Leamas added. (le Carré, *Spy Who Came in* 134–35)

In this discussion, Leamas inevitably has to lose because the methods of both intelligence services are in accordance with the communist ideology of the East, but not with the humanistic and Christian ideology of the West: "For this reason, my Western agent is at a loss to defend himself in ideological dispute with his Communist interrogator. The Communist should be able to reconcile the loss of innocent life with the progress of the proletarian revolution; Western man can't" (le Carré, "To Russia" 5).

After Control and Fiedler have declared the moral considerations of Western and Eastern intelligence services, respectively, Leamas, in the final discussion with his girlfriend Liz, realizes that both sides use the same methods. To protect the double agent Mundt from exposure by Fiedler, the British intelligence service arranges an ingenious diversion that costs Fiedler's life. Leamas has long ago abandoned the idea that Western spies are morally superior: "What do you think spies are: priests, saints and martyrs? They're a squalid procession of vain fools, traitors, too, yes; pansies,

sadists and drunkards, people who play cowboys and Indians to brighten their rotten lives. Do you think they sit like monks in London balancing the rights and wrongs?" (231).

The final scene of the novel shows Leamas sitting on the Berlin Wall, literally between the two systems. In the West, George Smiley urges him to jump down; in the East, the border guards aim their rifles at him. Leamas, however, cannot commit to either side, because, for him, both sides are the same. The only thing he believes in is his love for Liz. When she is shot on the Eastern side of the Wall, his life loses its meaning, and he climbs down and allows himself to be killed.

In this novel, le Carré does not intend to glorify Western victory; instead, he wants to criticize the adoption of the methods and to point out the moral dilemma of the West. In an open letter to Russian critics, le Carré gave his view on this novel:

By these and other means I sought to remove espionage from the sterile arguments of the cold war and concentrate the reader's eye on the cost to the West, in moral terms, of fighting the legitimised weapons of [c]ommunism. [. . .] I tried to tickle the public conscience with the issue of *raison d'état*. I have posed this question: for how long can we defend ourselves—you and we—by methods of this kind, and still remain the kind of society that is worth defending? [. . .] In espionage as I have depicted it Western man sacrifices the individual to defend the individual's right against the collective. That is Western hypocrisy, and I condemned it because I felt it took us too far into the Communist camp, and too near to the Communist evaluation of the individual's place in society. ("To Russia" 5)

3. Great Britain as a Disoriented Society

Le Carré's spy novels are comments about the state of British society. His fictional world of espionage is meant to be an allegory of the real world. For le Carré, the intelligence services are "microcosms of the British condition, of our social attitudes and vanities" (Introduction 15). In *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, the intelligence services are called "the only real measure of a nation's political health, the only real expression of its subconscious" (354). Le Carré is interested in cultural history more than in factual history. He investigates what it means to be British in the second half of the twentieth century. What is the state of health of British society in le Carré's novels? It suffers from its failure to adapt to the drastic changes caused by World War II. After the decline of the Empire and the loss of world-power status, British society drifts without orientation. Le Carré describes the Conservative terms of office as "the thousand-year sleep of Eden and Macmillan" and especially mentions "our predicament as a fading world power" (Introduction 22–23). The establishment, instead of adapting to the new situation, withdraws to closed institutions where they lose contact with reality and give in to the illusion that nothing has changed. In his novels, le Carré illustrates this behavior with the example of the intelligence service. The entry

into the service is seen as a retreat from an unsatisfying reality: “Behind the sealed doors, puzzled men could take refuge from the swiftly changing world, here defend the absolutism of British policy. Here loyalty and patriotism found silent and, as they sought, secure expression” (Le Carré, Introduction 18).

The agents betray themselves and still believe in a Great Britain that, in this form, no longer exists:

The belief went further: SIS would not merely *defend* the traditional decencies of our society; it would embody them. Within its own walls, its clubs and country houses, in whispered luncheons with its secular contacts, it would enshrine the mystical entity of a vanishing England. Here at least, whatever went on in the big world outside, England’s flower would be cherished. “*The Empire may be crumbling; but within our secret élite, the clean-limbed tradition of English power would survive. We believe in nothing but ourselves.*” (le Carré, Introduction 18; emphasis in original)

This behavioral pattern can be seen most clearly in his novel *The Looking Glass War*. The organization in this novel is the so-called “Department,” an intelligence unit with a proud war record that has sunk to insignificance in the postwar era. Metaphors of death and decay abound in the novel. For the employees of the Department, time seemed to stand still during the war. Avery, the only representative of postwar Britain in the Department, acknowledges the true function of the organization for its members: “He recognized that it provided shelter from the complexities of modern life, a place where frontiers still existed” (66). Estranged from reality, the intelligence service becomes a “dream factory” (101). Dream and self-delusion, however, have dangerous consequences. When the Department hears rumors about missiles in East Germany, it decides to send an agent there. The object of this mission is not so much to verify the information as to prove the Department’s own importance. The chosen agent is Fred Leiser, a Polish man who also lives in a world of illusions. Because he has trained with outdated equipment and is otherwise inadequately prepared, his mission is doomed to failure. The agents of the Department experience this failure as a rude awakening from their dream. Just like Great Britain after the Suez debacle in 1956, the Department learns that its dreams are no longer in accordance with reality.

4. The Spy Novel in the Time of Glasnost

For the spy novel, a situation of international tension is a virtually generic precondition, with two sides tied up in a conflict. The cold war with its dichotomously divided world provided an ideal breeding ground for this type of novel. Western authors had a clearly defined enemy: the Soviet Union. In the second half of the 1980s, however, the cold war began to thaw. In the Soviet Union, the new General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev introduced democratic reforms, which became known in the West as glasnost and pere-

stroika. East and West began a cooperation and—even more decisively—in the West Gorbachev became a darling of the media, who caused a “Gorbimania.” The fear of the Soviets, on which the spy novelists relied for so long, diminished. Already some critics assumed that the end of the cold war also spelled the end of the spy novel.

For le Carré, glasnost made a dream come true: He was permitted to travel to the Soviet Union for the first time. In 1987, he was granted a visa. The literary result of his journey to Russia was the novel *The Russia House* (1989). The story of the novel is based on his own experiences made on his journey. Because he saw that many daily operations were badly organized, le Carré concluded that the Russian military technology was far from the perfect state of affairs that the West believed. In le Carré’s novel, a Soviet physicist nicknamed Goethe wants to make public these shortcomings of the Soviet military. He writes a manuscript, which will be published by the British publisher Barley Blair. The manuscript ends up in the lap of the British intelligence service, where it causes panic. The CIA intervenes. Both intelligence services, which have used the idea of a Soviet threat to justify their existence, sense deliberate disinformation and send Blair to Moscow to contact Goethe. Blair falls in love with Katya, who acts as a go-between between him and Goethe. When the KGB arrests Goethe, Katya also is in danger, and Blair must choose between his country and the woman he loves. As in E. M. Forster’s well-known saying, le Carré’s protagonist remains loyal to the individual: He betrays his country to save Katya.

In contrast to his colleagues Frederick Forsyth, Colin Forbes, and Adam Hall (aka Elleston Trevor), who also published “glasnost thrillers” in 1989, le Carré does not explore the problems of the Soviet reforms but—consistent with his earlier novels—deals with the attitude of the West. Gorbachev’s reforms offer a great chance for a better international understanding, but le Carré suspects that the West is not really interested in that. Because the West has for so long defined itself by its opposition to the East, the disappearance of the old enmities results in an identity crisis. According to le Carré, the West cannot free itself from the old patterns of thought and is addicted to the cold war like a drug: “Personally, I have never doubted that Britain and the United States would suffer serious cold turkey once they took themselves off the Cold War trip. A lot of methadone, a lot of loving care will be needed to bring us safely back from addiction to normality” (“Will Spy Novels” D4).

It is primarily the professional cold warriors, the agents, who refuse to acknowledge the new political situation. They fear for their budgets and their careers, if not their *raison d’être*, when the enemy turns out to be a friend. Just like the Department in *The Looking Glass War*, the agents in *The Russia House* do not want to accept that times have changed. Defense politicians and the armaments industry also have profited from international tension, as the nightmare of a Soviet attack could be used to justify the military build-up.

Le Carré emphasized his message in the essay “Why I Came in from the

Cold.” The West, he argues, is at a turning point and must decide whether it wants to let the Soviet Union sink deeper, or to lend it a helping hand and support reform. For le Carré, the choice is clear. He sees Gorbachev’s policy as a chance that the West must not miss. Therefore, the West should free itself from the old patterns of thought. Not just spy novelists but also politicians and spies finally have to come in from the cold.

5. The End of the Cold War

Since 1989, the world has undergone upheaval. The cold war has ended for good, and the Berlin Wall, at which the spy who came in from the cold was shot, has fallen victim to hammer-wielding citizens. However, just as espionage existed before the cold war, it will continue after its end. Le Carré categorically rejects the idea that the end of the cold war also means an end to spying:

But don’t imagine for one second that, just because the Cold War’s over, the spooks aren’t having a ball. In times of such uncertainty as this, the world’s intelligence industries will be beaver-ing away like never before. For decades to come, the spy world will continue to be the collective couch where the subconscious of each nation is confessed, where its secret neuroses, paranoias, hatreds and fantasies are whispered to the microphones. (“Will Spy Novels” D4)

In *The Secret Pilgrim*, Smiley expresses a similar thought: “He scoffed at the idea that spying was a dying profession now that the Cold War had ended: with each new nation that came out of the ice, he said, with each new alignment, each rediscovery of old identities and passions, with each erosion of the old status quo, the spies would be working round the clock” (9).

The end of the cold war has led the spy novel into a crisis that also can be seen as a chance. Authors now can free themselves from the fixation on the Soviet Union and turn to new themes and settings. Le Carré foresees a renaissance for the genre:

If the spy novelist of today can rise to the challenge, he has got it made. He can sweep away the cobwebs of a world grown old and cold and weary, dump the obligatory baggage of the Cold War standoff and take on any number of new hunting grounds. If an era is dead, the genre faces a long and boisterous renaissance. The only question is, can the writers handle it? [. . .]

The spy writer can turn to almost any corner of the globe, knowing for a certainty that the spooks, arms dealers and phony humanitarians will be there before him: to Angola, El Salvador, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Northern Burma, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Chad, Libya. Space prevents me from naming all the rest. (“Will Spy Novels” D4)

Considering this prophecy, le Carré’s subsequent novel, *The Secret Pilgrim*, was disappointing. Critics accused him of a lack of originality, including *Time*, which called the book a “series of outtakes from a story that has already been told” (Gray 48). For those readers familiar with le Carré’s fictional world, it is charming to meet old acquaintances and old theses from his cold-

war novels are repeated. The intelligence service is once again seen as a microcosm of society, as “nothing if not a little mirror of the England it protects” (15). The question of the end justifying the means is discussed once more: “Please don’t ever imagine you’ll be unscathed by the methods you use. The end may justify the means—if it wasn’t supposed to, I dare say you wouldn’t be here. But there’s a price to pay, and the price does tend to be oneself” (10).

At one point, however, the novel turns out to be prophetic: “I remembered Smiley’s aphorism about the right people losing the cold war, and the wrong people winning it. [. . .] I thought of telling him that now we had defeated Communism, we were going to have to set about defeating capitalism [. . .]” (334).

In his subsequent novels, le Carré propounds this theory: The West has not deserved its victory. Now that the demons of communism have been defeated, capitalism run amok takes on the role of the enemy.

6. Change and Continuity in the Nineties and Beyond

The nineties were dismal for spy novelists. Although the end of the cold war did not bring the predicted end of the spy novel, authors nevertheless encountered problems writing about new trouble spots, and readers’ tastes changed. The spy novel slipped into a crisis that still is far from over:

Like cashiered spies grouping for a mission, veteran literary spy masters are coming out of the cold war into a new world order that is hard on current sales and indifferent to their old-fashioned trench-coat espionage fiction. [. . .]

The market is colder than a Siberian winter for espionage tales, many publishing executives and agents say, blaming the end of the cold war and shifts in readers’ tastes. (Carvajal E1)

Even le Carré felt the effects of the crisis. Although *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* was on the *New York Times* bestseller list for more than a year, *The Tailor of Panama* made the list for just seven weeks. Yet, while some of his colleagues did not write novels for years or turned to other genres, le Carré published several novels with new settings (Panama, Caucasus, Kenya) and new enemies (arms dealers, the Georgian Mafia, the pharmaceutical industry).

Although le Carré turned to other themes and adapted to the new political situation, his novels demonstrated continuity. He still wrote about men whose aims were not the aims of their organization and who thus were embroiled in a conflict of loyalties. He still criticized Western policies and the immoral behavior of the West. It is obvious that the new world order does not live up to the hopes that le Carré had at the end of the cold war. His disenchantment can be illustrated best with his novel *Our Game*. At the beginning of the novel, a deceptive harmony prevails. Agent Tim Cranmer is forced to take early retirement because, as his personnel manager says, “Cold Warriors of forty-seven don’t recycle, Tim” (le Carré, *Our Game* 28).

Cranmer withdraws to his country estate with his young mistress and enjoys his affluence. Meanwhile, the British intelligence service is looking for new targets in the world after the defeat of communism: “It was there, it was evil, you spied the hell out of it and now it’s gone away. I mean we can’t say, simply because we won, there was no point in fighting, can we? Much better to say, hooray, we trounced them, the Commie dog is dead and buried, time to move on to the next party” (27).

For one man, the cold war was not over yet. Larry Pettifer, a left-wing dreamer and a double agent led by Cranmer, cannot come to terms with the new Western politics. He accuses the West of betraying its ideals. Although Western politicians insisted on the right of self-determination for small countries during the cold war, they now do nothing as the Russians suppress the Ingushs and the Chechens:

All through the Cold War it was our Western boast that we defended the underdog against the bully. The boast was a bloody lie. Again and again during the Cold War and after it the West made common cause with the bully in favour of what we call stability, to the despair of the very people we claimed to be protecting. (le Carré, *Our Game* 212)

Pettifer cannot stand this declaration of moral bankruptcy of Western foreign policy. He steals almost £40 million from the KGB to help the Ingushs and pays for his idealism with his life.

Pettifer’s political views mirror those of le Carré. Le Carré has stated that after the end of the cold war, the West betrayed the ideals for which it pretended to fight:

The self-determination of oppressed nations was a cornerstone of our anti-Communism. For half a century we preached from the rooftops that on the day democracy replaced tyranny, the victim would be raised above the bully and small nations would be free to choose their fate.

Fat chance. (“Shame” A23)

He regards the present political situation as a continuation of the cold war by other means. According to le Carré, the world is still divided, not into military alliances but into spheres of influence, and Western leaders are reluctant to engage in regional and ethnic conflicts in the rest of the world: “[O]ur leaders were obliged to agree that the enemy had packed up and left the field. The revelation made few of them happy. ‘You mean we’ve really got to do something about the other half of the earth? It’s all too inconvenient, just when we were getting so rich’” (“Shame” A23).

A similar scenario is at the core of his novel *The Constant Gardener*. Justin Quayle, a diplomat at the British Embassy in Kenya, is regarded as conscientious and reliable but colorless. After his wife Tessa is brutally murdered and the British authorities seem less than enthusiastic about solving the case, Quayle must decide between the institution that he has served for almost all his life and the woman he loved. Justin decides—as is customary

in le Carré's novels—in favor of the individual and against the institution. He is an honorable schoolboy who has preserved his sense of morality and justice. He discovers that Tessa had uncovered a scandal. A Western pharmaceutical company was using sick Africans, without their consent, as human guinea pigs to test the side effects of a new drug. Tessa ultimately asked the British government to intervene, but the company threatened to cut jobs, so the British government covered up the affair. When Tessa became too dangerous, she was murdered. Quayle also is warned not to pursue his investigations further. Yet he continues until finally he, too, is killed.

With *The Constant Gardener*, le Carré intended to write a novel about the dealings of Western big business in the Third World. He had thought first about Shell and Nigeria; but when he learned about the activities of pharmaceutical companies in Third World countries, he knew he had found his theme, turning from the crimes of communism to the “crimes of unbridled capitalism” (le Carré, “In Place” 12). As the hopes for a better world after the fall of the Wall have not come true, le Carré assumes that politics are not controlled by politicians but—an almost Marxist idea—by big business's greed for profit. The idea that the right side lost but the wrong side won, which he stated in *The Secret Pilgrim*, has now become a certainty for him:

Do governments run countries anymore? Do presidents run governments? In the cold war, the right side lost but the wrong side won, said a Berlin wit. For the blink of a star, back there in the early nineties, something wonderful might have happened: a Marshall Plan, a generous reconciliation of old enemies, a remaking of alliances and, for the Third and Fourth Worlds, a commitment to take on the world's real enemies: starvation, plague, poverty, ecological devastation, despotism and colonialism by all its other names.

But that wishful dream supposed that enlightened nations spoke as enlightened nations, not as the hired mouthpieces of multibillion-dollar multinational corporations that view the exploitation of the world's sick and dying as a sacred duty to their shareholders. (“In Place” 13)

Besides criticizing the betrayal of Western ideals, both the cold-war and post-cold-war novels of le Carré explore autobiographical elements. His relationship to criminal father Ronnie appears in his cold-war novels. He had admitted that “my shadowy struggle with the demons of communism might, at least in part, be the continuation of my secret war with Ronnie by other means” (“Spying” 33–34). His novel *A Perfect Spy* (1986) can even be read as a fictional autobiography.

In his post-cold-war novels, le Carré continues to write about his childhood and his relation to Ronnie. The international gangster Roper in *The Night Manager*, for example, is a portrayal of Ronnie. In *The Tailor of Panama*, an homage to Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana*, the protagonist is a tailor who hides his not-so-glorious past behind lies and finally is recruited by British intelligence—a connection between swindler and spy that le Carré knows from firsthand experience.

The autobiographical elements can be seen most clearly in *Single & Single* (1999). Tiger Single, head of the British private bank Single & Single, has acted as money launderer for the Georgian Mafia. After the end of the East-West conflict, criminals of both sides now work hand in hand, driven by the common greed for profit. Single has involved his son Oliver in his criminal activities, and Oliver now must decide whether he will cover up for his father—a question with autobiographical overtones through le Carré's relationship with his own criminal father.

In sum, even after the end of the cold war, le Carré has remained true to his issues and is unlikely to withdraw from active life. In an interview, he told the German weekly *Der Spiegel*:

Sie möchten wissen, ob es eine Frage gibt, die ich mir selbst stellen möchte. Ja: "Okay, Cornwell. Du bist nun über 30 Jahre lang John le Carré gewesen, das Schreiben war dir zuträglich, ebenso wie der Kalte Krieg. Warum legst du nicht deinen Füller beiseite und ziehst dich aufs Cap Ferrat zurück?"

Die Antwort lautet: Ich bin ein zorniger alter Mann geworden, ebenso ungeduldig wie irgendein junger darauf wartend, daß die Welt sich weiterentwickelt. Und die Welt in ihrer heutigen Situation könnte sogar ein Fossil erzürnen. Warum vergeuden wir den Frieden, den wir errungen haben? (le Carré, "Löwe" 152)

You would like to know if there is a question, I would like to pose myself. Yes. "Okay, Cornwell. You have now been John le Carré for over 30 years, writing was beneficial to you, just like the Cold War. Why don't you put your pen aside and withdraw to Cap Ferrat?"

The answer is: I have become an angry old man waiting as impatiently as a young man for the world to develop further. And the world in its current situation could even anger a fossil. Why are we wasting the peace we have gained? (my translation)

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