

BAD BLOOD: CONTEMPORARY BRITISH NOVELS AND THE CYPRUS EMERGENCY

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The so-called Cyprus Emergency is largely overlooked during Britain's remembrance of its twentieth-century "small wars". In writing letters and memoirs, British soldiers and administrators of the time were defensive and bitter about a volatile and complex situation. Beginning with these views of participants, this article then focuses upon novelists' recent interest in the dramatic potential of this late-colonial strife, which incongruously took place on a sunny island now best known to readers as a pleasure destination. Five novels published between 2006 and 2014—some celebrated, others comparatively unknown—are discussed for their representation of the levels of violence and its justification by both sides, British squaddies and EOKA fighters. Engaging with academic definitions of "terrorism", this article concludes that at least some contemporary writers are now prepared to engage fully with the moral ambiguities present in late-1950s Cyprus.

The Cyprus Emergency of the late 1950s threatened British power and prestige, and challenged what remained of its imperial respect. It was hardly the first time that Britain had faced insurrection from those it governed overseas. It was not even unique for British soldiers and administrators to encounter Greek-speaking people wielding guns and explosives against them: this had happened on the streets of Athens during the Civil War which followed Greece's release from Axis control. But Cyprus was a particular hurt, in that the British had felt embedded there, rather than invaders or strangers. And it was particularly unfortunate timing for questions about the island's stability to arise: due to Cold War nervousness, the potential loss of an overseas base strategically placed in the eastern Mediterranean seemed damaging. Writing at the time, Patrick Leigh Fermor was disturbed that "the Turks and the Greeks have become implacable enemies in a combustible area of great strategic importance" (Leigh Fermor 1955).

In the first part of this paper, I give a very brief history of the British presence in and attitudes towards Cyprus in the 1950s. To do so, I utilise recent histories of the conflict, memoirs produced by British servicemen and administrators, and travel narratives. Most notable amongst the latter

are works by Lawrence Durrell and Colin Thubron, described by Jim Bowman as the most important, widely-read and cited of their kind in the period since 1950 (Bowman 2015: 87). Such travel narratives about Cyprus are few in number compared to those about Greece. In contrast, however, Cyprus has proved fertile ground for fiction, offering plentiful opportunities for tension and violence. Andrekos Varnava's comment about the utility of contemporaneous novels for analysing attitudes towards Cyprus under British rule might equally apply to works set at that time which are being published now: "Fictional references also have an important role to play, hiding messages that the author might otherwise not wish to overtly disclose – or more overtly disclosing messages, thus giving importance to them." (Varnava 2009: 6-7) As Jim Bowman has commented in relation to travel writing, texts have *influence*, "significant in moving audiences and constructing a credible vision of Cyprus" (Bowman 2015: 10). Novelists and travel writers of the time usually portrayed the Cypriots who took up arms against the British as terrorists. However, as I shall show in the main body of this article, more recent novelistic portraits of Cyprus have become more nuanced. With the benefit of a more critical understanding of British engagement in foreign regions, alongside more sympathetic interpretations of colonial calls for independence, novelists are now reflecting upon whether the British were wholly blameless in a situation which left few with any credit.¹

CYPRUS IN THE 1950S: HISTORIES AND INTERPRETATIONS

British interest, intervention and occupation in the Greek-speaking world has had a long history, not all of it viewed positively by popular opinion on either side. However, in the case of Cyprus, the colonial administrator John Reddaway postulated the existence of a "special relationship" (Reddaway 1986: 172). Today, as Robert Holland has argued, "to a degree inconceivable in the vast swathe of the former British Empire, there is a distinctive Anglo-Cypriot current present in Cyprus" (Holland 2012: post-script). In part, this is because the British officially did not leave Cyprus entirely. The two military Sovereign Base Areas occupy three percent of the island, and nine percent of the coastline (Clogg 2015: 140). There is a

1. This article is emphatically not intended as a justification for terrorism. In a complex political situation, emotions understandably still run high. I would like to acknowledge here the kindness of John Burke in supplying me with a copy of his recent conference paper (Burke 2015).

growing expatriate community and, of course, a most attractive holiday destination is offered by “one of the most fascinating islands in the world” (Thubron 1986: 5). The subsequent friendly atmosphere makes 1950s hostilities seem inexplicable. In 1972, Colin Thubron received a welcome from remote villages – both ethnically Greek and Turkish – where the children had never seen a foreigner before: “I realized that they had been dispersed through the village to assemble my dinner”. (Thubron 1986: 84)

As news had emerged in the 1950s of the escalation of violence, even those who knew and loved the Greek people struggled to reach a judgment. Patrick Leigh Fermor, knighted decades later for his immense contribution to Anglo-Hellenic relations, had worked alongside Greeks in the apparently less complicated conflict of the Second World War. Now, as the British hung grimly onto their colony and Greece supported attempts to evict them with guns and explosives, Leigh Fermor was anguished that, in the words of his biographer, “he was forced to watch these two countries throwing away two centuries of goodwill” (Cooper 2012: 286). Visiting in 1955, joining Lawrence Durrell in Paphos, Leigh Fermor gradually realised the seriousness of the situation:

Anti-British demonstrations, which were at first little more than students’ rags designed to ram home the seriousness of Greek feeling on British indifference, became more frequent and heavily charged with danger. Disturbances grew in Cyprus, repressive measures were applied, bombs exploded and shots were fired. Bad blood was made. (Leigh Fermor 1955)

To his notebook, he confided a blunter assessment: “Greeks right and we are wrong. Up to us to make step.” (Cooper 2012: 286) Leigh Fermor might regard the British policy as reprehensible, but he was equally disturbed to find that the Greek press were comparing the British to the Nazis. He denied that this was the case, arguing that British troops “have so far displayed great forbearance under provocation”. But he did concede that “Circumstances will lead us to ruthlessness – not, this time, in far-away Asian islands or the muffling jungles of Africa, but in the full blaze of the Mediterranean with all the civilised world (including our friends the Greeks) looking on. It can only end in shame and disaster”. (Leigh Fermor 1955) Leigh Fermor should know: as a former SOE officer, he was intimately familiar with the rules (or lack of them) of guerrilla warfare. “After all, in Crete there were only about five of us, each with a very small band of chaps, and we kept a number of German divisions sprawling and pinned down for years”. (Durrell 1957: 190)

Stephen Xydis has described the antecedents of the 1950s Cypriot fighters as those who had resisted the Ottoman occupation of Greece in the nineteenth century (Xydis 1967: 69). Others found a ready comparison closer in time – the Greek *andartes* who had waged war on the Nazis. Leigh Fermor was ambivalent about the increasing levels of violence shown in the Cypriot campaign: “EOKA is guilty of acts which one can make no pretence of excusing. (But can one condemn so easily the principle of armed revolt when all peaceful means have failed?)” (Leigh Fermor 1955). Long-term Cypriot resident Penelope Tremayne recognised a “gnawing sense of subjugation to people not better than themselves” (Tremayne 1958: 175). Those who had been part of the island’s civil or military administration were inevitably less forgiving of EOKA. John Reddaway had served as Administrative Secretary and later wrote a memoir infused with bitterness.² “The proposition that the Greek Cypriots had no choice but to resort to violence implies, first, that they had already exhausted all peaceful means of settling the dispute and, second, that the injustice and suffering inflicted on them was so extreme as to render their lives intolerable. Neither condition was satisfied in the case of EOKA” (Reddaway 1986: 56-7). Reddaway was responding to the kind of justification offered by a former EOKA detainee encountered by Colin Thubron in 1972: “Talking had failed, so what were we meant to do? Every people has a right to be free” (Thubron 1986: 39).

Sir Harry Luke, an administrator with extensive experience of the island, sought to separate the terrorists from the vast majority of law-abiding Cypriots: “the shrill, irresponsible yapping of indoctrinated bomb-throwing urban adolescents was not the authentic voice of a race of God-fearing farmers and shepherds” (Luke 1964: 173). Lawrence Durrell wrote his travel narrative about Cyprus from the similarly partisan position of having been head of the Public Information Office on Cyprus from 1954-56. Durrell’s became a key text: in *The Aphrodite Inheritance* (1979), the popular British television serial by Michael J. Bird, *Bitter Lemons* is shown as the main character’s choice of bedtime reading (episode 5). As David Roessel has shown, although Durrell claimed to represent Cypriot opinions objectively, he ended up merely reproducing his own standpoint, which was “pretty much the standard Tory view of the situation on Cyprus” (Roessel 2000: 241). The most prominent advocate of Enosis within Durrell’s account is Frangos, who is encountered inebriated in a tavern: “Dur-

2. He has now been fictionalised by Peter Cullis (2006: loc 780, 1088, 2120).

rell characteristically puts pro-*Enosis* sentiments in the mouth of a drunk" (Roessel 2000: 237). Elsewhere, Durrell emphasises that the young are being led astray through "the heady rhetoric of demagogues and priests" (Durrell 1957: 133). The Cypriots only support terrorism, then, because they are alcoholics, children, or child-like: "decent, simple folk whose resistance is read more as petulance or immaturity than as political will" (Bowman 2015: 119). Colonial adolescents in dire need of imperial guidance and restraint, the Cypriots were thought to lack the maturity and judgment to deal with their present predicament. Durrell's villagers gather around the radio to listen to the news, "as uncomprehending children might listen to the roll of distant drums" (Durrell 1957: 140).

Penelope Tremayne spent a year in Cyprus working for the Red Cross, some of that time living in Durrell's former house. She explained what she regarded as the limited nature and extent of support for the struggle through using the imagery of the forest fires which had taken hold in Cyprus: "EOKA had been no flame running through the stubble, but a succession of laboriously built and tended fires of green wood, smoky and fitful at the best of times, and choking to those near them" (Tremayne 1958: 167). Tabitha Morgan, in her magisterial study of the British in Cyprus, has shown that the writings of Durrell and Tremayne are indicative of "the persistent and unshakable belief expressed by generations of colonial administrators on the island that most Cypriots remained basically content under British rule and were merely led astray by the political posturing of irresponsible and self-interested leaders" (Morgan 2011: chap. 13). This incomprehension was born of narrow-mindedness and arrogance: why would the Cypriots want to join Greece when they had Britain? From his perspective of the 1970s, Colin Thubron argued that "The pitilessness of EOKA, both against others and within itself, was extraordinary for Cypriots, whose peaceable-ness has made them the natural subjects of empire" (Thubron 1986: 127). This contrasts sharply with the memories of Elenitza Seraphim-Loizou, who enthusiastically joined the EOKA movement, beginning as a mere runner but promoted through the ranks to become an Area Commander involved with bombings and murders. "We viewed our struggle as something sacred" (Seraphim-Loizou n.d.: 53), she wrote in her memoirs, in which she includes an incident in which another woman used her own children as human shields between British bullets and a fleeing terrorist suspect (Seraphim-Loizou n.d.: 45).

Members of British patrols often received a fair welcome in remote locations, reinforcing the view that extremism was the creed of merely a

minority. The future prominent television journalist Martin Bell, then carrying out his compulsory military service in the midst of conflict, was perplexed: "I can't fathom these Greeks. We spend all our time deporting their nearest and dearest to detention camps and prisons, and all they do in return is offer us the fruits of their hospitality" (Bell 2015: chap. 5). Although Penelope Tremayne was threatened on occasion, listening in fear from her bed as the door to her village house was tried at night, she was also met with spontaneous kindness such as when her neighbours "produced from nowhere an immense quantity of cherries wrapped in newspaper, which they insisted upon giving me" (Tremayne 1958: 128, 62).

His tour of duty ending with a whimper – the shredding of now-pointless military intelligence documents, maps and photographs of wanted men – Martin Bell reflected on the futility of the British clinging on for so long: "The decolonisation of Cyprus was a catalogue of failed initiatives and missed opportunities" (Bell 2015: chap. 20). At its acquisition in the nineteenth century, Cyprus had been regarded by the British as a bookend to their possession of Gibraltar at the other end of the Mediterranean. But it had swiftly been overtaken in that role by Egypt, which was annexed in the 1880s. Cyprus had thereby become a political backwater, merely exploited for taxes (Holland 2012: chap. 3). During the First World War, Britain had shown that it was prepared to part with Cyprus, offering it to Greece in 1915 as an incentive to join the fighting against Bulgaria, which had recently declared for Germany. In 1925, however, Cyprus was formally made a British colony, finally separating it from nominal Turkish oversight. After the Second World War, the Cypriot aspiration for *Enosis* (union) received a boost from the precedent of the handover of the Dodecanese to Greece. But the British were determined to remain, especially when the Suez Crisis further limited their options for stationing troops on friendly soil, and their Middle East Headquarters was consequently moved to Cyprus (Holland 2012: chap. 8). However, Andrekos Varnava has shown convincingly that "Cyprus' strategic, political and economic importance was always more imagined than real" (Varnava 2009: 3). Even the colonial administrator John Reddaway conceded that the value of the island "rested more on the negative argument for denying it to a hostile power than on the positive argument of its operational value" (Reddaway 1986: 11). Further, at a time of relinquishing India and Palestine, withdrawal from Cyprus could be construed as yet another sign of British weakness, as Durrell discovered: "If Cyprus were to be frivolously wished away then

what of Hong Kong, Malta, Gibraltar, the Falklands, Aden – all troubled but stable islands in the great pattern?" (Durrell 1957: 194)

When the British took possession of Cyprus in the later nineteenth century, some voices had suggested that the inhabitants were "not really Greek at all" (Holland 2012: chap. 3). For many involved, as Tabitha Morgan has shown, the Greek Cypriots were "a constant source of disappointment. They were neither exotically Oriental nor did they correspond to western ideas about classical nobility and as such always fell slightly short of the mark" (Morgan 2011: chap. 3). Durrell met some of the same ignorance: one official opined that "the Cypriots could claim no Greek heritage, since they didn't speak Greek, that they were Anatolian hybrids" (Durrell 1957: 120-1). However, Sir Harry Luke, although himself a former colonial administrator, was in emphatic disagreement: "There is no doubt that the Greek of Cyprus passionately feels himself to be a Greek in speech, thought, faith and way of life" (Luke 1964: 175). Penelope Tremayne was likewise convinced that they "have always had, and rightly always will have, an unshakable conviction that they are Greeks and belong unalienably to the Greek world" (Tremayne 1958: 175). But some travellers have continued to find the lack of "pure" Greekness in Cyprus disturbing. In his visit of 1972, Colin Thubron found that they were "mid-way between the classical and the oriental" (Thubron 1986: 102).

This supposed ambiguity in identity also manifested itself in views about the "maturity" of the Cypriots as a people. Lord Radcliffe, in his proposals regarding Cyprus in 1956, spoke of the Cypriots as an "adult" people (Clogg 2015: 143). His flattery was rather the exception. Laurie Lee's first view of the Cypriot people, as he arrived in 1945 to make a documentary film, was disparagingly of "half-naked children" springing from the path of his car (Lee and Keene 1947: 5). The harvest seemed almost medieval, done wholly by hand: "Men with long, curved sickles were reaping, and girls, with kerchiefs on their heads gathered the sheaves and bound them to the backs of asses" (Lee and Keene 1947: 26). British soldier Albert Balmer, on his national service, was prepared to consider them a people in transition: with both tractors and oxen pulling ploughs in adjacent fields, "You could stand and watch ancient and modern technology working side by side" (Balmer 2008: 132-3).

Resistance to such change was regarded as symptomatic of a perverse backwardness and obstinacy. But Tabitha Morgan has noted that British attempts to modernise farming were in reality misguided and counterproductive: the light wooden plough of ancient design was actually perfectly

sued to island conditions and peasant lifestyles, and was thus still in use in the 1950s (Morgan 2011: chap. 4 and n. 30). In the 1979 British television serial *The Aphrodite Inheritance*, designed in collaboration with local tourism authorities to boost business, Cyprus was still shown as an overwhelmingly pastoral island. When the god Dionysus, in disguise as the poacher and shepherd Basileos, wants to block a car's passage, he employs a flock of sheep (episode 5). The photographer Reno Wideson, in origin a Greek Cypriot and by profession a British colonial official, explained why rural scenes predominated in his collection published in the early 1950s: "I have always believed that there lies the true flavour of this enchanting land" (Wideson 1953: 7).

The colonisers wanted to believe that Cyprus was close to, and capable of, civilisation and (re)development, a return to its ancient roots which the British had themselves inherited. They clung to "the vague and persistent idea that vestigial traces of the classical roots of European civilisation still lingered on the island itself" (Morgan 2011: chap. 2). British administrators deluded themselves that the British had done a good job. Most Cypriots wished "to continue to live under British rule and its security, its incorruptibility, its even-handed justice, its low taxation, its emancipation of the villager from bondage to the money-lender, its concern with public health, its scrupulous regard for human rights" (Luke 1964: 176). The *Enosis* movement was thought not to be anti-British. Durrell has a taxi driver sigh: "We don't want the British to go; we want them to stay; but as friends, not as masters" (Durrell 1957: 26). In reality, British rule was always marked by cautiousness and frugality, rather than enthusiasm (Morgan 2011: chap. 2). Reddaway conceded that "It is indisputable that Britain should and could have done more than it did to promote the material prosperity of Cyprus while it was under British rule" (Reddaway 1986: 30). Durrell himself acknowledged the regime's "folly and neglect", but argued that this was down to tactlessness rather than malice or lack of ability: a "wooden administration and bad manners" (Durrell 1957: 136, 26).

The British soldier Albert Balmer's welcome to Cyprus in October 1958 was witnessing the aftermath of an attack outside a police station: two vehicles containing service personnel on their way to a swimming expedition blown up, one dead and eighteen wounded (Balmer 2008: 121). The urgent need to defecate led one member of a foot patrol to discover a pipe bomb concealed behind a wall (Balmer 2008: 131). Even the landscape was turned against the occupiers. British soldiers died in the forest fires of 1956, as Martin Bell recalled with an objectivity born of hindsight: "EOKA

was blamed for starting the fire, but it could as well have been natural causes, a misdirected mortar round or the result of an attempt to burn the enemy out of his hide-outs" (Bell 2015: chap. 3).

The British response was hardly likely to win local hearts and minds. Balmer recalls the everyday petty acts of revenge: orange juice swiped from outside local stores, and the water in communal wells deliberately muddied to irritate users (Balmer 2008: 125-6). Theories even circulated that the forest fires had been started deliberately by the British army through airdrops ostensibly containing food supplies (Tremayne 1958: 51). A visiting general refers to suspects as "bastards", and the rank-and-file soldiers determine to "trust nobody" (Balmer 2008: 128, 133). Stopping a burly manual worker for a routine ID check, one of Balmer's patrolmen feels the genitals in order to confirm their gender (Balmer 2008: 145). Writing in a letter of the time, Bell's fear was "that all these searches, arrests and road blocks generated a great deal of ill-will" (Bell 2015: chap. 9). In 2012, previously suppressed documents were released which revealed British soldiers out of control, including an incident in which an officer observed the kicking and beating of Cypriots as they lay on the ground (Bell 2015: chap. 25). Ian Martin, like Bell and Balmer a national serviceman, spent his time in Cyprus as an interpreter, and a letter home from the summer of 1958 reveals his disillusionment after witnessing the damage to property and people caused by soldiers of the Royal Ulster Rifles: "To keep up the farcical pretence of no ill-treatment, etc., everyone in authority has perjured themselves again and again: and any attempt by me or anyone else to tell the truth could never succeed, short of taking it to the United Nations" (Martin 1993: 77). Later, in October of the same year, Martin received a letter from a friend still serving in Cyprus, revealing the British reaction to the shooting of soldier's wife Catherine Cutcliffe whilst out shopping: "there was wholesale rape and looting and murder" (Martin 1993: 78). But later commentators were conscious of a collective British amnesia towards their countrymen's misdeeds: confronted by eyewitness testimony of prison conditions, "It seemed now that I was naïve not to have believed it before. In every people, when angry or afraid, there is a quality which can be distorted into brutality" (Thubron 1986: 39). John Reddaway, who as a former civil servant in Cyprus had strong reasons for justifying the British record, contended that "in the stress of doing battle with terrorism, it is extremely difficult to get the balance right between what is necessary in order to contain violence and restore order and what

is counter-productive because of the effect it may have in alienating the population as a whole" (Reddaway 1986: 58).

A suppressed history of the conflict by British officer Arthur Campbell, accused the local press of complicity against the British: "Every apparently successful action of the EOKA terrorists against the security forces or against civilian targets was reported in depth and often in heroic terms, eliciting sympathy for the terrorist as underdog" (Bell 2015: chap. 23). Back home in Britain, the issue of Cyprus was used as a party political weapon. The Labour Party, in Opposition, heaped pressure for self-determination for Cyprus on the Conservative government (O'Malley and Craig 1999: 63). James Callaghan, an MP and later Prime Minister for Labour, spoke in July 1957 of the British government's insistence on holding Cyprus as "the height of folly and madness" (Panteli 2000: 254).

Imperial rule was always a challenge in practical and reputational terms for Britain. Robert Holland remarks that, as well as much that was positive in terms of prosperity and social change, "Over the decades after 1800 the British brought to the forefront of the Mediterranean stage their ambition, instinct for domination, penny-pinching ways, grating superiority and many other such traits" (Holland 2012: intro.). John Reddaway, in his particularly bitter history, remarks that "Britain found withdrawal from an empire a more painful process than acquiring it" (Reddaway 1986: 78). Perhaps this helps to explain why, as army veteran Balmer notes, "On many Remembrance Day services, Cyprus seems to be the one conflict that is omitted, although all other small wars are mentioned where losses are incurred" (Balmer 2008: 258). However, Martin Bell, who created his own history around the frame provided by one hundred letters he sent home between October 1957 and May 1959, argues that "We have finally reached a point where the truth really can be told about this distant conflict" (Bell 2015: chap. 1). His fellow writers in the field of fiction would seem to agree with him.

THE CYPRUS CONFLICT IN RECENT NOVELS

For novelists, the questionable legitimacy of British troop involvement in a foreign land provides tempting dramatic possibilities involving division and dilemma. As Jim Bowman has noted of travel writing, "Cyprus has long been characterised as a nexus of darkness, sadness and fatalism" (Bowman 2015: 135). The contemporary Greek novelist Thanasis Valtinos has recently explained the attractions of setting his narratives in the past:

"From a writer's point of view, History is a highly stimulating area of interest. It is a particularly dramatic area that even in its crudest form is made up of enmeshed individual destinies" (Valtinos 2016). A complex past and intractable present have been turned into a readily consumable product: Cyprus-as-conflict.

Victor Price's *The Death of Achilles* (1963) set an early pattern for a pacy novel steeped in Cypriot violence. Despite being published close to events, Price has his British protagonists sapped by moral ambiguities. Three years into the conflict, Hugh Barbour, working as a civilian interpreter with British forces, professes to see the British as lacking in honour (Price 1963: 168-9). But Barbour, despite his cynicism, condemns his own side only to a degree: crucially, he is prepared to voice his worries and concerns about the British when in the company of friends, allies and lovers, but not when confronted by a terrorist suspect. This is because these were "criticisms which he had made often enough in the past and believed in, but were hedged around with all sorts of qualifications" (Price 1963: 194). Prisoners were not exactly ill-treated – "they are more thorough in other countries" – just starved, sleep-deprived, and then frightened (Price 1963: 81). Barbour's concerns about interviewing a key suspect – "what happened when both victim and executioner had lost contact with the objective world, when both felt that terrible alienation, when both were emotionally disturbed?" (Price 1963: 180) – serves as a metaphor for the wider situation of Cyprus, in which both sides have lost their moral compass.

The past decade has seen a renewed interest by novelists in utilising historic Cyprus as a backdrop for intrigue, violence and, increasingly, the uncertain legacy of British involvement abroad. The notably cardboard protagonist of Richard and Barbara Osborn's *On Her Majesty's Cyprus Mission* (2014) is an Intelligence Corps officer of public school upbringing and straightforward black-and-white values. An excellent scholar of languages, Ian Black is said to have acquired his Greek skills at Harrow School, under the unlikely scenario that "we had a Greek national teaching up-to-date Greek, rather than classical Greek" (Osborn 2014: 316). Arriving in Cyprus on 27 March 1958, he is on the spot an unfeasible number of times when violent and other significant events take place.³ Overhearing a

3. This is rather in the mode of George MacDonald Fraser's *Flashman* series of novels (published from 1969 onwards), in which a cowardly nineteenth-century cavalryman strays by accident into such terrors as the Battle of the Little Big Horn and the Charge of the Light Brigade. The Osborns seem to miss the point that such piled-up coincidences work only as comedy.

conversation between two local domestic employees, Black foils the notorious conspiracy in which a bomb was placed under the bed of the Governor, Sir Hugh Foot (Osborn 2014: 93). He saves Foot's life a second time by spotting a terrorist who attempts to shoot at his passing convoy on 2 November 1958 (Osborn 2014: 266). Black's plan to surround an EOKA meeting in the Troodos Mountains results in some captured papers which underline their commander's ruthlessness: Colonel Grivas "writes about the need for indiscriminate killings of civilians", a policy which bears fruit in the murder of Catherine Cutcliffe (Osborn 2014: 215).

The terrorists are made to look naïve and simple, consistently underestimating the British. This is exemplified by the many occasions on which locals reveal details of future arms drops and plots in front of British officers, who they think do not understand their language: "None of the English know how to speak Greek. I served with them during the war, and all they know is English and how to drink tea" (Osborn 2014: 41). The British gaze is thoroughly unswerving and uncomplicated: "Ian Black believed that they were all murderers and terrorists" (Osborn 2014: 321). Here, Black lumps all Greeks together as conspirators, whereas the events of the narrative would seem to have shown otherwise. A local mayor is cautiously scornful of the movement's levels of popularity. "I hear that Colonel Grivas plays on the youthfulness and inexperience, to get them to join" (Osborn 2014: 42). Businessmen are against armed struggle, as the threat of terrorist acts has driven away tourist revenue (Osborn 2014: 39).

The British retaliation for the murder of Catherine Cutcliffe is rather underplayed in this fictionalised account. Certainly, it is conceded that British troops "went on a rampage beating up Greek locals and looting stores" (Osborn 2014: 216). Non-British NAAFI employees are rounded up after a bombing and "severely beaten" (Osborn 2014: 217). But it is clearly shown that such actions take place after extreme provocation. "The British troops were so incensed by the shootings and the murder that they started a campaign of intimidation against the Greek Cypriots" (Osborn 2014: 216). This rather absolves the occupiers from blame, placing the cause on Grivas's actions, with the word "intimidation" serving to conceal the full severity of the response. The NAAFI bomb, it is emphasised, is deliberately savage: "hand built and contained nails that did a lot of damage to the victims" (Osborn 2014: 216). In contrast, the British are overtly concerned about the welfare of innocent civilians: Black is warned that "Killing or wounding innocent bystanders will not be looked upon lightly, by the authorities" (Osborn 2014: 264).

The Prologue, seemingly representing the voice of the authors, one of whom is a former member of the British army and the US Air Force, seeks to absolve the British of blame. This is a war against “terrorists”, at a time when the British forces were overstretched by other conflicts in Kenya and Malaya (Osborn 2014: 5, 6). The acknowledgements page notes “honour and respect to all the British servicemen who served and, in some cases died, on Her Majesty’s Service in Cyprus” (Osborn 2014: 2).

Brian Callison’s *Redcap* (2006) is an altogether more sophisticated novel, based around detailed descriptions of a few violent incidents, moving from Cyprus 1957 to Germany ten years on. The novel opens with Bill Walker, a Royal Military Police staff sergeant, caught in an ambush during a night patrol on a mountain road. The full horror of the vicious sub-machine attack on his Land Rover convoy is described, his colleague left eviscerated in a tree to die. Walker is appalled by these tactics which form a trend against the colonisers:

terrorists are shadowy men. They didn’t come out and fight: especially when taking on the British Army. Cyprus, Palestine, Aden, Malaya: terrorists, nationalists, partitionists ... they were all the bloody same. Bombs in married quarters targeting squaddies’ wives and kids: the odd sniper from long range (Callison 2006: chap. 2).

But, and in contrast to the Osborns, it transpires that the author is more even-handed in his apportion of brutality than this initial bald statement might suggest. Walker’s commander, Major Eric K. Steadman, a supposed hero having received the Military Medal during the Second World War, takes sadistic revenge in the present conflict: he executes a boy aged nine or ten with a shot to the head (Callison 2006: chap. 2). His victim is armed with an ancient rifle, regarded by Walker more as a symbol of manhood than an effective anti-British weapon (Callison 2006: chap. 3). Rather than a terrorist, Walker contends that “He was a wee laddie playing soldiers with a home-made gun. You shoulda spanked his backside – not slaughtered him!” (Callison 2006: chap. 3). But Walker stays silent about his superior’s act: he realises that the establishment will close ranks to preserve the illusion of “officers and gentlemen” (Callison 2006: chap. 3). The second major event of the narrative is a full-scale attack on a British military base. At night, the throat of an eighteen-year-old sentry is slit; his Cypriot assailant is stripped, severely beaten and mutilated by Steadman and another officer (Callison 2006: chap. 6).

Walker makes growled, sardonic pronouncements to those under his command about the reasons for the British presence: "Tonight is the night you take your section out to keep the Zorbas on the path of British righteousness" (Callison 2006: chap. 1). In private, he goes further, showing at least some understanding of differing perspectives: the EOKA infiltrator at his base "had only been a patriot fighting for what he believed in" (Callison 2006: chap. 9).

In her 2010 novel, Sadie Jones's purpose is to remind the reader of conflicts often overlooked during official remembrance of the apparently more straightforward World Wars. These *Small Wars* (2010) are here shown as tainted by violence, lies and cover-ups, in which the central character, Major Hal Treherne, becomes both estranged from his wife, Clara, and disillusioned with the army he serves. Jones's reading list, found in her acknowledgements (Jones 2010: 470-1), includes both ends of the political spectrum: Lawrence Durrell's government-supporting *Bitter Lemons*, as well as the much more ambiguous novel by Peter R. Cullis, which I discuss below. At first, beginning in January 1956, the British downplay the nature and extent of their problems – "It's hardly the Blitz, is it?" reflects Clara (Jones 2010: 20) – and the Major makes sure that soldiers conduct themselves appropriately: "Most of the lads showed an instinctive tact in the dealings they were required to have with the locals" (Jones 2010: 39). It is the British interpreter, Lieutenant Davis, who better understands the much harsher reality. The water-torture of prisoners (Jones 2010: 79), is followed by the military response to the bombs which destroy soldiers and horses exercising on a beach: mass round-ups of the Limassol population, beatings, then rapes and murder in local homes (Jones 2010: 172-80). In a no doubt deliberate echo of the Cutcliffe case, Clara is shot whilst shopping in the street, a fellow army wife killed beside her (Jones 2010: 334). This descent into attacking the defenceless comes after the author's apparent thoughts, reflective of the ambiguities shared by Callison's Staff Sergeant Walker, that "There was no truth ... The British were torturers; the British were decent and honourable. EOKA were terrorists; EOKA were heroes." (Jones 2010: 103)

Published in the same year as Jones's novel, Andrea Busfield's *Aphrodite's War*, follows events from 1955 until the 1970s. Told from a Greek family's perspective, the British appear remote and brutal. Drunk on warm beer (Busfield 2010: 21), the soldiers are monsters who enter a village "with boots that kicked at doors. Wood splintered. Women screamed. The people were terrified, but the hate, there was so much hate" (Busfield

2010: 58). Forest fires are started by weapons that are being used to hunt Grivas (Busfield 2010: 91). It is the British who provoke the Greeks, through the imposition of draconian laws bringing "detention without trial, stop-and-search insults and six months in jail for possession of firearms" (Busfield 2010: 26). The plot to place a bomb under the governor's bed was merely a reaction to the British exiling of Archbishop Makarios (Busfield 2010: 39). However, the Cypriots are undeniably brutal too. The shooting of Catherine Cutcliffe "had caused national revulsion, and there was a growing reluctance to embrace the cause" (Busfield 2010: 168). A local journalist has sympathy for individual occupiers:

English mothers were losing their sons, and Michalakis couldn't help but pity them as he wrote endless reports of young men crippled and killed, their limbs shredded by bullets, their intestines mashed by shrapnel, their blood spilt and seeping into Cypriot soil. He had no time for politicians and their posturing and games, but the soldiers – he didn't hold any special grudge against them. (Busfield 2010: 47)

The central character, Loukis, is conflicted about his involvement in EOKA. He takes to the mountains for pragmatic reasons: apparently determined to avenge the beating to death of his elder brother, he is also escaping from personal romantic complications. His heart therefore lies at home, not in the political cause. This is articulated by his fellow EOKA recruit, Toulla: "I'm so utterly fed up. There's no finish in sight for our fight, and in the process I'm becoming an old maid" (Busfield 2010: 176).

Of all these novelists, however, Peter Cullis appears most forgiving. The struggle over an island is reduced to a personal combat. Christopher and Zavvas met by chance on a Cyprus beach aged eleven, and grew up as close as brothers. Zavvas begins his terrorist career in May 1956 by stalking an Inspector in charge of a Nicosia police station, targeted for his outspoken opposition to EOKA (Cullis 2006: loc 493). Tracked down to a café, the policeman is gunned down before he can draw his own weapon (Cullis 2006: loc 530). Zavvas ends his EOKA activities by killing both of Christopher's parents, the father a military man, as they travel an isolated road in their Landrover (Cullis 2006: loc 2166). Zavvas's murderous campaign is zealously pursued in line with Grivas's religious rhetoric: "These people were invaders and had no right to be in his country; he was carrying out God's will in destroying them" (Cullis 2006: loc 937). There is also an appeal to mythology, as Zavvas, adopting the codename Jason, "saw himself as an Hellenic Warrior in the mould of the Homeric Greek Heroes, whom he had admired so much as a child" (Cullis 2006: loc 944).

But Zavvas ultimately turns his back on violence. Whilst the dream of *Enosis* was for him still sound, the methods he employed had belonged only to Grivas, carried out not for the cause but “for the personal glory of their leader” (Cullis 2006: loc 2339). The British are shown as reasonable, with the new governor, Foot, favouring conciliation in order to reach a settlement (Cullis 2006: loc 1095), and personally intervening to stay Zavvas’s execution. Christopher O’Neill, returning to the island as a Lieutenant in the Parachute Regiment, views British tactics as more incompetent than brutal: “lashing out at all and sundry, unsure of exactly who was the enemy, inadvertently alienating even those who tacitly supported it” (Cullis 2006: loc 1422). O’Neill, remarkably, goes on to forgive his parents’ killer: “he hadn’t meant to do it, it was just one of those crazy things that happen in a war” (Cullis 2006: loc 2569). He visits the grave of his now dead childhood friend and offers a salute, “from one soldier to another” (Cullis 2006: loc 2617).

At the time of the events which are central to these five recent novels, the divergence in the representation of those who fought in Cyprus was clear and straightforward. “To the Cypriots the men were patriots and martyrs; to the British they were terrorists” (Thubron 1986: 52). In a recent article, three academics have remarked wryly that “Few terms or concepts in contemporary political discourse have proved as hard to define as terrorism” (Weinberg *et al.* 2004: 777). In a separate scholarly study, Boaz Ganor begins by noting that the term terrorism “has a far more negative connotation, seemingly requiring one to take a stand, whereas the term ‘guerrilla warfare’ is perceived as neutral and carries a more positive connotation” (Ganor 2002: 296). Ganor goes on to produce a definition for a terrorist based upon international legal conventions that “the deliberate harming of soldiers during wartime is a necessary evil, and thus permissible, whereas the deliberate targeting of civilians is absolutely forbidden” (Ganor 2002: 288). Thus, by this measure, EOKA can be said to have engaged in terrorist acts, since they not merely attacked military personnel but, as the Catherine Cutcliffe tragedy notoriously exemplifies, also deliberately targeted British civilians. Weinberg and his colleagues also considered fifty-five other scholarly articles and concluded that “country of origin does play a role in the way scholars in the professional journals define the term terrorism. For example, scholars from the Middle East never mentioned (0%) the element ‘civilians’, while scholars from western Europe and north America mentioned this element more frequently (40% and 21%, respectively)”. (Weinberg *et al.* 2004: 784) The western European

origins of the novelists whose work I have discussed in this article would similarly make it more likely that they view attacks on civilians as a characteristic defining EOKA as terrorists.

However, as I have shown, in fact modern novels exhibit a full range of reactions to the violence of the Cyprus Emergency: from incomprehension and outrage, to understanding and forgiveness. The former soldier Ian Martin reflects the even-handed frustration that these events now provoke: “everyone concerned in this miserable conflict comes out of it badly, and every side told lies” (Martin 1993: 65). The ambiguities and perhaps embarrassment occasioned by the Cyprus Emergency has meant that, as John Burke has recently said, “within Britain a form of collective amnesia is perhaps preferable than having to reconcile with a particularly troublesome imperial past” (Burke 2015: 2).

By revealing the complexities of the Cyprus Emergency, contemporary British novelists are at least engaging with this controversial period of recent history, even if merely for their own dramatic ends. We might view this as assuaging the national conscience, a form of collective apology for past excesses in military behaviour and previous inaccurate representations of the other side. However, I would argue that by focusing on the dramatic potential of this particular period, today’s writing continues to define twentieth-century Cypriot history as backward and dark. Despite the more nuanced view of terrorism and of British actions, then, fiction is still commodifying the island as Conflict Cyprus.

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